



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

November 29, 2022, to March 23, 2023  
and Index

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker





Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 29, 2022

Day 1

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-  
Lac La Biche (UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, ECA, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 61

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk  
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk  
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel  
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and  
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees  
Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary  
Programs  
Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

**STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Allard  
Eggen  
Gray  
Hunter  
Phillips  
Rehn  
Singh

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Irwin  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker  
Vacant

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Dang  
Gottfried  
Hunter  
Loewen  
Reid  
Sabir  
Smith  
Vacant

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Rutherford  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Milliken

Allard  
Ceci  
Dach  
Long  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Shepherd  
Smith  
van Dijken

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Allard  
Deol  
Goehring  
Gray  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sabir  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Williams

**Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Bilous  
Goehring  
Sabir  
Singh  
Williams

**Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Rutherford  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon

Amery  
Irwin  
Long  
Nielsen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Gottfried  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Renaud  
Stephan  
Williams

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Renaud  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Ganley  
Getson  
Guthrie  
Lovely  
Rehn  
Singh  
Turton  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m.

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! Order! All rise, please.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated October 26, 2022, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

**The Clerk:** Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

### Prayers

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

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to invite Ariana Whitlow, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in the singing of *O Canada*.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
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.

### Presentation to the Assembly of Ms Danielle Smith Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat

**The Speaker:** I would now like to invite the hon. the Government House Leader to proceed to the main Chamber doors.

Hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat containing the results of the by-election conducted on November 8, 2022, which states that by a by-election that was held in the constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat, the Hon. Danielle Smith was duly elected as the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. Would she please come forward.

[Mr. Schow escorted Ms Smith to the Mace]

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you the hon. Ms Danielle Smith, the new Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who has taken the oath as a member of this Assembly, has inscribed the roll, and now claims the right to take her seat.

**The Speaker:** Let the member take her seat.

Hon. members, while we await the arrival of Her Honour, the RCA Band will now play a brief musical interlude. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax. It has been in service in both world wars and in Korea and has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band today is under the direction of Captain Curtis Bain. Please enjoy listening to the Royal Canadian Artillery brass band.

### Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

**The Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, and His Honour Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

**Her Honour:** Please be seated.

Good afternoon, everyone. Before I deliver the Speech from the Throne, I would like to thank all elected official members of the Assembly for serving our province. Thank you for what you do, and you know that you are a very important part of our precious system of government. The decisions you make and what you do in the Assembly, in the Chamber, make a difference to the lives of all Albertans, so I want to wish you all a very successful, productive session. I hope that when you go back to your constituencies, you will thank all the community leaders in your respective constituencies for what they do to keep our communities and province moving forward.

Now, before I end, I also want to welcome our new Chief Justice of Alberta, the Hon. Ritu Khullar. Congratulations, Madam Chief Justice. We all wish you well in your new role.

I want to finish by wishing each and every one of you and your families, your loved ones all the very, very best for a peaceful, joyous, happy holiday season, and let us all look to 2023 and the future with hope and optimism.

### Speech from the Throne

#### Introduction

**Her Honour:** Mr. Speaker, hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly, and fellow Albertans:

I open this Fourth Session of the 30th Legislature as His Majesty the King's representative.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Alberta's and Canada's longest serving monarch. Her dedication to duty and service is an example that all of us in this Chamber should aspire to emulate. Queen Elizabeth had a great affection for our province, which is shared by His Majesty King Charles

III. I am honoured to open this Legislative Assembly for the first time on His Majesty's behalf.

Today we gather on Treaty 6 territory, and I invite all hon. members to reflect upon and acknowledge the traditional territories of Alberta's First Peoples and their invaluable contribution to our province and country.

Today's Speech from the Throne will outline the commitments of His Majesty's government for the people and province of Alberta.

Hon. members, this is a challenging time for our province. Rising inflation is impacting the ability of Albertans to provide for themselves and their families, our health care system is under significant strain, and we're combatting unprecedented interference and overreach from the federal government in Ottawa. These may be harsh headwinds, but Albertans are strong. We have faced difficult challenges before, and not only have we overcome them; we have grown the stronger for it. We will do so again.

### **Affordability**

Albertans are an independent and self-reliant people. We do not often ask the government to assist us with meeting our needs. However, during times of crisis and hardship Albertans expect their government to use our vast resource wealth to assist those in need. We must never lose sight of the fact that our natural resources are not the property of government; they are the property of the people of Alberta.

And too many Albertans are facing an inflationary crisis that is forcing them to make choices they should never have to make. Parents are choosing between food and after school activities for their children, and seniors are choosing between life-saving medication and heating their homes. Although most Albertans are feeling the financial pressure of this crisis, low- and middle-income seniors, families with children at home, and vulnerable Albertans are being hit the hardest.

This crisis is not of Alberta's making. It has been thrust upon us from elsewhere. It is the result of supply chain disruptions and war internationally, combined with antienergy policies and economic mismanagement by politicians in Ottawa.

But whatever the cause, this government has a responsibility to take immediate action to help make life more affordable for all Albertans. The new Ministry of Affordability and Utilities will lead work across government to implement a package of targeted inflation-relief measures, starting with the introduction of the Inflation Relief Act. Under this legislation households earning under \$180,000 will be provided with a tax-free payment of \$600 over six months, starting this January, for each senior, to parents for each dependent child under 18, and to each vulnerable Albertan collecting AISH, PDD, and income support.

The government will also index for inflation AISH, PDD, income support, the Alberta seniors' benefit, and the Alberta child and family benefit while providing additional support for food banks and expanding access to low-income transit passes. Protecting and supporting the most vulnerable among us has and always will be the Alberta way, and this government is committed to ensuring that its support for those in the most need continues to be among the most generous in all of Canada.

Although most of this government's affordability measures will target those with the most need during this inflationary crisis, all Albertans will also benefit. The majority of Albertans must drive to go to work, buy groceries, and get their families to appointments and activities. The government will provide immediate relief at the gas pumps by suspending the entire provincial fuel tax for at least six months and by making the current fuel relief program permanent thereafter.

As temperatures drop and the days shorten, Albertans pay more for electricity and heating. This government will provide increased rebates on consumer electricity bills through the winter months totalling an additional \$200 per household. The government will also make the current natural gas rebate program permanent and is working with providers on a plan to flatten out spikes in winter electricity rates this winter and permanently thereafter.

And to keep the tax burden on Albertans as low as possible, the government will index personal income taxes retroactively to 2022 levels, meaning a larger rebate for each Alberta taxpayer this spring.

Together these measures will save Alberta families and businesses more than \$2.4 billion over the next 18 months. Again, this is just a start. More affordability measures are in the works because every decision this government makes until this inflation crisis is over will balance affordability for Albertans with protecting our province's financial well-being and that of the next generation.

### **Health Care**

Albertans must have access to world-class health care where and when they need it most. However, across our province critical surgeries are being delayed. Parents are waiting hours with their children to receive basic treatment in the emergency room. Ambulances are taking far too long to arrive when needed. The government must take action. More words and platitudes will not shorten wait times or free up hospital beds.

Thankfully, our doctors, nurses, paramedics, and all front-line health care professionals are the best in the world and are heroes in our midst, and they are literally the key to fixing health care. We need many more of these great Albertans on the front lines caring for patients.

To our front-line professionals: we thank you. We know you are tired, yet you soldier on to serve and love and care for all of us. We love and salute you. On behalf of all Albertans, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

This government is here for our health care workers. That is why it is committed to supporting our public health care system and ensuring resources are directed where they are needed most, to emergency and operating rooms rather than to boardrooms and consulting companies.

Although fixing our health care challenges will take time, we will see progress on these issues immediately. The government's Health minister, Jason Copping, along with AHS Official Administrator Dr. John Cowell have initiated the health reform action plan. The plan includes instructions to Alberta Health Services to maximize the use of all surgical facilities across the province while using chartered facilities to deliver more needed surgeries more quickly for more Albertans. The government's health care reform action plan also includes reforms to decrease ambulance response times significantly by shortening patient transfer times at emergency rooms, using specialized nonemergency vehicles for interfacility transfers, and empowering our paramedics to provide on-site evaluation and treatment where medically appropriate.

The government will also bring additional health professionals into our emergency rooms to assist with treatment and triage so that those who need a simple prescription or alternative care get the assistance they need without taking a hospital bed away from those who truly need one.

And, critically, the government will continue to lead with our world-renowned treatment-first approach for Albertans with mental health and addictions challenges while expanding mental health supports for youth and children. The government understands that investing significantly in mental health saves thousands of lives and improves the lives of hundreds of thousands more in our province.



It is time to double down on our success on this issue, and the government will do so.

### Jobs and Economy

The Alberta government also remains focused on its steadfast commitment to job creation and economic diversification. To achieve Alberta's full potential, the government will champion innovation while reducing the barriers of entry to entrepreneurs and innovators who want to invest in new ideas and industries in our province.

We know Alberta's greatest asset is its people. This government is committed to nurturing the best education and training programs in the world. Training the next generation will meet the needs of both traditional and emerging industries to attract the best and brightest from across the nation and around the world to our province.

The government must also support the economic sectors that have brought so much continued wealth and prosperity to our great province. Alberta's foundational industries of agriculture and energy produce what the world needs most: food and clean, dependable energy. As Albertans we will never be ashamed of feeding and powering the world.

In fact, now more than ever the world needs more Alberta energy and agriculture, and this government is going to make sure that is exactly what happens. This government will work to reduce interprovincial trade barriers, work towards new customs preclearance for agricultural exports, and expand and improve Alberta's irrigation network. It will maintain and greatly expand exportation of our natural resources to world markets, and it will contribute to lowering emissions by investing in Alberta-based environmental technology like carbon capture and hydrogen while replacing the world's reliance on coal and wood with clean and ethical Alberta LNG.

Humankind has not solved its challenges by cutting economic growth and making people more poor. That is a recipe for environmental disaster and poverty. We overcome our greatest challenges through innovation, technology, wealth creation, and economic growth, and that is exactly how Alberta intends to take on the challenge of lowering our province's and the world's emissions. It is time for our federal government to get on board with that plan and, rather than land-locking our province's energy and technology, work with us to take our clean energy and technology to all the world.

And speaking of technology and innovation, this government will work to diversify our economy. It will do that through the development of a technology and innovation strategy, a new digital media tax credit, and the expansion of high-speed rural broadband services to attract new investment and changemakers to all parts of our province. This also means continuing to lead the way when it comes to harnessing the power of our natural resources such as hydrogen, helium, liquefied natural gas, and geothermal energy while exploring new economic corridors.

All of these opportunities will help Albertans benefit from the province's economic potential, including Indigenous peoples who have always called these lands home. As a part of needed economic reconciliation this government will strengthen its partnership with Indigenous peoples by listening, learning, and ensuring that Indigenous peoples are not only participants in our economic growth but partners and owners of the developments they choose to permit on their treaty lands.

### Standing Up to Ottawa

It is important to address our province's relationship with the federal government. As Albertans we have individual and

provincial rights enshrined in Canada's Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These rights underpin the very foundation of our nation and who we are as Canadians and Albertans. These include our freedoms of speech and religion; liberty; equality; the rights of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples; the right of provinces to deliver health care, education, and social programs free from federal interference; and, of course, the rights of all provinces to develop our natural resources for the benefit of our people. These personal and provincial rights are not something the federal government can simply supersede when it chooses. Ottawa is not our ruler; Ottawa is our partner, and it needs to begin acting like it.

The Canadian Constitution is clear. The federal and provincial governments both have exclusive and sovereign areas of jurisdiction, and this government will no longer sit idly by as Ottawa infringes on our constitutional rights to develop our resources, develop our economy, and deliver our social programs in the manner that Albertans see fit.

That is why the first piece of legislation this government, under our new Premier, will introduce will be the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This act is to be used as a constitutional shield to protect the personal and provincial rights of Albertans from any unconstitutional or harmful acts by the federal government taken against our province, our people, or its economy. Whether it be Ottawa restricting the use of fertilizer by our farmers or attempting to prevent us from developing the very energy resources that power our provincial and national economies, whether it be persecuting owners of legal firearms, inappropriately invoking emergency powers, or intentionally interfering in the delivery of provincial health care, education, or child care, the government will not enforce any unconstitutional federal measure or policy within the boundaries of Alberta going forward.

Let us make no mistake: Albertans are proud Canadians, and we love our country. This legislation will never be used to undermine the rule of law or the unity of our nation. Just the opposite: it will be used to uphold and restore the intent of the most foundational document of our law, the Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights.

Alberta's voices will be heard, Albertans' rights will be respected, and the Alberta government invites every one of its fellow provinces to work with the government in ensuring that same respect is demonstrated to every single province by our nation's capital on a go-forward basis. In so doing, the government will ensure Canada becomes stronger and more unified than ever before.

### Overcoming Challenges Together

Hon. members of this Legislature, whatever your party affiliation, the government asks that you work together to overcome the challenges facing this province for we are all Albertans, and we love this province deeply: our magnificent cities, our breathtaking mountainscapes, our boundless fields of grain and natural resources, and, of course, our greatest treasure of all, the indomitable and compassionate spirit of our people. Our nation and the world need Alberta to lead, and that is what the government shall do because that is the Alberta way, and Albertans must never apologize for it.

God save the King, and may God bless Alberta to be forever strong and free.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to invite Ariana Whitlow, accompanied by the RCA Band, to lead us in the singing of *God Save the King*. Please remain standing at the conclusion of *God Save the King*.

**Hon. Members:**

God save our gracious King,

Long live our noble King,  
 God save the King!  
 Send him victorious,  
 Happy and glorious,  
 Long to reign over us,  
 God save the King!

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

### Statement by the Speaker

#### 50th Anniversary of Legislative Assembly Broadcast Services and *Alberta Hansard*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'd like to provide some brief remarks about two very important anniversaries in the history of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. This year marks the 50th anniversary of both the television broadcast of the Assembly proceedings as well as *Alberta Hansard*.

On March 2, 1972, something special happened here at the Assembly. It was opening day of the 17th Legislature, and it was the first time that the Assembly proceedings were broadcast live on television. I can only imagine the anticipation of Albertans from corner to corner. In the throne speech that day the government announced that as part of their open government program the regular proceedings of the Assembly would be televised.

A week later, on March 9, the Assembly adopted a resolution, supported by all parties – note to members – to allow for the broadcast of proceedings by various media, including television. After preparations were made, by March 15, 1972, regular broadcasts of the Assembly's proceedings began.

In those early days only Friday question period – yes, you heard that right: Friday question period – was broadcast, and a summary of the prior week's proceedings on the following Sunday was televised. By 1978, however, CTV broadcast gavel-to-gavel coverage of the proceedings. This would later be reduced, sadly, to only Oral Question Period and certain items of the daily Routine until the advent of Alberta Assembly TV, which broadcasts proceedings from gavel to gavel once more.

Significantly, Alberta was the very first jurisdiction in Canada to have its proceedings broadcast on a permanent basis.

Nineteen seventy-two was also a very important year because on March 8, 1972, a motion was moved and passed, with the support of the entire House, to publish a complete record of Assembly proceedings retroactive to March 2. *Alberta Hansard* was born. By 1974 *Hansard* staff produced the *Hansard* Blues, which are the unofficial transcripts of the Assembly that are made available to all of us. Since 1972 *Alberta Hansard* has been relied upon extensively by members, staff, Assembly officials, media, and members of the Alberta public to know and to follow the Assembly debates, to understand and fully appreciate what their elected officials are saying in the Assembly.

Nineteen seventy-two also marked a very important date in my parents' lives, who join us today in the Assembly, as it was also their 50th anniversary just last week. Welcome to the Assembly. [applause]

To conclude, I will leave you with this thought, and I encourage, as we start a new session of the Assembly, members to choose their

words wisely. It is estimated that since *Alberta Hansard* formed, over 50 years ago, approximately 153.7 million words are part of the permanent record of Alberta history and *Alberta Hansard*. I hope you will choose your words wisely, and let's look to see what the next 50 years have in store for the Alberta Assembly.

### Tablings

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise to add a few more words to the millions that have already been put on the record. Thank you for that wonderful history.

It is also my honour today to rise and introduce the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is designed to be a constitutional shield to protect Albertans from unconstitutional federal laws and policies that harm our province's economy or violate Alberta's provincial rights. To be clear, it was devised to be respectful of court decisions and Indigenous and treaty rights. By restoring and respecting the constitutional rights of our creative and diverse provinces, including Alberta, Canada will become stronger, more prosperous, and more unified than ever.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division]

**The Speaker:** I'll tell you what we'll do, hon. members. A division has been called, which is, of course, the right of members of the Assembly, however unconventional during a throne speech. A division bell will be rung. For the benefit of those seated and joining us in the galleries, it sounds a lot like a fire alarm; however, there is no fire. We will have a recorded division. What will happen is that there will be a 30-second bell. There will be a 15-minute period between that and when the actual division takes place. At 14 minutes a minute-long bell will sound again. Please don't be alarmed. To try to make this as smooth as possible, if you must leave the Chamber, I think it's reasonable to allow you the opportunity to do that. If you can remain seated to create as little disruption as possible, that's helpful, but I appreciate the fact that the delay may not be ideal for some of you.

[The division bell was rung at 3:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Loewen	Sawhney
Amery	Long	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Schulz
Barnes	Luan	Shandro
Copping	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Dreeshen	McIver	Singh
Ellis	Milliken	Smith, Danielle
Fir	Nally	Smith, Mark
Getson	Neudorf	Stephan
Glubish	Nicolaides	Toews

Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Guthrie	Orr	Turton
Hanson	Pitt	van Dijken
Horner	Pon	Walker
Hunter	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rosin	Wilson
Jean	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	Yaseen
LaGrange		
Against the motion:		
Bilous	Goehring	Phillips
Carson	Gray	Renaud
Ceci	Hoffman	Sabir
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Deol	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan	Pancholi	Sweet
Ganley		
Totals:	For – 55	Against – 22

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

## Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the speech of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration Wednesday, November 30, 2022.

[Motion carried]

**The Speaker:** Members and invited guests, I would like to remind all of you that you are invited to attend a reception, that is currently half being held in the Legislature rotunda, immediately following the closing ceremonies. I hope that you will join us for some light refreshments.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Wednesday, November 30, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:13 p.m.]



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*Alberta Hansard* is available online at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca)

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 30, 2022

Day 2

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	



### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Ms Rosin  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Bilous  
Goehring  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith, Mark

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Allard  
Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing. As is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since the last time we've met.

### Mr. Peter Trynchy August 22, 1931, to November 21, 2022

**The Speaker:** Peter Trynchy was elected as the Progressive Conservative Member for Whitecourt on August 30, 1971. Mr. Trynchy won six consecutive elections in Whitecourt and two in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, serving eight terms before retiring in 2001.

During his nearly 30 years of service Mr. Trynchy was the government whip from 1975 to '79; the minister of recreation and parks from '79 to '86; the minister responsible for occupational health and safety, and Workers' Compensation Board from 1989 to 1992; the minister of transportation and utilities from '92 to '94. Before his election to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta Mr. Trynchy served his community on the Mayerthorpe town council for six years. A businessman and a farmer, he earned a reputation for taking immediate action during his time in office. Mr. Trynchy received the Queen Elizabeth II golden jubilee medal in 2002 and the Michael Luckovich award for outstanding public service by a parliamentarian of Ukraine origin in 2008. A driving force to establish the Mayerthorpe Airport, it was renamed in his honour in 2020.

Peter Trynchy passed away on November 21, 2022, at the age of 91. In a moment of silent prayer or reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Trynchy as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Proposed Amendments to Standing Orders

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call upon the Clerk for the daily Routine, I notice that Government Motion 9, which is on notice on the Order Paper today, is proposing to amend a number of standing orders, including amendments with respect to two items in the daily Routine: Introduction of Guests and Members' Statements.

The motion seeks, among other things, to amend Standing Order 7(3) to provide that each day members may make introductions under Introduction of Guests, that the time allotted for this item of business is to be four minutes, and that each member's introduction may not exceed 20 seconds. In addition, an amendment has been proposed to Standing Order 7(4) to reduce the number of members' statements from nine to seven each day.

I understand that two unanimous consent requests may be coming forward that would seek to give effect to these proposed amendments this afternoon. Is someone willing to make the first request? The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(3) in order to allow members to make their own introductions of guests for a period not exceeding four minutes, each introduction to not exceed 20 seconds.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Accordingly, Introduction of Guests this afternoon will follow the process I have just outlined.

Is the hon. the Government House Leader willing to make a request for unanimous consent for Members' Statements to give effect to the motion?

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(4) in order to allow for seven members' statements to be given today in the order outlined in the House leaders' agreement shared with all members by the Speaker.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The rotation for Members' Statements that will apply today is contained in a House leaders' agreement that I received on November 28, 2022, which has also been circulated to each member and that I will table at the appropriate time today in the Routine.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with admiration and respect there is a gratitude to members of families who have shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome the members of the Trynchy family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name, and remain standing until all have been introduced: daughter of Mr. Trynchy Darlene Langevin and her husband, Val; grandson Christopher and granddaughter Ashten; and son Marlin Trynchy and his wife, Janet Gervais. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two people who I can safely say I would not be here without. One of them is my father, Doug Smith, and the other is my mother, Sharon Smith. When I told them I was going to get back into this job, they said, "Are you crazy?" And I said, "Thank you for your vote of confidence." I'm so glad that they are here. Please give them the warm welcome of the Chamber.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and, through you, would like to introduce 80 grades 5 and 6 students of Julia Kiniski school in my riding of Edmonton-Meadows. Among them are their hard-working teachers, staff. I would like to name Mr. Dale Mandryk, Ms Crystal Jenkins, Ms Lexie Zechman, and Parminder Grewal. Please join me in welcoming all of them here.

Thank you.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I know that it will take some time for us to get used to the reintroduction of Introduction of Guests, but I will remind members that those introductions are to be 20 seconds or less. I believe that we ought to set the precedent for what these introductions will look like in that I am of the belief that these introductions ought to be about the guests and less about being used as a partisan tool. That's not a reflection on the introductions that we've had already this afternoon but more that I wanted to provide that reminder and had forgotten. They will be 20 seconds, and I will be rising, as I do during question period or other speaking limits, to ensure that we can get through as many introductions as possible, and I encourage members to keep their remarks brief out of respect for others.

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, seated up in the Speaker's gallery, Chase Malkin and his mother, Janell. Chase has taken a keen interest in learning about Alberta politics and spends many days learning about all of us. I have no doubt that one day he'll be seated down here on this very floor. Please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly, and stop by 323 to meet Chase after question period.

**Member Ceci:** Elladee Windsor is a master of social work student who is currently completing her practicum in my constituency office. Her work is focused on the Fort McMurray wildfire and the role of social workers in recovery from disasters. I'm so proud she's here today, and I can't wait to watch her career grow and develop.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly my friends Destiny Chiasson and Brett Pearce. Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

### Members' Statements

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

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans' rights are sacred. They are enshrined in the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Unfortunately, for too long our rights have been trampled on by federal actors, and for too long governments have failed to stand up and say: enough is enough. As we all know, this has grave consequences for our industry, our economy, and our workers.

Fortunately, those days are done. On Tuesday Bill 1, the long-awaited Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, was introduced in this Legislature. If passed, this act will empower our province to stand up against overreach and interference from the federal government, fight federal legislation that is unconstitutional or harmful, and defend the federal-provincial divisions of power, giving our province the right to develop policies that reflect our own unique needs.

This is not about separation. This is about strengthening and clarifying the bonds that make us a true confederation. This bill even has inspired other provinces like Saskatchewan to pass their own legislation affirming their jurisdictional authority against the federal government.

Contrary to what the opposition NDP will say, this act in no way permits cabinet to unilaterally amend legislation, but it comes as no surprise that the opposition NDP is already opposing the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act without even reading it. Their actions only serve to remind us how they sold Albertans out to Justin Trudeau and Ottawa when they were in office and how they will do that again if given the chance.

Our United Conservative team won't do that. We will always put Albertans first, we will defend Alberta's constitutional authority against overreach from Ottawa, and we will fully exercise our areas of jurisdiction granted under the Constitution. This bill is not a sword; it is a shield. Albertans expect their government to defend the province they cherish, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

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

#### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's postsecondary institutions are crucial to our economic recovery, equipping Albertans with vital skills and knowledge for now and the future. Unfortunately, college, polytechnic, and university students are struggling today because of decisions made by this UCP government. The Minister of Advanced Education has approved tuition hikes anywhere from 16 to 104 per cent and more than \$10,000 in additional annual fees. This government has consistently downloaded even more costs onto the backs of students, students who are already struggling due to the countless other UCP decisions that have made life unaffordable for Albertans.

Now, at a time where people across this province are struggling, this government has just made a bad situation worse. Alongside increases to tuition, fees, student housing, and more, interest rates have steadily been on the rise as well. So what does this government do? They add an additional interest charge on student loans. This means they are cruelly profiteering off Albertans who are simply seeking higher education. This extra money that the UCP is taking out of the pockets of Albertans adds to student loan payments, one steep monthly bill during the worst affordability crisis in 40 years.

Students are facing major pressures in every aspect of their lives: increases to rent, utilities, tuition, gas, insurance, and more. The list goes on and on. Yet the average student doesn't even have access to the inadequate affordability packages offered by this government. While some folks are able to access these resources, so many students are simply left out in the cold. Single people, those without children, students: they're all impacted by the affordability crisis, too, and they're just as worthy of support, I believe.

These are our future leaders. They are facing an affordability crisis and are crying out for help. The Alberta New Democrats are listening. Should we form the next government, we will take action to ensure that education is affordable and that our young people are set up to lead into a bright economic future.

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

#### Former MLA Peter Trynchy

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a heavy heart I share a member's statement today regarding the passing of Honourable Mr. Peter Trynchy. He passed away on the 21st of November at the age of 91. He was preceded by the love of his life,

Lorraine. He'll be missed by his son Marlin Trynchy and his wife; by daughter Darlene and her husband; and by grandchildren Christopher, James, and Ashten as well as five great-grandchildren.

Peter Trynchy was born in Rochfort Bridge, Alberta, on August 22, 1931. Peter was a businessman, a farmer. He ran a local grain elevator for years. He served on the Mayerthorpe town council and a number of other local organizations. Peter was elected in 1971, served for 27 years. For those keeping score at home, that's eight consecutive terms. He was the minister of recreation and parks, the minister of OH and S, the WCB, public safety services, transportation and utilities. There isn't a corner of this province that didn't benefit from Mr. Trynchy's hard work over the time in office. Mr. Trynchy would often remark how exciting it was to be part of such a significant change in Alberta under the leadership of Premier Lougheed. Mr. Trynchy established the Peter Trynchy scholarship, which helps folks to obtain career education in technical trades.

I first met Mr. Trynchy when I was knee-high to a grasshopper at the Wildwood Fair. He took the time to talk to me as a kid and give me an Alberta pin. I carried that around for years, and it's one of the reasons as an MLA I do the same thing for kids in our constituency.

In 2020 we renamed the airport in Mayerthorpe after Mr. Peter Trynchy. Without him it wouldn't have been built. We made it a stop on the Alberta Air Tours. We had 20 airplanes that came along and stopped in, and it was the first time the seniors were able to get out of the homes. I had the honour of giving Mr. Trynchy an Alberta pin back and told him the story, and it made him smile.

Mr. Trynchy, you left some awfully big shoes in our constituency to fill. I'll do my utmost to fill them. I wish to thank you and your family for all your years of service.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Seniors' Support

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our seniors helped lay the foundation for our great province. Because of the importance that seniors hold in our province, it is critical that they are taken care of. Today I'm honoured to stand in this House to share just one of the ways that we are taking care of seniors in my constituency of Livingstone-Macleod.

This summer I had the privilege of visiting Peaks to Pines, a new 100-unit seniors' lodge in the Crownsnest Pass. This seniors' living facility offers different levels of care: seniors can choose independent living and be self-sufficient in their own suites, or they can choose to have supportive living, where they have access to on-site health care aides, prepared meals, housekeeping, and more. These varying levels of care choices will provide seniors in my riding with the flexibility and support they need. Peaks to Pines lodge is a huge step in the right direction towards housing options for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, although this facility is a great addition in my constituency and I'm pleased to see it finally completed, it does not solve the issue of difficult living situations for seniors across our province who simply cannot afford to live in a facility like this. Investment in affordable housing and care facilities will be vital to ensure that seniors have the best care possible and will keep them close to family and friends.

Seniors in our province, especially those who live in rural communities, need more support from our government. Because of the increased costs of living and the inflation crisis, Albertans everywhere are struggling. Living on fixed incomes, our Alberta seniors are struggling to afford life. Recently our government announced that we will be increasing the benefit rate for low-income seniors by 6 per cent beginning this January. Low-income Alberta seniors will also be receiving an additional \$100 a month

for six months beginning in January. Mr. Speaker, the indexing of these financial assistance benefits and the additional cash is going to be critical as we address the financial pressures our older Albertans face. This added 6 per cent will have a positive impact on the lives of our seniors.

Thank you.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Mr. Sabir:** Economic certainty; stable, competent government; the rule of law: all of these things are critical for the future of Alberta, and all are under threat with the introduction of the Premier's sovereignty act. This bill is unconstitutional. It completely disrespects this House, the people elected to serve in this House, and millions of Albertans who put us here.

The Premier was selected by 1 per cent of Albertans. She didn't even have the majority of support in her own party, yet she now believes she can give herself supreme power to rule outside of this House, that she can change legislation behind closed doors. She has decided her actions are not subject to public accountability. She has decided she supersedes us all.

While she may be so misguided in her own love for herself to give herself this power, her own ministers don't agree. The Finance minister called the bill a ticking time bomb. The Minister of Municipal Affairs called it the Anarchy Act. The minister of environment said that it will "create instability and chaos." I could go on and on.

Now those ministers stay silent, but Albertans are speaking out. Political scientists are calling it the most undemocratic piece of legislation this House has ever seen. Investors and businesses are reaching out to us to express serious concerns as they openly consider whether to pull out of the province altogether. This bill will kill jobs; it will stop investment; it will destroy our economic future; it will erode our democracy.

This Premier must be stopped. I call on every MLA in this House today to take a stand against this Premier. We are at a critical moment. Albertans are watching, and if you refuse to act now, you can explain to our children why you put their future at risk.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements Private Members' Business Rules and Practices of the Assembly

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as this is the first regular sitting day of the Fourth Session, there's some information I wish to share with you prior to Oral Question Period. I would like to inform you that modifications have been made to the Oral Question Period and members' statement rotation based upon the House leaders agreement I mentioned in my earlier statement.

One Oral Question Period each week and one member's statement every three weeks had been assigned to the member who was the independent member during the spring, the Member for Central Peace-Notley. However, since that member is now a member of the United Conservative caucus, that question and member's statement have been allocated to the United Conservative caucus.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat will be entitled to question 8 on day 3, and the Member for Edmonton-South will be entitled to question 9 on day 4. Each of the independent members will continue to be allocated one member's statement every three weeks. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is allocated a statement on Monday of week 2 of the rotation, and the Member for

Edmonton-South has been allocated a statement on Monday of week 3.

With respect to private members' business there have been some modifications to the list of positions for private members' public bills and motions other than government motions drawn for the Fourth Session. As a result of recent appointments of certain private members to Executive Council and the resignation of the former Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, bills 210, 224, 231, 238, 239, 245, 246, 253, 254, and 255 and motions other than government motions 510, 515, 520, 521, 523, 526, 539, 542, 543, 551 have all been withdrawn from the list of positions for the Fourth Session of the 30th Legislature.

As I reminded you in the procedural memo sent to members on November 28, a number of parliamentary secretaries have been appointed recently. I remind you that parliamentary secretaries are private members; they are not members of Executive Council. Accordingly, they have the rights and the duties of private members, not of members of cabinet. I refer members to the rulings by Speaker Kowalski on April 16, 2008, which can be found on page 13 of *Hansard* for that day, and Speaker Wanner, which can be found on page 1599 of *Hansard* from October 30, 2017, which indicate that it is inappropriate for parliamentary secretaries to direct questions to the minister whom the parliamentary secretary is affiliated with. Accordingly, I would ask that the parliamentary secretaries refrain from posing questions to their ministers.

With respect to House leadership I would remind members that the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul is a private member. He has been appointed as the Deputy Government House Leader. Members will recall that the current Government House Leader was previously appointed the Deputy Government House Leader during the 2021 fall sitting, also when he was a private member. On October 25, 2021, I made a statement on the scope of the member's role as the Deputy Government House Leader, and I'd urge the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and all members to review those remarks, which can be found on page 5647 of *Hansard* from that day.

I wish to remind members that the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees will take place immediately following the Routine.

Finally, as we embark on this session, please remember that in accordance with Standing Order 13(7) members must be in their assigned seats when speaking or voting.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by quickly congratulating the Premier on her new role.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans – all Albertans – expect their elected officials to stand up for Alberta, no question. But yesterday we learned that the Premier's approach on sovereignty is not that but, rather, a full-throated power grab from Albertans. She's granting herself the ability to write laws in secret, behind closed doors, no reviews, no checks, no balances, just an unprecedented abuse of authority. To the Premier: why is her first act an unconstitutional, antidemocratic attack on the democratic rights of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the hon. member. No, it does not. It's very clear. I suppose if the

opposition had stayed to actually read the bill when it was presented yesterday – I would have expected they might have read it in the meantime – they would have seen that every decision that is going to be made has to first get the validation from this Assembly. What that means is that this Assembly will pass a motion, and it will give the direction to cabinet. It will always be at the direction of the members that we will make decisions in cabinet.

**Ms Notley:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm relying on the briefing from the Deputy Minister of Justice, who does understand this legislation, unlike this Premier. In fact, this move is nothing more than a cynical political tool used to consolidate power and to undercut our much-needed economic recovery. In fact, the Calgary Chamber of commerce says that it will impede new investment, reduce business certainty, and make it harder to attract new talent. Why doesn't the Premier put Albertans first, drop this bill, and start doing some real work to protect and promote investment in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number one biggest detractor and the number one thing that has chased investment out of this province has been the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa and their undemocratic decisions and their violation of our constitutional rights in this province. That is what the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act is all about. It is about enforcing our constitutionally guaranteed rights to make our own decisions regarding the development, the conservation, and the export of our resources. I would ask the opposition to support it.

**Ms Notley:** Well, quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing an alarming collision of three very rare political events: first, we have a Premier who's made more mistakes in three weeks than most make in three years; second, we have a Premier selected by less than 1 per cent of the population a mere six months before a general election; and third, that same Premier is now attempting to consolidate more power outside of the Legislature than any Premier in the history of this province. She's in over her head. Why won't she withdraw this legislation and focus on real solutions for Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to educating the opposition in my speech later today on the sovereignty act about how our country is supposed to work and the fact that Alberta does have sovereign rights to make decisions in areas of exclusive jurisdiction. I would just ask for them to listen to the debate and to support the actions that we are taking here because we know that Albertans want us to act on this. We have a mandate, with the equalization referendum that was passed, that our people want to make sure that we stand up to Ottawa, and that's exactly what we're going to do with the sovereignty act.

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

**Ms Notley:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I did listen to the debate. I listened to the debate of the UCP leadership candidates, and let me tell you that those folks sitting around: hypocrisy a little astounding. Not long ago they all held a joint news conference on how they would be voting against the act. The Finance minister called it an economic time bomb; the jobs minister, a fairy tale; the Municipal Affairs minister, anarchy; and the minister of trade said that it was like shooting ourselves in the foot. Yesterday all of them capitulated. Will any one of them stand up and explain why they sold out Albertans yesterday?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have had an incredible time over the last eight weeks making sure that our caucus members had a lot of input into all of our decision-making and identifying our priorities, and one of the things that we had heard loud and clear was that they want to stand up and push back against Ottawa. As they had input into the construction of this bill – we’ve gone through a cabinet policy committee process; we’ve gone through a cabinet process; we’ve gone through a caucus process – everybody became very comfortable with the fact that this is going to do exactly that: it’s going to assert our constitutional rights, and it’s going to push back against Ottawa.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I think everybody became really comfortable with a paycheque, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the former Premier at least had the good sense to walk away from this Dumpster fire. He once called this approach catastrophically stupid, and back then the Finance minister agreed with him. He said, quote: I believe invoking the Alberta sovereignty act would put us backwards because it would create chaos. He went on to say that the act would curtail new investment and force established businesses to leave Alberta. To the Finance minister: if you believe what you said then, why did you fail those businesses and the people working for them yesterday?

2:00

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise in the House this November day. I had legitimate concerns over early renditions of the proposed sovereignty act, but I’ve had full opportunity to weigh in to the development of this bill. This bill, for my support, needed to respect the rule of law, needed to be constitutional, and needed to be implemented in a way that would not create business uncertainty. This bill does that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I hope the minister can sleep well at night, because businesses certainly are not. Economists and business leaders say this approach hurts our international reputation. The former Energy minister actually described a recent international meeting with energy leaders. She said, quote, it’s already creating instability and chaos. “I had international investors concerned about their assets in Alberta asking about what was going on with the Sovereignty Act.” To the now environment minister: why are you surrendering to an approach that is undemocratic, unconstitutional – you’re a lawyer; you know it – and harmful to our economy? That’s what you said.

**The Speaker:** Prior to the hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas’ remarks, I’m sure she’s not asking for a legal opinion of the minister because that would be outside of the convention of what is acceptable in the House.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1 is neither unconstitutional nor undemocratic. Every single thing that comes out of it will be debated in the Legislature. In the very preamble of the act it said it will be constitutional and nothing will be construed to be unconstitutional. I had some very grave concerns about the act. We went through a caucus process, and I think we addressed those concerns.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition.

### Health Care System

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve to have the health care they need when they need it. Yet today health care is in chaos because of both the pandemic and the many bad decisions of the

UCP. Albertans can’t find a family doctor, they’re being transported to hospitals in fire trucks, and they’re waiting 20-plus hours in ERs. In Calgary sick children are being forced to wait for care in a trailer outside the children’s hospital. Why is the Premier more obsessed with calling movie sets about vaccine mandates than helping Alberta families get the health care they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the health care system is in crisis, which is why I made it a priority when I got elected that we were going to make sure that we put health care reform, and Alberta Health Services reform in particular, at the forefront. It’s the reason why I have dismissed the board and thanked them for their work but put in place an official administrator, who can accelerate all of the changes that we need to make to make sure that the experience of people on the front line is going to be improved. Number one, we’re going to reduce wait times in emergency rooms. We’re going to also make sure that people don’t wait in . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, that board shakeup was window dressing, absolutely nothing more. This is a Premier who has accused front-line health care workers of manufacturing a staffing shortage, she fired the chief medical officer and replaced her with a volunteer, and she’s now developing her own public health response by talking to a conspiracy theorist who believes the vaccine is a bioweapon. She promoted horse dewormer as a treatment for COVID. The Premier suggested last week she’s made some mistakes. If so, will she stand up and apologize for the ones I just described today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard that we needed new leadership at the chief medical officer of health, and I’m very pleased that Dr. Mark Joffe has agreed to take on that role. We also know that the only way that you can make the kind of changes that we need to make to stabilize health care, to address the long waits of paramedics when they show up at emergency rooms, the long waits that people have when they enter an emergency room, and the surgical wait times is to make sure that we have somebody hands on, day in, day out, ensuring that they have the support that they need to push the changes through, and that’s what we’re giving. I’m delighted to work with Dr. Joffe.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have actually heard the Premier’s inside voice on health care, and it’s not pretty. She’s mused about opening unstaffed beds in hotel rooms, bringing back health care premiums, making people with, quote, catastrophic medical events pay deductibles, and paying for doctors’ visits out of a \$300 spending account. These things were said and written 16 months ago, not 16 years ago. Why doesn’t the Premier apologize for those statements or, conversely, just admit she can’t be trusted to fix Albertans’ health care?

**Ms Smith:** I find it amazing that the Leader of the Official Opposition is opposed to health spending accounts, because the only time I’ve ever had a health spending account is when I was in elected office. I know she has a \$950 health spending account paid for by taxpayers. It sounds kind of elitist to me to be accepting taxpayer money for a health spending account and then saying that Albertans shouldn’t be able to have the same thing. What we’re offering is an approach that will make sure that we’re supporting

the health care decisions of all of our Albertans by paying for the things that are not paid for by Alberta health care.

### Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity

**Ms Panholi:** There is a crisis in our health care system, and children are now experiencing the worst of it. Both the Stollery in Edmonton and the Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary are continually exceeding 15-hour wait times. A heated trailer has been set up outside the Alberta Children's emergency department. A trailer to hold children wanting to access health care: that's where we're at. Children's surgeries are being cancelled, there's a shortage of children's medications, illnesses are moving quickly through schools, and too many kids do not have family doctors. Will the UCP government allow an emergency debate in the Legislature today to address the children's health care crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, our emergency departments are under strain, as they are across the entire country. We're seeing an early and severe flu season, and patients coming to emergency are sicker than on average, you know, given that, often, many numbers of visits to either the emergency departments or to family doctors were put off during the pandemic. We're responding. We're responding by adding capacity across our entire system, from EMS to continuing care. At the Children's in Calgary, AHS added a new fast-track unit, and they're working to add staff to other spaces as well.

**Ms Panholi:** I was joined earlier today by my constituent Lindsey Kemp, whose 6-year-old son George is immunocompromised. He's had two heart transplants, and he also has Crohn's disease. Lindsey worries about what will happen if George gets sick and needs hospital care, which he does regularly. She worries for patients and parents waiting for a life-saving transplant for their child. The Minister of Health is allowing the chaos in our hospitals to continue and potentially putting life-saving surgeries and treatment for children at risk. At what point will the Minister of Health acknowledge that this is a crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to all parents who have sick children, and I wish that family and that individual all the best.

We are providing care. Mr. Speaker, if you need to get care, whether it be at the Stollery or the Children's hospital, it is there for you. Yes, our system is under strain, but we are dealing with that. We are investing an additional \$600 million this year, \$600 million next year, \$600 million the year after that, because we know we need to expand capacity. We are also looking to transform our system, add more family doctors, and I can talk more about what we're doing with the AMA in a moment.

**Ms Panholi:** Parents across this province will say that they do not feel that they have access to health care for their children right now, and they're correct. Now, I recognize that solutions to this problem are not easy, which is why we must debate this in the Legislature today. We cannot wait until wave after wave of illness overwhelms our hospitals and the dedicated front-line workers who have done so much to care for Albertans. They deserve clear and immediate support from the members in this Chamber. Parents need to know that they can access health care for their children. For the sake of the children and our health care workers, will the UCP agree to an emergency debate today about children's hospitals and their crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we are acting and we have been acting and we are continuing to act. I spoke already about adding capacity to our system. We are spending record amounts of dollars: \$22 billion this year and expanding that by another \$1.2 billion over the next two years. We are also transforming the way we deliver the health care system. The Premier already spoke about appointing the administrator to drive changes to our system faster, lower EMS times, lower times in emergency departments. We are also working on expanding access to systems through adding health care staff. We have more doctors, more nurses than we ever had in the system, and we're doing more.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has the call.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For far too long we have watched our provincial rights, granted to us under the Constitution, be infringed upon by federal actors, and for far too long governments have failed to stand up and say: enough is enough. On Tuesday Bill 1, the long-awaited Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, was introduced. Can the minister please explain how this act will be used to protect our rights, our freedoms, and the interests of our province from federal overreach?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. What this does is provide a framework for us to openly and democratically have a debate here in this Assembly to be able to discuss when there is overreach from the federal government. We know this is happening very often, and this provides us a tool, an additional tool to what we already have as a government, as a House, a tool for us to be able to continue that work and then to be able to take next steps on how we can better protect the interests of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has the call.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that no one wants to see any government grant itself extraordinary powers that could potentially be abused, like we recently saw from the federal Liberals in the use of the Emergencies Act, and given that concerns have been raised about whether this new legislation would grant Alberta's cabinet these kinds of extraordinary powers, can the minister please explain as to whether this act would allow cabinet to alter or amend legislation without legislative oversight? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Minister of Justice is the one with the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No. To be clear, in no way does this act permit cabinet to unilaterally amend legislation. In this framework cabinet cannot amend legislation without the specific direction provided by the MLAs in this Assembly. Cabinet can only work within those parameters. That means that the democratically elected members of the Assembly are the ones who determine . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Minister of Justice is the one with the call.



**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, that means that the democratically elected members of the Assembly are the ones who determine what actions under the act are justifiable or necessary.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A well-informed opinion from someone who has read the bill.

Given that members of the United Conservative Party are all proud Albertans and Canadians and given that questions have been raised about whether the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act opens the door to separation from Confederation, can the minister explain whether this piece of legislation is about separation or about protecting Alberta within a united Canada?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No; this has nothing to do with separation. This is entirely about protecting the interests of Albertans. In fact, although they're not listening right now, I would invite the NDP to suggest opportunities for how this framework might be used in the best interests of Albertans, but of course they're not going to do that because they don't want to upset or push back against the Trudeau-NDP alliance in Ottawa.

### Health Spending Accounts

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, as of today hundreds of thousands of Albertans have no family doctor. For many this is a direct result of the conflict and chaos caused by the UCP. Now the Premier wants to move forward with health spending accounts, an idea she discussed extensively, saying in June 2022 that they could act as a way to pay to see a doctor. She even said, "My view is that the entire budget for [family] practitioners should be paid for from Health [care savings] Accounts." Will the Minister of Health unequivocally condemn any suggestion that Albertans should be asked to pay out of pocket to see their family doctor, especially given that this government has made it so much harder for Albertans to see one?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The Premier has been quite clear on this, on the purpose of health spending accounts. The purpose of health spending accounts is to be able to provide coverage for services that are not covered under the Alberta health insurance act. I was very pleased that in September we reached an agreement with the AMA and that agreement was ratified, and this agreement allows us to invest more in our doctors to be able to attract and retain. We have more doctors now than we've ever had in the province. I look forward to continuing to work with them to focus particularly on family doctors, and we can retain more and get better access for . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier was much less clear just a few months ago about these health spending accounts that are outlined in her mandate letter to the Minister of Health so the minister owes it to Albertans to answer to the Premier's well-documented, radical reasoning behind the proposal and given that in discussing HSAs, the Premier openly mused about forcing Albertans to pay a deductible to see a doctor and given that she had also suggested that Albertans in desperate need of care could turn to family members for donations or host a fundraiser, does the minister agree that the Premier's past suggestion that Albertans in need of medical care should be left to rely on a GoFundMe is unacceptable?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat my first answer. The purpose of the health spending account is to enable Albertans to access those services that are not covered by the Alberta health spending act. I want to be crystal clear. Often preventative care doesn't get the attention it deserves. You know, it takes steps to maintain. The health spending account, when we actually get that set up, will provide the opportunity for Albertans to focus on preventive care where they want, just like many Albertans across the province do today through their own health spending accounts through private employers. We want to provide that opportunity to all Albertans.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government did more damage to accessing preventative care than any in Alberta's history – and the questions I'm asking today are based on the Premier's own words from as recently as last July – and given that she clearly advocated for all visits to a family doctor to be paid from AHSAs or, if that presents a burden, Albertans in need of care could beg their employers, their family, or their communities for help and given that Albertans facing an affordability crisis not seen in 40 years shouldn't be forced to also have to pay for care, will the minister state clearly on the record that Albertans will never pay a single cent for public health care that they're currently entitled to under this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, for a third time, just to be clear, the purpose of the health spending account is to cover those items that are not covered under the Alberta health insurance act. I want to be crystal clear about that.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on providing better access to family care. I was very pleased in September to announce the modernizing Alberta's primary care system, a task force to look at where we can learn from around the world to be able to improve access to primary care, access to Indigenous care, and access to rural care. We know that primary care done well will actually help our acute-care system.

### Affordability Plan

**Ms Renaud:** People who have never struggled before are struggling now, and this Finance minister put together an affordability package that leaves out millions of Albertans. Middle-class singles and the working poor get nothing, zero help. Struggling Albertans can't afford groceries, can't afford skyrocketing insurance premiums, have less money in their pockets after years of sneaky UCP income tax increases. To our accountant Minister of Finance: why did this government leave so many Albertans out of this affordability crisis plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While Alberta's economy has recovered strongly, we know that Albertans and their families are struggling. They are challenged every time they leave their homes to get groceries or feed their families or fill up at the gas station. So we've put together an immediate relief package, which provides an estimated \$900 in relief to households with or without children, with or without seniors. In addition to that, we've also put together targeted supports to where they're needed most: to support seniors, vulnerable Albertans, and children for their health and well-being.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government walked into a \$28 billion royalty windfall and couldn't come up with an affordability plan to help all Albertans and given that this government has systematically

harmed disabled and vulnerable Albertans since 2019 and given that after their half-baked new plan an AISH recipient is still \$3,000 worse off than they would have been under an NDP government, to the Minister of Finance: why, with record revenues, is this government still targeting the most vulnerable and people who still can't afford to buy groceries and keep a roof over their heads?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to join my colleagues in announcing the reindexing of core support programs that vulnerable Albertans rely on. These include AISH, income support . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. minister was courteous enough to listen to the question. Perhaps you might do the same for the answer.  
The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I was pleased to join my colleagues in announcing the reindexing of AISH, income support, the Alberta child and family benefit, and the Alberta seniors' benefit. We know that vulnerable Albertans and seniors need the help right now. In addition, we're providing \$600 in targeted supports to recipients of those core support programs to help them get through the worst of this storm.

**Ms Renaud:** Band-Aid on a wound.

Given that this government is so out of touch that they came up with an affordability plan that leaves out millions and given that a recent graduate, someone just starting in their career, is getting hammered by inflation but is getting no support from this government and given that some of the wealthiest Albertans are getting a tax-free cheque while those struggling get nothing, how can this Minister of Finance stand in this House and possibly justify his plan that leaves out so many Albertans who are struggling to make ends meet?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

2:20

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, individual Albertans will benefit from significant broad-based relief. They'll benefit from fuel tax savings every time they fill up. They'll benefit from the electricity rebate, for a total of up to \$500 in relief. We've lowered their income tax. In addition, we just announced further bursaries for low-income students. We've announced an expansion of low-income transit. We will support students. We will support Albertans, individual or not.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Health Care Workforce Supply

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Weekly I hear from individuals in the Camrose constituency that we have a shortage of nurses, and these individuals also do not have a family doctor. They indicate that they have been on a waiting list for months. The Minister of Health held an engagement session in Camrose this summer where local doctors, nurses, and elected officials attended and participated in round-table discussions. To the Minister of Advanced Education: can we have the nursing program reinstated at Augustana campus?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Let me just say on record what an incredibly fierce advocate she is for the community of Camrose.

Mr. Speaker, in the spring we announced in Budget 2022 \$171 million in new funding to create 10,000 additional spaces at our postsecondary institutions. That includes new spaces in nursing, for health care aides, and in paramedicine. I'm continuing to work, though, with the University of Alberta, in particular, with respect to the individual program.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that our government is focused on ensuring accessible health care is available for all Albertans and given that the St. Mary's hospital team has indicated that they are a teaching hospital and given that Augustana campus provided instruction for a nursing program for many years, to the minister: how soon will the University of Alberta be advised that they can reinstate the program at Augustana Camrose?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the University of Alberta has opportunities both now and well into the future. As I mentioned, we recently created a new program to create 10,000 spaces in in-demand postsecondary programs, including in health care related programs. As per the direction provided by Premier Smith in my mandate letter, the Premier has asked us to expand that very successful targeted enrolment program specifically in areas of economic need and health care need. Just as recently as the other day I had a conversation with the president of the University of Alberta, and we're working closely together.

**The Speaker:** I might remind the minister that the use of proper names for any reason is unacceptable.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that many communities in the province are currently suffering from a doctor shortage and given the limits to the volume of Alberta-trained doctors we can produce, to the minister: what is the government's long-term solution to address the shortage of health care workers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to the member. I will agree with my colleague that the Member for Camrose is a fierce advocate.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's health care workers are the best in the world, and we need to make sure that they have the right supports in place to retain the staff that we have now and recruit the additional staff that we need. I was, as I indicated earlier, very pleased that we reached a recent deal with the AMA with over 70 per cent support. That includes incentives to attract new doctors to our province, especially in rural and remote areas. We are also working on a plan with the Minister of Advanced Education and postsecondary institutions to expand the current number of seats for more medical grads in the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is next.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today with great concern about the state of Alberta's classrooms and the education that's being provided in them in turn. It's clear that under the UCP our international reputation and student outcomes are falling further and further behind. Will the Minister of Education tell Albertans why she thinks it's okay for there to be thousands and thousands and thousands of more students going to school while she provides a thousand fewer teachers to actually educate them? Her own budget proves it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I see that the member opposite is unprepared and has not done her homework. In fact, if she had done her homework, she would have realized that we have added \$700 million to the 2022-23 school budget, which actually has increased the number of teachers, over 800 new teachers and over 800 new educational assistants.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the minister's own budget shows that she has a thousand fewer teachers than when she took the office and given that the UCP cut funding from classrooms and student learning has suffered as a result of that and given that the government has now said that schools must provide in-person and online learning simultaneously, without providing any new resources for them to be able to do so, and given that staff burnout is a significant concern – and it's a reality – will the minister tell Alberta students, staff, and families why she's providing no new supports while schools are dealing with widespread chaos and absenteeism?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what fantasyland she's living in, but I can tell you that we have added \$700 million to the overall budget. We actually funded the teacher contract settlement; that's an additional \$205 million over three years. We have added supplemental enrolment funding. We've added fuel contingency funding, Ukrainian student supplemental funding. You know what? School board reserves, operating reserves, have gone from \$264 million to \$464 million.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the minister fired 20,000 education workers via a tweet at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic and many of them were never rehired and given that education funding has been underspent by roughly a billion dollars over the last two years – those are facts from the UCP budget documents – and given that 99 per cent of Alberta teachers don't trust the minister and most were disheartened to see the current Premier decide to keep her in the position, the minister has been a failure . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

**Ms Hoffman:** Teachers don't trust this minister. Parents don't trust this minister. Why did the Premier keep her in the job instead of shaking it up?

**Member LaGrange:** Again, nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I spent all summer, from the end of June to the beginning of October, meeting with school divisions. I met with over 70 school authorities. I actually attended all the AGMs . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member LaGrange:** . . . the Catholic School Trustees' AGM, the francophone AGM, and the Alberta School Boards AGM. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I got a standing ovation by the Alberta School Boards Association. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**Ms Ganley:** The Anarchy Act. A ticking time bomb. A constitutional and economic crisis. Those are some of the ways the ministers in the government cabinet have described the sovereignty act, but I specifically want to ask the now minister of environment if she will support this economically destructive bill, which she herself said would create "instability and chaos"?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt I had grave concerns about the sovereignty act as originally proposed, but as it's drafted now and as it's gone through a caucus process, it's addressed many of those concerns. It follows the rule of law. It's democratic. Everything before it comes before this Chamber. It does not seek to disallow or not follow court judgments. Most importantly, it respects the separation of power between the judiciary and the legislative Chamber.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the Minister of Finance said that the sovereignty act is a ticking time bomb and given that it seems that all UCP MLAs will be whipped to vote in favour of this bill despite the economic chaos and destruction it will cause and given that I am hearing from businesses that are deeply concerned and considering whether they can continue to do business in Alberta if the sovereignty act is passed, will the Minister of Finance stand up against this Premier, who is threatening the economic future of this province?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I did have legitimate concerns over some early renditions of the sovereignty act. Certainly, it's a concern of mine that we maintain a business environment of certainty and predictability, one that attracts investment. This bill has to respect the rule of law, be constitutional, and be implemented in a way that keeps a stable business environment. It will. That's why I'm supporting it.

2:30

**Ms Ganley:** Given that investors are looking for certainty and that they've told me that the sovereignty act creates nothing but chaos and given that I'm already hearing from chambers of commerce, energy companies, innovators, and more that this bill is already having an impact on investments, job creation, and more – and that was before it was even tabled – can the Minister of Energy admit today that if a single investor withholds investment in Alberta as a result of the sovereignty act, he will ignore the Premier's directive and defeat this harmful legislation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what's creating uncertainty today is excessive fearmongering by the members opposite. When they were in office, they raised taxes, they heaped on regulatory burden, and they sent tens of billions of

dollars of capital packing and, with that, tens of thousands of jobs. We've worked hard to position Alberta's economy to be competitive, to attract investment, and to create jobs. That's why Alberta in the last year has created 28 per cent of the jobs in Canada in this province alone.

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

### Queen Elizabeth II Highway 65th Avenue Interchange in Leduc

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly a great day for Albertans and businesses in the capital region. Today the hon. Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors stood with the town of Leduc as they finally broke ground on the much-anticipated QE II and 65th Avenue interchange. Given that this project is one that many individuals and businesses will much appreciate, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors provide the House with some details on when we can expect to see shovels in the ground?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was a great day for the Edmonton region. I was with the Deputy Premier, from Edmonton-South West, as well as the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont, announcing this amazing Leduc intersection and interchange. Graham Construction actually won the contract, and construction is going to happen within days. It is unfortunate, though, because the provincial representatives of the NDP could have asked their leader, Jagmeet Singh, to approve this project through the national trade corridor program, but they didn't, and it got declined.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. That sounds very familiar.

Given that we will see shovels in the ground in a matter of days and given that this project will improve the flow of traffic on Alberta's busiest highway and given that this project will aid businesses and individuals commuting to the Edmonton airport, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please highlight the significance this project will have on Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our economic growth and our economic corridors aren't just rail and road. It's also through the air and our international airports. The Edmonton International Airport: the air cargo capacity that they do is tremendous, and to attract more businesses, more economic growth in the Edmonton region, this was such a key component to that. As well, STARS air ambulance is based on the south side of the airport, so having an additional access to the airport with this investment will just not only go for economic growth but also to help emergency services in the Edmonton region.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the answer. This is incredible news for the capital region's economy.

Given that the interchange will improve access to the shopping centre outside of the airport and given that this project will make it easier for our province's distributors to access cargo centres at the airport and given that these improvements to the QE II will kick-start our economy, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please share the economic benefits that this project will have for our province? [interjections]

**Mr. Dreeshen:** I hear the Edmonton MLAs from the NDP cheering this on – that's great – a \$112 million announcement in the Edmonton region today. Six hundred jobs are going to be supported with this project. We'll see about a 3 per cent increase in cargo trucks every year from this. We're also bringing important services to the Edmonton region. We'll actually see international markets increase by about 4 and a half per cent every year with this announcement and about 6 million hours of commercial traffic to be saved when this project in the Edmonton region is done. So just a great day for Edmonton.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirteen days ago treaty chiefs stood in an unprecedented show of solidarity to oppose this Premier's unconstitutional sovereignty act. Treaty 8's grand chief said that the sovereignty act, quote, undermines the authority and duty of the sovereign nations that entered into treaty. Chief Tony Alexis has called on this government to hold off on passing the sovereignty act until at least after the next election. To the minister: why is he supporting the UCP government forcing through the sovereignty act without any consultation, after all treaty chiefs stood in opposition?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government is standing up for everyone in the province. Indigenous peoples have also faced economic barriers from federal institutions. This act will not change existing treaty or Aboriginal rights that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the sovereignty act will give the Premier and all of her ministers dictatorial power to rewrite laws behind closed doors and given that the UCP government will have power to remove Indigenous rights with as little as a stroke of a pen and that treaty land can be exploited without free and informed consent from the First Nations and given that Chief Alexis stated that this bill sets up the province to allow extraction at any rate, completely unprotected, does the minister really support the sovereignty act, which has the ability to completely erase treaty rights?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Section 2 clearly states that "nothing in this Act is to be construed as . . . abrogating or derogating from any existing aboriginal and treaty rights." That's the first thing in this bill that was put in there. I have met with several First Nation leaders, and I've heard their concerns. We will continue to work with them. We've developed such a good working relationship with them. We've got our Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation working. We're just moving forward with them at all times.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member, with no preamble.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that every single treaty chief opposes the sovereignty act and given that your government is rushing through this piece of dictatorial legislation and ignoring the duty to consult with First Nations and given that now he supports legislation that can remove Indigenous rights and the need for free and informed consent by the whim of this Premier, to the minister: with his failure to consult First Nations on the sovereignty act and now admitting to supporting

the Premier's ability to remove Indigenous rights, does he believe he's capable of continuing to be Minister of Indigenous Relations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we work closely with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. I'm in support of standing up for all Albertans. The federal government: they need to stay in their lane. That's what this is all about. This gives us that tool that we need to defend the interests of all Albertans. This government has been working hard, like I said, with our Indigenous friends out there. A great example of that is our partners in prosperity movement, where we're working hard, and we've got our Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation working, and we've got several new projects coming forward in the new year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Organizational Vaccine Policies and Provincial Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to represent Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, which during the pandemic was able to see 99 per cent vaccination rates. It was a moment of pride for our community. Now, however, it seems like the new Premier, rather than wanting to celebrate this success story, would rather call them to tell them to get in line with her thinking or forget seeing a cent of provincial money as long as she's in that chair. Can the Minister of Justice explain why vaccinated Albertans are being bullied by this Premier, and will he advise the Premier that these types of calls are inappropriate and should stop immediately?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As a government we understand that we are in an endemic phase at this point in time. We have a number of measures in place to be able to support Albertans and support getting through this particular phase in dealing with COVID-19. That includes building capacity in our hospitals. That includes, you know, asking Albertans to make the choice to get vaccinated. We're very pleased to be able to offer a number of bivalent vaccines. That also includes people making the choice about wearing masks, but that is a choice.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this Premier claims that she's standing up against vaccine mandates by claiming that she's calling businesses and withholding their grant funding if they don't cave to her claims and given that, despite her claim, the Arctic Winter Games claim that they never heard from the Premier and that they claim they got their money over two years ago, is this Premier so desperate to maintain control over the base that elected her leader in the UCP that she is inventing instances of threatening event leaders and businesses?

2:40

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, this government is proud of working with partners to promote the maximum participation for Albertans who can benefit from our major sports. In terms of the Winter Games, the Premier was clear: in Alberta we do not prevent any Albertans because of their status of health choices such that they cannot participate in sports. I am proud to tell you that we worked with the organizing committee for this event. They adopted our recommendation, and they removed their obsolete ban.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that, in the Premier's own words, she leveraged \$2 million in provincial funding for the Arctic Winter Games in order to convince them to block their vaccine mandate but given that the Premier, who spent her first week in office apologizing for her words and actions, is still claiming she is calling film sets and other businesses to bring them in line with her whims, can the Minister of Justice confirm if the Premier is actually calling these businesses and commit to getting her to stop, or can he confirm if this is just another fantasy of the Premier?

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to share with Albertans that this government strongly encouraged all Alberta employers with respect to decisions of individuals' choices for their health status. When we listened to public health orders, we consider public health as determined by Alberta Health Services and Alberta's chief medical officer. When it comes to individuals' choice for their health in terms of vaccine status, that's something between their doctors and themselves. We won't interfere with that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a question.

### Spinal Muscular Atrophy Treatment

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you become a parent, life as you know it is over. That may sound harsh, but I challenge anyone who has children to think that anything is more important than their children's well-being and their safety. When you have a sick child, parents, family, and friends stop at nothing to help them. One such family are the Hankis. Their little girl, Harper, has spinal muscular atrophy. Through the miracle of modern medicine and a proverbial village, a life-saving gene therapy treatment was made available for Harper last year. However, additional medications such as risdiplam or Evrysdi are now needed to maintain and further improve Harper's quality of life. To the Minister of Health: can you please advise if medicine for Harper is approved for any additional funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for the question. I agree with the hon. member that the health and well-being of children is the main focus of every parent, especially when they are sick. I was very pleased that Zolgensma is covered for eligible Albertans up to six months old, as of December 1, 2021. This one-dose therapy is truly a miracle of modern science, and I'm glad that we can provide it under the rare disease drug program going forward.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister. Given that Harper has had noticeable improvements with her treatments and given that her family and the generosity of others have paid for the treatment plan to date and given that the available funds are running out and the little girl's health will slowly decline without her medication and given that there is a long review process determining potential for treatment subsidies, could the minister please explain what support is available for Harper's family, if they can continue to provide Harper with her essential treatments?

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again to the member, Mr. Speaker. Right now there are three covered treatments for spinal muscular atrophy, and each has its own requirement for coverage. Currently the clinical evidence does not support the combination of these

treatments. However, there is a process available for Albertans to apply for exceptional coverage through their primary care provider. If there is evidence to support the request, the exemption may be granted, and the coverage would be extended. I feel for every family experiencing these problems and hope we can find long-term solutions to SMA and other rare diseases in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the member.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you, Minister, for the work on this. Given that the clinical evidence from Harper's doctors has been outstanding on her improvements and given that I've met this little girl and her family several times over the years and I've witnessed her progress personally and given that these treatments are approved in the United States by a number of medical plans that cover the costs, to the same minister: can you please clarify if there's a possibility of using Harper Hanki's current treatment plan perhaps in concert with the manufacturer's medication to offer critical data that could help others while also starting the process to look at this as a treatment option?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the member. The treatment of rare diseases in Alberta needs a comprehensive approach. We need a plan to help fast-track approvals of new drugs and therapies that can result in these life-changing outcomes. New research is constantly emerging, and we need to make sure our coverage reacts to the changing needs of Albertans and does this quickly. That's why we are developing a strategy for the evaluation and approval of rare disease drug treatments within the province, and I'll share more about this initiative in the near future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period, and we will be proceeding immediately to the remainder of the members' statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

#### Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past July we welcomed the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region to Alberta. PNWER's 31st Annual Summit, hosted in Calgary, was one of the organization's most successful in history. As now past president of PNWER I cherished the opportunity to showcase my city and our remarkable province to over 600 legislators, business leaders, academics, and policy-makers while highlighting local success stories and cohosting a much-heralded visit to the oil sands.

PNWER includes elected and business leaders from 10 provinces, states, and territories. I am proud to announce that all jurisdictions were represented at this year's summit, and I am grateful to have worked closely with the private sector and academics in strengthening the many long-standing relationships through PNWER.

Mr. Speaker, the United States is our closest neighbour, friend, and ally, but we must not take this all-important relationship for granted. We must work hard in finding common ground, in building trust, and on more effective and enduring engagement on issues of mutual importance.

In these times of geopolitical uncertainty we are reminded of increasingly unpredictable influences on our security and economic stability, and while short-term priorities of our nations may differ,

our unique and cherished relationship as secure, friendly, and trusted trading partners, with over \$1 trillion in bilateral trade in 2021, is of vital importance to all Albertans. Our commitment to North American security through NATO, NORAD, and Five Eyes also reflects our mutual concerns around continental defence and shared commitment to global peace and security.

For over 30 years PNWER has contributed to strengthening our regional economy through 19 multisectoral working groups, the enduring impact of their Legislative Energy Horizon Institute, emergent collaboration on energy security and sustainability, or just the ability to pick up the phone and call a friend across the border.

Mr. Speaker, when we reflect upon the values and vision we share with our American friends through PNWER and other organizations promoting bilateral prosperity and security, we embrace a subject that we share in this Chamber, that every Albertan is supported in achieving their best.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and Deputy Government House Leader.

#### Northern Alberta Land-use Planning

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Trudeau and the federal government are at it again. They make an agreement with the province and then find another angle to try and interfere with provincial jurisdiction.

This time it's in the form of providing federal funding to pursue a feasibility study in regard to what is called an Indigenous protected conservation area, or IPCA. There are two proposals being looked at that have northern Albertans very concerned. One, in the Wolf Lake area, covers over 11 townships of land within the MD of Bonnyville and Lakeland provincial park. That's over a thousand square kilometres. The main problem with the feasibility study is that it provides zero details as to what restrictions the IPCA could put in place. Will it restrict access for hunting and recreation, could it restrict access for some groups for traditional use, or is it just intended to interfere with oil and gas and forestry? That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. No one can provide that information.

Our government just completed extensive committee meetings with all stakeholders in the Cold Lake caribou subregion, which includes the area in question. The recommendation from that work, which includes extensive habitat restoration and protection, resulted in the Cold Lake subregional plan, which was accepted by the federal government, who then signed a section 11 agreement under the Species at Risk Act agreeing that jurisdiction remains in the hands of the provincial government.

Now the Trudeau Liberals are using the Metis Settlements General Council in an effort to further interfere with provincial jurisdiction by providing this funding. This proposed IPCA and total lack of information provided by the hired consultant group are causing a lot of concern for many people in the region and indeed all over the province. If Mr. Trudeau was really concerned about helping our Métis settlements, maybe providing funding for much-needed infrastructure, fresh drinking water, and housing would be better.

Canada's provincial Crown lands and parks must remain under the jurisdiction of the province they are located in. Alberta's Crown lands and provincial parks are public lands and will remain so. Nice try, Justin. Alberta will not give up sovereignty over provincial Crown lands or parks.

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give oral notice of Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022, sponsored by myself, the Member for Peace River.

2:50

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time under Standing Order 42 I intend to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge the following: (a) Alberta is facing a crisis in children's health care that has resulted in unacceptable emergency room wait times, capacity issues, and surgical cancellations to the point that a trailer is now being established next to the Alberta Children's hospital to provide health care; (b) wait times at the Alberta Children's hospital and the Stollery children's hospital have exceeded 15 hours on multiple occasions; (c) the families of sick children impacted with COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus, and influenza have been facing a prolonged shortage of children's pain and fever-reducing medication, which adds to the stress, discomfort, and pressure of an already difficult situation; (d) the government's reduction of funding for education programs has led to 1,000 fewer teachers and thousands fewer educational assistants being employed by Alberta schools, which has made the challenges of dealing with schoolchildren's widespread illnesses more difficult to deal with at a local level.

Be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Alberta (a) to acknowledge the impact these delays and the lack of access to basic health care services are having on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children and their families and (b) to immediately table in the Legislature an action plan to address the crisis in children's health care.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a tabling.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter that I sent earlier this week to Alberta school trustees outlining things that they have told me are deep concerns and things that we will do to address them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a tabling.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three copies of an e-mail that was sent to my office and to the Minister of Education. It's just a tragic story about children catching COVID at school and passing it on to their mother, who has metastatic cancer and is not doing well as a result. This constituent is asking me to encourage the Minister of Education to read her multiple e-mails.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In a new session it's absolutely my pleasure to introduce five copies of the Leap Manifesto, of which one of the main signatories is the NDP socialist caucus.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling today. I rise to table six copies of the House leaders' agreement which was signed on November 28, 2022.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, the 2022-23 mid-year fiscal update and economic statement, November 2022.

On behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association 2021 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in light of the Standing Order 42 and the possibility that unanimous consent may in fact be granted, which would set aside the regular business of the day to proceed immediately to Standing Order 42, we will now proceed to the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees.

### Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 58(2) nominations are invited for the office of the Deputy Chair of Committees for the 30th Legislature. The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the Deputy Chair of Committees is one that serves a vital function in this Assembly as it maintains order and honours tradition and decorum. I believe that the person best suited for this role is one who is familiar with House proceedings, a member in good standing, and one who has proven to be fair to all. That's why today I am honoured to nominate the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, Roger Reid, for this role.

Over the past three years I have seen first-hand that Roger has proven attentive to every position he has held while being a mentor to those around him. Roger is respected amongst all . . .

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Mr. Long:** My apologies. The Member for Livingstone-Macleod is respected amongst all members of our caucus and many members of the opposition caucus and has a deep admiration for our parliamentary process and the historical traditions of this House. He also happens to be the representative for one of the top five most beautiful constituencies in the province.

Over the last two years this member has stepped up to fill the roles of chair and Speaker in an unofficial capacity. I'm truly confident that given his experience and dedication he would fulfill the role of Deputy Chair of Committees with dignity, confidence, and respect for all members of this Assembly. I encourage all members to support him in his quest to serve this great Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Does the member wish to accept the nomination?

**Mr. Reid:** I do.

**The Speaker:** It felt like we were getting married there.

Are there other nominations? The hon. Official Opposition House Leader has a nomination.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, all members of this Assembly. We know how important the office of the Speaker and the Speaker's team are. The Deputy Chair of Committees is an important piece of that work, managing the business that we conduct here in this Chamber, ensuring the privileges of all members are protected.

An important part of that work is maintaining a nonpartisan office of the Speaker to ensure that functioning of our Assembly, to ensure

order and decorum. For that reason, we see in other parliaments and in other Legislatures a common practice of choosing members of the Speaker's team from multiple parties within the Legislature. Canada's House of Commons has frequently used that practice, in their case choosing the Deputy Speaker from the opposition caucus. Not only does this contribute to the good functioning of the House, but it also ensures nonpartisan functioning of the House. So I'm asking all members of this Assembly to set aside partisanship in considering for the nomination of Deputy Chair of Committees the MLA for Edmonton-Manning.

The MLA for Edmonton-Manning has the experience of presiding over this Assembly as its chair. In fact, this MLA served in the 29th Legislature as the Deputy Chair of Committees. She has a wealth of experience and a true desire to serve this Assembly impartially and with the considerable grace and wisdom that she has shown throughout her time as an elected official here. We have seen her ably representing our Assembly at Speakers' conferences in the past and working across the aisle in both her critic roles and in her role as the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, supporting her constituents. I know that she would add excellent qualifications to the Speaker's team and that she would serve with credit this entire Assembly. The MLA for Edmonton-Manning also comes from Alberta's capital region. I think that having regional representation within the Speaker's team is something that should be considered as we make this nomination and as we make our choice in the election of Deputy Chair of Committees.

Please consider making the office of the Speaker and the Speaker's team a little bit sweeter and voting for the MLA for Edmonton-Manning. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning wish to accept the nomination?

**Ms Sweet:** I do accept the nomination.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to declare nominations closed. Are there others?

I declare nominations closed. The nominations for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees – this is the one time in which I am officially allowed – are the Member for Edmonton-Manning, Heather Sweet, and the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, Roger Reid.

I will briefly provide the parameters in which the voting process will take place. The doors to the Chamber will remain secured during the voting process. Members will proceed from their desks to pick up a ballot here from the table officers. Members will then proceed to one of the four voting booths that will be placed on the table before me. Members will indicate their choice for Deputy Chair of Committees by printing the proper name, first and last, of the candidate whose name appears on the posted list, which will be in the voting booth. Members deposit their completed ballot in the box provided for them at the Sergeant-at-Arms' desk. Members will return to their desks after casting their vote.

Once all members have voted, the table officers will retire with the ballot box to count the ballots, accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms, who will act as a scrutineer. When results have been tabulated, the table officers will return to the Chamber, and the bell will be rung for one minute. During the period of time in which the table officers and the Sergeant-at-Arms are counting the ballots, members may leave the Chamber but need to return to the Chamber at the completion of the one-minute bell.

The voting process will begin immediately following the set-up of the voting booths and the ballot box.

3:00

[The lists of candidates were posted]

**The Speaker:** The voting process will now begin.

[Members voted from 3 p.m. to 3:07 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

Have all members who wished to cast a ballot done so?

I declare the voting process closed.

Would the Clerk, Sergeant-at-Arms, and table officers please count the ballots and report back to the Assembly.

[Ballots were counted from 3:07 p.m. to 3:16 p.m.]

**The Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, 77; the number of spoiled ballots, zero; the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 39. The member having received the majority of the votes cast is Mr. Reid. Mr. Reid is hereby the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 30th Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed to the remaining business of the Assembly, I would invite the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod to say a few words if he wishes. The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am truly humbled, and through you I want to say thank you to the members of this Legislature for their confidence and their trust. I look forward to serving this House and the people of Alberta as the Deputy Chair of Committees.

Thank you.

## Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to proceed to Standing Order 42. I understand that some members may be leaving the Chamber. Out of respect to the hon. member, please do so quickly, quietly, and promptly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

## Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion that is urgent and pressing and which I read out under Notices of Motions. I'd like to acknowledge that pursuant to Standing Order 42 I've provided the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies, and I've provided your office notice of my intention to move this motion as well as notified the government.

Mr. Speaker, it's our duty as representatives in this Assembly to address the urgent crisis in children's health care. As the motion indicates, children and their families are experiencing significant anxiety and greater illness and pain because of the pressures in the health care system.

The spread of COVID-19, RSV, and the flu has led to significant illness among children across the province. This has caused both significant absenteeism in school and pressure on the health care system. There have continually been over 15-hour wait times at the children's hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary. A temporary trailer was just set up in Calgary to increase the room for children waiting for care. Families have been advised to go see their family doctor instead of coming to the emergency room, but hundreds of



thousands of Alberta families can't find a family doctor, so they have no place to go. The increased need for emergency care has caused children's surgeries to be cancelled. Clearly, this is not what we as legislators want the state of health care to be in our province, which is why we should have a fulsome debate today about what actions we can take to relieve this pressure and support children and families.

I know health care workers and providers are doing the best they can with the support that they have, but unfortunately health care workers have too often been blamed during the pandemic. The spread of misinformation and an active combative approach of some members of the government have significantly lowered morale of health care workers. As the pressures in children's hospitals increase, more staff will be expected to work more and at times cancel planned time off over the holidays. This is already taking place in the Children's hospital in Calgary. I believe we have a duty to all health care workers to tell them that those of us elected to represent Albertans support them, that we respect them, and that we are actively working towards solutions to this urgent health care crisis.

3:20

But we, of course, have a duty as well to children and their families to have this debate. A constituent of mine named Lindsey Kemp joined me earlier today, whose son needed to go to the Stollery many times in his young life. In fact, she described it as having lived there with him, with her son, for over a year in between two heart transplants before the age of five. She knows the situation in the Children's hospital as well, and it is clear that the current situation is not okay and must be addressed. Lindsey was brave to speak out today on behalf of her son and other children in similar situations.

I sincerely hope that the government members opposite will have the courage today to debate and speak to this urgent matter. I can think of nothing more important than the health of children across the province that we represent. Addressing children's health is far more important than Bill 1, which is already ridden with controversy in the powers that this government is giving to themselves. I want all members of this Chamber to think where their priorities lie and what they want to advance today. Is it an undemocratic bill, or is it supporting children and their families? Parents in this province right now are anxious, they're stressed out, they're worried, and for many of their children they are not getting the health care they need.

As a parent, Mr. Speaker, I can say from first-hand experience that I know the fear of when my child was sick – she had a fever for eight days straight – and I'm thinking that the last thing I want to do is seek emergency health care right now because I'm worried about taking my child to a children's hospital and the wait times. No parent should be afraid to actually go access emergency health care. They should be able to know that when they need it for their child, they will get it immediately.

We know that they'll get the best care possible from our health care workers, who are fantastic and have done incredible work, but right now parents and children are not accessing the health care system because they cannot. That is a crisis that we should all take incredibly seriously, and we should have this debate. I urge the members of the government to take that to heart and to have this discussion today in this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 42 allows for a member of Executive Council to respond for up to five minutes should they wish to do so. The hon. Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this issue. This is a very important issue. As I've said before in this Chamber, our emergency departments are under

strain, as they are across the entire country. As you read in the paper and as mentioned by the hon. member across the aisle, we are seeing an early flu season, and patients coming to emergency, as I indicated before, are sicker on average, partly because so much routine care was deferred over the last couple of years.

But we are responding. We have a plan, and we are acting on that plan, Mr. Speaker. We are spending a record \$22 billion this year, the highest amount ever, for our health care expenses. In addition to that, on top of the \$22 billion, there are also additional dollars for getting caught up on surgeries and for our COVID response. We're using this money to add capacity across our entire health care system.

Now, Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary is seeing a surge of patients in recent weeks, like other children's hospitals across our country, and they're responding to that surge of patients by adding capacity. That's part of the additional \$600 million and that \$22 billion that we are putting into health care this year. They've added a new fast-track unit to be able to do treatment and triage as well, and they're working to add staff to open up other care spaces as well. They've also added the heated trailer, as mentioned by the member opposite, so kids and families don't have to wait outside at peak times, Mr. Speaker. That's a good initiative. It's part of our overall approach to add capacity, and it's a very small part of the work that we're doing not only in the Children's hospital but across our entire health care system.

Mr. Speaker, just this morning I was at the Misericordia hospital for an event celebrating a new emergency department that will be opened next year, three times the size of the existing one. I want to thank all physicians and nurses and health care workers and professionals and volunteers for the work that they're doing to look after Alberta patients and particularly for kids in emergency and across our entire health care system. They are under strain. They need relief, and we are working to provide that. I think that they would also want me to reassure parents that the health system is there for sick kids.

The two children's hospitals are near 100 per cent occupancy overall, as are a number of our major urban hospitals at certain times when, you know, we hit the peak flu season, like we are right now. They are adding staff to be able to respond to these needs. The children's ICU is very busy, most recently under 100 per cent of normal capacity, and they have had to transfer a few patients out, but they are able to provide care to the sickest kids that need the care. Quite frankly, it's recognizing that we need to do more, but our ICUs are holding up better with less disruption than we're seeing in other provinces relative to the demands right now.

In surgery we're doing similar volumes compared to before the pandemic, and access is similar in terms of the percentage of children waiting longer than the recommended time. Now, this is still too long, Mr. Speaker, but we are continuing to be able to provide surgeries across the system, including for children. There are postponements here and there on a tactical basis, but we are providing the service. Quite frankly, even though we know we need to do better, we are doing much better than other provinces, where the national average is far worse than we have here.

It's been a tough two years, and it's going to be another tough winter, Mr. Speaker, but we are taking steps to address the challenges being faced in our emergency departments and being faced in our children's hospitals. We are funding to add additional capacity. We made the recent change in terms of appointing an official administrator, and this administrator is full-time focused on supporting our senior executives within AHS to be able to deliver the services that Albertans need, with a particular focus on emergency departments. We know this is an area of critical concern, and we will drive those times down. There are a number of initiatives as part of that in terms of not only improving triage services and improving access to – or allowing 911 operators to move people to 811 in terms of demand management but also improve the

flow throughout the entire system and have other areas for alternate levels of care so we can actually treat people faster.

Mr. Speaker, we are working on this. We are investing in our health care system. We have appointed a new official administrator, who's bringing a number of initiatives in place. We have a plan. We're enacting a plan. We are going to deliver on that plan, so at this point we do not need an emergency debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day Government Motions

2. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(a).

[Government Motion 2 carried]

### Fall Sitting

4. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2022 fall sitting is extended until either of the following occurs, immediately after which the Assembly stands adjourned:  
(a) the end of the day on December 22, 2022;  
(b) the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 3(9).

[Government Motion 4 carried]

3. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to His Majesty.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(a).

[Government Motion 3 carried]

### Evening Sitings

6. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) and for the duration of the 2022 fall sitting of the Fourth Session of the 30th Legislature the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 4(1).

[Government Motion 6 carried]

### 3:30 Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1 Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier, the President of Executive Council, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Relations.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's been quite a spectacle to return to this honoured Chamber over the last 24 hours. I don't know that I've ever seen anything like it: to have the first reading of a first bill not only voted against before it was even presented to the Legislature but to have a standing vote on division just to try to demonstrate that there was some rancour in our ranks.

Then, you know, that wasn't enough. To also then see the opposition go and clearly not read the bill when they had the opportunity to and try to get informed about it by Twitter and get so many things wrong that I'll have to correct in my speech today but then quite an unprecedented response from the Leader of the Official Opposition, to actually call upon the federal government to disallow this bill should it pass. It's quite remarkable when you hear that among the many expected things of the sovereignty act this week, even the media is outraged by this. Here's an ex-Premier who wants her job back encouraging a Prime Minister to disallow future provincial law.

I must tell you that this is exactly the reason why we're putting this law forward in the first place, because of federal intrusion into our affairs and the fact that we have to push them back into their own lane. I'm quite surprised, actually, that the members opposite have not taken a page from their namesake party in Saskatchewan, which voted in favour of a very similar bill called the Saskatchewan First Act. They are not fearmongering about it. They are recognizing that this is essentially asserting the way our country ought to operate, and I'm delighted that the Premier of Saskatchewan has acted in this regard. I think it's actually a testament to the opposition in that province that they realize that they must put their citizens first. I have to question whether this opposition puts Albertans first or whether they put the view of the leader of their federal party and the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa first. That is what is going to be decided as we move forward over these next coming months.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Since it's clear that many members of this Chamber have not read the bill, let me go through and talk about why it is that we are proposing Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. I think one of the misconceptions that had been put forward was that this had something to do with leaving Canada. Nothing could be further from the truth. What we are simply asking for is to have the same power and the same respect that Ottawa gives to Quebec. Nothing more, nothing less.

Let me go through a little bit about why it is that I believe that this is necessary. I have seen this from having travelled this province for many months. Albertans love our province, and they love this country. Canada is our home. Canadians are our family. This has nothing to do with our fellow Canadians. This has everything to do about an out-of-control federal government that does not honour the foundational documents that this country was built on. They are constantly intervening in our areas of sovereign jurisdiction. Yes, I use that term advisedly because that is how our Constitution is written. We are demanding action so that Ottawa respects Alberta's sovereign areas of provincial jurisdiction as defined by the Constitution and demanding that – and I think Albertans expect us to uphold the fact that we are

signatory to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and make sure that we are upholding those as well.

Unfortunately, the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa is systematically and intentionally undermining and attempting to control all aspects of our province's economy, how we develop our resources, and even how we manage our social programs. Through equalization transfers they overtax our province massively, and then they dribble a little bit back to us with conditions over how we're supposed to spend it. On top of that, they take the rest so that they can buy votes in areas in eastern Canada where they think that they're going to have more luck in winning seats. It is a black hole, the federal bureaucracy, and Albertans have had enough of it. The continued federal attacks on our economy and province cannot be allowed to continue, and the Canadian Constitution is clear.

Let me go through and establish the framework for why it is we're putting the bill forward this way because I think it will answer some of the questions of the critics. It says:

Whereas Albertans possess a unique culture and shared identity within Canada;

Whereas it is the role of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to preserve and promote this unique culture and shared identity;

Whereas the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 are foundational documents that establish the rights and freedoms of Albertans and the relationship between the provincial and federal orders of government, including the division of legislative powers between them;

Whereas the Province of Alberta is granted rights and powers under the Constitution Act, 1867 . . . 1930 and . . . 1982 and is not subordinate to the Government of Canada;

Whereas actions taken by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada have infringed on these sovereign provincial rights and powers with increasing frequency and have unfairly prejudiced Albertans;

Whereas actions taken by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada have infringed on the rights and freedoms of Albertans enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in an unjustified and unconstitutional manner;

Whereas the people of Alberta expect the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada to respect the Constitution . . . as the governing documents of the relationship between Canada and Alberta and to abide by the division of powers and other provisions set out in those documents;

Whereas the people of Alberta expect the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada to respect the rights and freedoms of Albertans enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and

Whereas it is necessary and appropriate for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to set out measures that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should consider taking in respect of actions of the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada that are unconstitutional or harmful to Albertans and for Members of the Legislative Assembly . . . to have a free vote on such measures according to their individual judgment.

There are a couple of things here that I think are important. Number one, it lays out that we are proposing to pass legislation that is in compliance with the foundational documents of our country. Voting against this is like voting against our Constitution. Asking the federal government to disallow this is like asking them to disallow and override our constitutional protections in the Constitution, and it is not appropriate.

The other thing I'd say is a word about "sovereign," because I think that's what many people are reacting to. Maybe it's because I have had the opportunity of taking the oath of office in the position I'm now in as well as the oath of office, just yesterday, as MLA for

Brooks-Medicine Hat. I have given out diamond jubilee medals in honour of Her Majesty. We saw yesterday a Speech from the Throne given by the Lieutenant Governor, who is the representative of His Majesty.

When you look at even the way in which this bill is enacted, it says: "Therefore His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, enacts as follows." This very document shows that we have a direct sovereign right that is granted to us on behalf of His Majesty. I am not and we are not seeking permission from Ottawa to exert our influence. We do not have to ask for permission from Ottawa, and it's because we have these sovereign rights.

Let me tell you a little bit about where that comes from. When NAFTA was passed, in 1993, there were a number of academic papers that were talking about the application of trade law in Canada at the time. I'd like to quote from a 1994 essay in the *Canada-United States Law Journal* titled *Sovereignty and Federalism: The Canadian Perspective*. It outlines clearly how the provinces and the federal government have equal legislating authority. Here's what they say:

The concept of sovereignty in the Canadian federalist context has more than one application. As a result of the Constitution Act, which distributes legislative powers between provincial legislatures and the federal parliament, it is appropriate to speak not only of the sovereignty of Canada, but of the separate sovereignty of each province within its sphere of legislative jurisdiction.

So this is not an unfamiliar concept. The outsized reaction to what it is that we are proposing is the only thing that is unusual here. That's why I think it's important for people to understand why it is we have to make a different approach.

**3:40**

Let me go through and tell you what I have observed over the last number of years, because I think that for too long what has happened is that we have allowed the federal government to interfere in our areas of jurisdiction. Maybe it was because we were a young province. Maybe we had a low population. Maybe we felt that we could use the extra hand. Maybe it was because the federal government was actually helpful at different periods through its history, but the last seven years, under the Liberal-NDP government that we now see at the federal level, have become anything but that, anything but helpful.

As we have grown in population, what we have seen is that Ottawa is actively sabotaging our economy and damaging our prospects for growth at the same time that it's overtaxing us. This is, I think, underscored by the fact that three times we have tried to do things the way we normally do them, which is polite and diplomatic and writing letters and going to conferences and begging and pleading for them to just honour our jurisdiction, and look what's occurred.

First, the Leader of the Official Opposition, when she was in this position, attempted to get social licence. How did that work out for us? We got a carbon tax, that we now can't get rid of and which is now going to grow by 300 per cent, that is underscoring the cost of every single thing every single family has to buy. I've been waiting to see the Official Opposition leader call out and object to that increase, because they care so much about affordability. We haven't seen it. But why do we have a carbon tax in the first place? It's because they paved the way for it.

We also saw an early phase-out of coal-fired electricity. I've talked to somebody in the industry. They say that that premature decision cost us \$4 billion, that had to be made up in the power bills of everyday Albertans. You're wondering why we have an

electricity price crisis; that's part of the reason for it. There was one plant, Keephills, that was closed within years of it being opened even though it was supposed to have a much longer time horizon. That was a decision that was made to try to get social licence.

Thirdly, a cap on our oil sands producers. Well, look at what that got us. Not only did it give a bad idea to the current environment minister; he is now proposing an aggressive target, that we certainly cannot meet, increasing the expectation that emissions will be reduced 42 per cent by 2030, eight short years. An emissions cap that aggressive without the technology able to implement it is a de facto production cap, and it is against the Constitution because it violates our foundational rights to be able to determine how we develop our own resources.

That is what we tried to do. We tried to get social licence, and what do we get instead? Well, Trudeau responded by giving us a ban on tanker traffic, Bill C-48, which is targeting our industry in particular; what we've been calling the no-more-pipelines act, Bill C-69, that really is: you can't build anything anywhere in Alberta without federal approval. It's why we are fighting it, and it's why all of the provinces have joined with us. Then we saw the cancellation of Northern Gateway, Energy East, Teck Frontier mine, and well over \$100 billion of other projects. That's what happened when we tried to seek and curry favour with the federal government.

Next, the former Premier thought: "Well, maybe I'll pay a courtesy visit to Quebec. Maybe we can see if we can get some buy-in on exporting western Canadian natural gas through ports on the coast in Quebec, from LNG facilities there." Quebec initially said yes, but most recently, earlier this year, they responded by cancelling the Port Saguenay LNG project and banning future oil and natural gas development in their own province. There are Alberta-based companies that now have claims of billions of dollars against the Quebec government on the basis of those cancelled leases. That's what happened when we tried once again to seek some kind of bilateral agreement with Quebec. It failed.

Thirdly, I remember the precise moment that Albertans lost support for equalization. It was when it became clear that there was – Premier François Legault was asked the question about supporting the recommissioning of the Energy East pipeline, and he said to Alberta: we don't want your dirty oil. A couple of days later, there was extra money left over in the equalization fund, and the Finance minister at the time, Bill Morneau, gave a billion dollars to Quebec. The message to Albertans was pretty clear: we don't want you to have economic prosperity, but keep the dollars rolling. That is the reason why there was such a strong mandate to end equalization. When it went to the public, 62 per cent of the public said to end it.

The answer from the federal government – and I think we went out there hoping that this would be the final opportunity to start a constructive conversation with the federal government about how we could change our bilateral relationship, how we could work together to develop our resources. What did we get instead? We got environment minister Steven Guilbeault, who has waged an unceasing attack on our province ever since that decision. When you look at the policies that he has proposed, he wants to see an end to any fossil fuel based power on the electrical grid by 2035. This is a province where 90 per cent of our electricity grid is powered by natural gas. Almost a hundred per cent of our home heating is powered by fossil fuels. This is the approach they're taking at the federal level. Then on top of that, as I've mentioned, is the production limit cap that he wants to put on oil and natural gas.

That's not all. Now he's attacking our farmers with a similar aggressive emissions reduction proposal to reduce emissions 30 per cent in a similar time frame. It's the same problem. If you do not

have the technology and you do not have a realistic time frame, an emissions cap like this operates as a production cap. It's a violation of our right under section 92A to develop our own resources.

Enough is enough. We have been a constructive province, and the response has been continued disrespect and a continued drain of our resources. Since the 1960s we have seen \$600 billion leave this province to go and fund federal priorities, and this is the reason why we're putting Ottawa on notice. We are not going to do this anymore. This is not going to be the way that our province relates to the federal government. We are telling Ottawa that we intend to return to the law that governed our relationship, the Constitution. We will not enforce federal laws that violate the sovereign powers granted to us under sections 92 through 95 of the Constitution or that violate the rights and freedoms of our citizens guaranteed by the Charter.

Now, I happen to have the sections of the Constitution with me because I think maybe I spend more time reading the Constitution – Madam Speaker, maybe it helps to get to sleep at night, but I've read the Constitution quite a bit over the last number of months. Let me tell you how the distribution of legislative powers is defined in the Constitution under section 91. This is the language that is in our Constitution.

#### Powers of the Parliament

##### Legislative Authority of Parliament of Canada

91 It shall be lawful for the [King], by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate and House of Commons, to make Laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada, in relation to all Matters not coming within the Classes of Subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces; and for greater Certainty, but not so as to restrict the Generality of the foregoing Terms of this Section, it is hereby declared that (notwithstanding anything in this Act) the exclusive Legislative Authority of the Parliament of Canada extends to all Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next hereinafter enumerated; that is to say . . .

I am not proposing that we take over any areas of federal jurisdiction. They have jurisdiction over, as it says here, "the Public Debt and Property" and "the Regulation of Trade and Commerce." Boy, I wish they'd do a better job at that, in getting our products to market rather than blocking them. They talk about the ability to raise money by any mode or system of taxation and the borrowing of money on the public credit – gosh, I do wish I had control over that one, too, because I can tell you that we wouldn't be having the inflation crisis that we have today – the postal service; the census and statistics; the militia, military; the fixing of and providing for the salaries of the civil service; beacons, buoys, and lighthouses; navigation; sea coast; ferries; currency, exchange, banking, and coinage; savings banks; weights and measures; interest; copyrights; bankruptcy and insolvency; and so on and so forth.

These are not things that are contemplated under this legislation because I respect the sovereign areas of federal jurisdiction. I have no desire to, for instance, go and open up passport offices although I think that's probably a job that we would do better than the federal government right now, too. We expect that the federal government – in fact, I think they might do a better job in their areas of jurisdiction if they focused on them rather than intervening in our areas of jurisdiction every chance they get.

Let me continue on, then, so that we understand the framework for how our legislation is written. We are not going to interfere with federal jurisdiction. We are just asking them to stay in their own lane and get out of our jurisdiction. What is our jurisdiction? Pretty much, well, anything else you can think of:

Such Classes of Subjects as are expressly excepted in the Enumeration of the Classes of Subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces.

There's that word again. That's the indicator that we do have sovereign power. It is because these powers are given to us exclusively. It says that

any Matter coming within any of the Classes of Subjects enumerated in this Section shall not be deemed to come within the Class of Matters of a local or private Nature comprised in the Enumeration of Classes of Subjects by this Act assigned exclusively . . .

There it is again.

. . . to the Legislatures of the Provinces.

Here it is.

#### Exclusive Powers of Provincial Legislatures

##### Subjects of exclusive Provincial Legislation

92 In each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next hereinafter enumerated; that is to say . . .

Direct taxation. The borrowing of money. We have the ability to manage the sale of public lands belonging to the province and the timber and wood thereon. We have the ability to establish and maintain prisons. We have the ability to establish and maintain hospitals and the health system. Municipal institutions fall under our jurisdiction. Shops and other licences to generate revenue fall under our jurisdiction. Local works and undertakings fall under our jurisdiction. The solemnization of marriage. Property and civil rights in the province fall under our jurisdiction, section 13. The administration of justice, including the courts. We also have "generally" – a catch-all – "all matters of a merely local or private nature in the province" are our exclusive jurisdiction.

#### 3:50

It goes on:

Non-renewable Natural Resources, Forestry Resources and Electrical Energy

This is so important it has its own section in the Constitution.

92A. (1) In each province, the Legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to

- (a) exploration for non-renewable natural resources in the province;
- (b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources in the province, including laws in relation to the rate of primary production therefrom; and
- (c) development, conservation and management of sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of electrical energy.

Do you see why Bill C-69 interferes in every possible way in this foundational principle of our Constitution? That is what we are trying to return to.

We also have the right for export from our province of our resources.

(2) In each province, the legislature may make laws in relation to the export from the province to another part of Canada of the primary production from non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources . . . and the production from facilities in the province

that generate electrical power. The only proviso is that we can't charge a discriminatory price to our neighbours.

So this is the framework for how our country is supposed to work.

We have a whole section on education.

##### Legislation respecting Education

93 In and for each province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education . . .

There are a few provisions that that is subject to.

There's also section 94 that deals with just our friends in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

Section 94A gives the federal government some – it says that they may make laws in relation to old age pensions and supplementary benefits, including survivors' and disability benefits irrespective

of age, but no such law shall affect the operation of any law present or future of a provincial legislature in relation to any such matter.

We have the ability to have our own laws around old age pension and supplementary benefits.

Section 95: this is concurrent powers of the legislation on agriculture and immigration.

In each Province the Legislature may make Laws in relation to Agriculture in the Province, and to Immigration into the Province; and it is hereby declared that the Parliament of Canada may from Time to Time make Laws in relation to Agriculture in all or any of the Provinces, and to Immigration into all or any of the Provinces . . .

This, to me, I think, is also – we should take this under advisement. We have essentially abrogated our own duty, I think, to manage these areas. I think the federal government is only supposed to be there from time to time, and we've allowed them to take over the entire area.

I should also mention, because it may have been a while since folks have read the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to which we are also a signatory means that we are obliged to also protect the foundational rights and freedoms of our citizenry, and this is how it is framed:

Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law . . . the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights . . . set out in it subject to only such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Now, I've talked to the last living signatory of this document, Brian Peckford, and he says that this is what gets violated all the time. When governments take action to violate rights, it must be demonstrably justified. They must demonstrate that it was justifiable to do, and I think that that is where the federal government fails on so many fronts when it violates our rights.

I should also mention section 2 here.

##### Fundamental freedoms

2 Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association.

We also, under section 6, have right to mobility.

6(1) Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada.

We have rights to move around and gain a livelihood.

(2) Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right

- (a) to move [around] and take up residence in any province; and
- (b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province.

That's been violated so many times in the last two and half years.

We also have legal rights, the rights to life, liberty, and security of the person.

7 [Every person] has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

We've got the right against unreasonable search and seizure.

8 Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.

9 [We have] the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.

And I must also underscore, of course, equality rights.

15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law

without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

We have an obligation as legislators here to make sure that we are upholding the rights of our citizens and that we are also exercising our powers in our areas of jurisdiction. That's what this is about. It's about pushing Ottawa back in its own lane.

So let me tell you a few things that I'm watching that I think that this legislation might have applicability for in pretty short order. First of all, I mentioned the fertilizer ban. If the federal government makes good on its policy proposal that they want to force our provinces to reduce fertilizer emissions 30 per cent, it's going to be a de facto production cut in the use of fertilizer, which has global implications for world food security. We can't allow that to happen, and I'm pleased to see that Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe will not stand by and let that happen either.

We also have this arbitrary emissions reduction, which I've mentioned before as well. If they move on the proposal to reduce our emissions 42 per cent by 2030, it is also a de facto production cut, and it is offside with section 92A of the Constitution.

Firearms confiscation. They're rushing to amendments on Bill C-21 I think because they know that they're offside with this, and I think our Justice minister has done a great job of putting them on notice and making them be aware that they are violating the Constitution in many ways. Property and civil rights are provincial jurisdiction. Policing is provincial jurisdiction. The contract that we have with the RCMP in setting our priorities falls under our jurisdiction, and we will not be moved to go after firearms owners who purchase their firearms legally. We are interested in going after criminals, people who are smuggling firearms across the border and putting them into the hands of gangs in Calgary and Edmonton and elsewhere. That is our policing priority.

There's a fourth area, Bill C-69. Our Transportation minister has already put the federal government on notice that we want to build some new highways. If you can believe it, they have inserted themselves into our ability to build highways that are longer than 75 kilometres in length. That was never intended by the founders, to micromanage our affairs to that extent.

But there are so many others. The censorship law. As much as it's difficult at times to meet that press gallery – they're a little bit tough on me – I absolutely support the fact that they have a job to do. And if they are finding that they do not have the ability to exercise their press freedom under new onerous federal laws coming through, they should know that we will protect them here because it is an essential . . .

**Mr. Madu:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Smith:** It is. It's essential. It's the fourth estate. I come from it myself. Their job is to be a watchdog on our institutions.

The improper use of the Emergencies Act. I should mention this as well because I suspect a lot of our draconian policies that we saw over the last two and a half years come from an inappropriate direction happening from the federal level of government. I think we can see as well through the past number of weeks that the Emergencies Act was invoked improperly. As a result, this is the kind of thing that we should have been able to stand up and do as Quebec and say: "You know what? Some of those provisions: we're not going to enforce them. We're not going to freeze bank accounts of our citizens. We are not going to be targeting those who are engaged in peaceful protest." So I can see a number of different ways in which this legislation might be used.

**4:00**

I'm just hoping – I'm hoping – that in doing so, in passing this legislation, it creates a new, constructive relationship with the federal level of government. I mean, I have seen many of the members certainly in the Liberal caucus socially, and I think that there are some great ways in which we could potentially work together. I know that one of the members, Randy Boissonnault, just recently wrote a column – I hope I can find it here – about the ways in which we have been able to work constructively together. I do want to mention that because that is my intention: let's find a way that we can work together constructively on the things that are our priorities as well.

I'm going from memory now because I can't seem to find this column, but one of the things that we announced jointly was that we were going to be investing in a net-zero hydrogen production plant called Air Products. This, to me, is a prime example of how we can continue to support our base industry. We are a natural gas basin. We have a comparative advantage in this product. We've got the technical expertise to develop it. But it also works in sync with the federal obligations that have been signed on to in our international agreements. If we can find ways to work together like that, we will have a very constructive relationship.

I did have a chance to talk to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau when I first got elected, and I said that our industry is not offside with the carbon neutrality targets of 2050. Our industry is actively working with the adoption of carbon technology, the comparative advantage as well that we already have in capturing CO<sub>2</sub> and burying it underground, turning it into useful products, the development of hydrogen. We are going to be a hydrogen hub, particularly in the Edmonton region.

We also have the ability to help our friends and neighbours internationally by exporting clean LNG to displace more polluting fuels, whether it's coal, whether it's wood, whether it's dung. There are billions of people on the planet who still do not have access to clean energy when they're cooking their food or heating their homes; 44 million people a year die of indoor air pollution. We have an obligation not only to provide food security but to provide energy security and to alleviate global poverty. We can do that by still maintaining the objectives to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. If we can get the credit – and there is a mechanism for this in the Paris accord, a green transfer credit – we can reduce emissions elsewhere, get credit back here, and get to carbon neutrality faster. Those are the things that we want to work with the federal government on.

I should also mention as well – I'm not allowed to say his name, but he's the Minister of Culture. I almost caught myself. The Minister of Culture was just at a very successful meeting with his counterparts in the rest of the country on how we're going to address domestic violence. This was a very productive way of approaching the issues. The minister put on the table: here are the programs that we are already funding; will you match what we are doing? The federal minister agreed, so there are over \$500 million that are being invested in domestic violence initiatives, and Alberta's share is going to be \$53 million. But we didn't have to sacrifice; we didn't have to compromise. They came to the table and said: tell us your priorities, and we will work with you on implementing those. Those are the kinds of things we want to see.

The transportation minister, whose name I can't say, also was recently at a conference. He told his federal counterpart that there's no reason why they should be interfering in our ability to build new highways. One of the mandates I've given to the Transportation and Economic Corridors minister is: let's build that highway between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray; let's build an economic

corridor going down the east side of our province; let's make sure there's a . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Peace River.

**Ms Smith:** I hear Peace River might also need a new stretch of highway. [interjection] Not to mention a hospital in Cardston that's also needed.

These are the kinds of things that I think we can work together with our federal government on if they give us the latitude, and it sounded like, in putting that forward, they gave an early indication that they would be prepared to do that with us. That's what co-operative federalism looks like. It's when both parties recognize that we have sometimes competing but often complementary ways of getting the job done. But the federal government must always defer to us in our areas of constitutional authority because we have the sovereign jurisdiction; it's what our foundational documents actually say. That, I think, is going to be the approach that we are hoping to take on and go forward with. It's not going to be combative if it doesn't have to be, but the ball is going to be in Ottawa's court.

I think that they have managed to figure out how to have a constructive relationship with Quebec, where Quebec is able to, for instance, have its own provincial police, have its own pension, have its own immigration program, collect its own personal income taxes. Then whenever the federal government comes calling and says, "We'd like to spend money in your area of jurisdiction," Quebec says: "Well, actually, we don't want the strings attached. Just give us the envelope funding, and we'll do it our own way." And they always say yes. Why is it that Quebec is treated so differently? Because they demand to be treated differently, and we should demand to be treated just like Quebec. That is what the sovereignty act is all about. I think that what I'm seeing with our counterparts in Saskatchewan: they understand this, too. They understand that by asserting their rights under the Constitution, it will change the relationship with the rest of the country.

I should say that I think the biggest success that we had in putting this on the table, despite the ways in which it's been mischaracterized, was when our Environment and Protected Areas minister went to COP27 just a few weeks ago in Cairo, had an opportunity to talk with Steven Guilbeault and had an opportunity to meet with her counterparts in the environment as well. When the final communiqué came out, it called to reduce, eventually phase out oil and natural gas. And for anyone who didn't hear this, I have to underscore it because this is what the environment minister said. He said that he could not sign on to the final communiqué because the development of natural resources is provincial jurisdiction, and if he signed on to that, he would face a legal challenge from the provinces that Ottawa would lose. I have never seen that recognition from the federal government before. The fact that our environment minister was able to meet constructively, have a pleasant conversation, talk about shared interests: I think that we're finally getting through. But would we have gotten through if we hadn't put this on our radar, if we hadn't demanded to be treated differently, if we hadn't demanded that they followed the provisions in our foundational documents? I simply don't think so.

And you know what? The Americans are noticing, too. I'm told that John Kerry has talked with Steven Guilbeault and said: "What are you guys doing up there in Canada, specifically in Alberta? You guys are miles ahead of us on emissions reduction. We want to learn from what's going on in Alberta." That's the reason why we need to have our own ability to make decisions about the development and conservation of our resources our own way, because we'll do them differently. We'll do it way differently than Quebec. Quebec's approach is: keep it in the ground, don't develop it, and spend billions of dollars paying out private-sector investors. Our approach is: let's use technology and let's make sure that we get our cleaner

fuels to market and let's work collaboratively on the development of new industry, in particular hydrogen. That is the reason why we must assert that this is our area of jurisdiction, and Ottawa can simply butt out.

Let me just say a moment, because I think it's now been pretty clearly established: there's nothing in this legislation that talks about breaking up our country. That's not what this is about at all. It's about going back to how this country was initially intended to work by our nation's founders. I think that there's a new misconception now that has developed that somehow this bill is going to give authoritarian powers to the cabinet. I think this just goes back to, again, reading what the actual legislation says. The legislation is designed so that if we find one of these violations that I've talked about, we will bring forward a motion and enumerate all of the ways in which we are going to address it, and it will be fully debated in this Chamber. Every member will have the opportunity to weigh in on it, and that will become the marching orders of cabinet. It will have to come through the Legislative Assembly first.

In addition – and I should just maybe underscore this point – powers of the Lieutenant Governor in Council has subsection (4), "Nothing in this Act abrogates any authority or power vested in the Legislative Assembly." The Legislative Assembly is the heart of this. None of this even begins unless we get approval from the Legislative Assembly. In addition, it will expire, as these kinds of things should. I mean, we hope that any time we would have to invoke this act, we would be able to work out some kind of collaborative path forward with our federal counterparts, but any of these provisions will expire two years from when the original order is set.

We have to be mindful, of course. We don't want to be using this all the time, obviously. I don't want to use it at all if it can be helped. If Ottawa stays in its lane, we won't have to use it at all, but we had to make sure that there were these legislative protections so that if we do take this kind of action, it comes back here because this is the people's Chamber, and it's the people who are going to have to decide on this. But I think the people have given us a mandate to move forward on pushing back against an increasingly out-of-control Ottawa, an out-of-control Ottawa that has no respect for the rule of law, no respect for the provinces, no respect for the fact that it shouldn't be intervening in our area of jurisdiction.

#### 4:10

The other thing that I have to underscore and I believe one of my ministers responded: we foundationally, because we believe in these documents – I should just remind everyone what section 35 of the Constitution says. This is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Recognition of existing aboriginal and treaty rights

35(1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed . . .

(2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Land claims agreements

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

And (4),

Aboriginal and treaty rights are guaranteed equally to both sexes

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally . . .

That is a foundational section of the Charter.

This document says we're going back to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution. It by definition is going to

support Aboriginal and treaty rights. It says right under section 2 that

nothing in this act is to be construed as

- (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the Constitution of Canada,
- (b) authorizing any directive to a person, other than a provincial entity, that would compel the person to act contrary to or otherwise in violation of any federal law, or
- (c) abrogating or derogating from any existing aboriginal [land] and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

It's right there. It's right there. So this is, I think – am I coming to an end here? This is the reason why we have done what we have done.

I have given the examples of six areas that are under concern to me, but I have also done a couple of other things. I have asked our ministers to look at policies and laws that are unconstitutional or that harm Albertans and to prepare resolutions for the spring. To give examples, as I had mentioned: the fertilizer production cap, C-69, arbitrary emissions reduction cap on oil and gas, firearms confiscation, the federal law, the improper use of the Emergencies Act, the plastics ban, trespassing by federal environmental officers on private property. There's already a new law in Saskatchewan to address that. We, I think, also are going to have some concerns with excessive restrictions on building code requirements, with the federal government wanting to force us to change overnight our electricity system. That, again, violates the provision of our power under section 92(a) of the Constitution. And there are probably others.

I have also asked our deputy ministers that I want to know when the federal government is reaching in because this is the way in which they attempt to control us, through their federal spending power. They reach in at the bureaucratic level and say: "Hey, let's work together on this, that, or the other policy. We'll give you a little bit of money; just float it up the food chain to the minister, pass it." What always happens: they either only fund a fraction of what it's going to cost or they tell us to put the program in place in a way that's massively more expensive than the way we want to do it ourselves or the funding expires and then we're left implementing a program that was designed by Ottawa. We're not going to do that anymore.

Every time the federal government contacts any one of my departments, it elevates into my ministry so that I know exactly how many ways in which the federal government is trying to intervene in our affairs. As I told you, this is not going to happen anymore, Madam Speaker. From now on Alberta is not going to ask permission from Ottawa to be prosperous and free. Those days are behind us.

With that, I would move second reading of Bill 1 and ask the hon. members to support me in that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the second reading of Bill 1. Yesterday I along with my colleagues stood up for Alberta's economic security, stability by voting against the Premier's proposed legislation, which, in my opinion, is the most disastrous piece of legislation that I have ever seen.

The Premier cited extensively what section 92 of the Constitution does. It gives Alberta exclusive jurisdiction over certain heads of power. The Premier also mentioned a section from the Charter that sets out rights and obligations of all Canadians. Nothing in this piece of legislation does anything to change that.

In fact, this bill does not do what it says it's doing. It's not even worth the piece of paper it's written on. You cannot fool Albertans by changing the name of this disastrous piece of legislation, that is clearly an absolute recipe for disaster for our economy, for our democracy. It is dangerous, it's antidemocratic, and it will create more chaos, more costs, and more conflict. That's why we voted against its introduction yesterday.

Allow me to explain what this bill does. The first thing it does is give the Premier and cabinet unprecedented powers to change and rewrite laws behind closed doors, without approval of this House. Let me say that again. This gives the Premier and cabinet ministers unprecedented power to change the law unilaterally, without approval of this House. What it does: section 3 says that any cabinet minister can bring a motion to the resolution, ram it through, using and abusing the majority, and then go to the cabinet table. And what can they do? In section 4(a)(i): "suspend or modify the application or operation of all or part of an enactment, subject to the terms and conditions that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe." That's written in the legislation, that it can suspend or modify the application or operation of law. If somebody still, after reading this, cannot understand, there's nothing much you can do. But that's what the section does.

In sub (ii) what it says: "specify or set out provisions that apply in addition to, or instead of, any provision of an enactment." This gives cabinet power to specify or set out provisions that apply in addition to or instead of. Now, this provision gives cabinet the power to make additions to the laws or even create laws that will be applied instead of the enactment that this section applies to. Their words: it's written in section 4. I urge all members: along with their key messages, do read the legislation. It's pretty clear. I would say that Albertans didn't send me here to let cabinet decide on debate. Our role is to debate legislation. All of my colleagues are here to do that. They are here to debate legislation, not just motions giving cabinet powers to decide what they think is appropriate behind closed doors.

The UCP MLAs may want to give someone else their job. On this side of the House we are here to do our job. Let's remember that the Premier was elected by 1 per cent of Alberta voters, and now she wants to pass this draconian piece of legislation, that gives cabinet dictatorial powers. This is not right.

**4:20**

It doesn't matter what's in the motion presented in the Legislature when this act says that cabinet can amend whatever and however they feel like. We spoke this morning with the department officials, and they clarified that there is no requirement for the motion to be specific. Even that motion is not binding on the cabinet: that's what Justice officials are telling us. It hands total power over to the cabinet. The power they have is over everyone. The act states that it provides authority over every public and grant-receiving organization, meaning that the cabinet can dictate their will to nonprofits, school boards, municipalities, police forces, and more.

This is a massive, massive overreach. There has been no consultation with Albertans. This is undemocratic, and it's an attack on our democracy. If Albertans want to challenge the changes made under this act, the UCP has made it harder. When you ask public officials for rationale to put the standard of review as "patent unreasonableness" or decreasing the time frame for judicial review from six months to 30 days, rightfully so department officials are saying that that's a political decision for the Legislature and the government to explain, and I'm sure we won't hear anything.

The Premier also said yesterday, even though it is their first piece of business, that she hopes that this act is never used, but we now have documents from the public service and mandate letters with specific



direction on how the government plans to use this act. We've got three different stories, depending on if you talk to the Premier, the minister, or the deputy minister and department officials. The Premier and the minister are either severely misinformed about what's in this legislation, or the government is misleading Albertans.

Let me share who has weighed in on this piece of legislation, what Albertans have said about this act, and I quote: there is no shred of evidence that this act will lead to economic growth; you can't tell me this is going to support economic growth and support continued economic diversification in this province. End quote. Madam Speaker, that's Deborah Yedlin, president and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce. She doesn't think that there is a shred of evidence that this will lead to economic growth.

Todd Hirsch, ATB's former chief economist, believes that the Premier's piece of legislation, which would assert the province's sovereignty to overrule federal laws and policies, is dangerous. I quote: I think this would be so politically confusing and disruptive; just ask Quebec after 1976, when that province first elected a separatist Parti Québécois government, how that went for them; it was 40 years of an outflow of people and capital and corporate presence and influence, and it never returned; that same thing would happen in Alberta. End quote. That's a former chief economist with Alberta treasury branches.

Then the Premier was talking about section 35, that gives Indigenous and treaty rights constitutional status. The Premier went on at length about how this piece of legislation upholds treaty rights. She completely ignored what treaty chiefs have to say about it. All three treaty chiefs – treaties 6, 7, and 8 – spoke against this piece of legislation at a joint news conference. I quote: we must uphold the treaty; it is an international agreement and the highest law to govern the land, resources, and our people; we have never ceded this territory, nor do we ever plan to. That's treaty chief Tony Alexis of the Alexis Nakota Nation.

Another quote:

Bill 1 determines that a federal initiative is unconstitutional if it violates provincial jurisdiction or "causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans." This is important because it is not about jurisdiction, it is about whether the [government] likes a federal law or not.

That's Professor Duane Bratt from Mount Royal University.

Emmett Macfarlane called it "the most unconstitutional bill in Canada's modern history." Another quote:

Upon the passing of such a resolution . . .

the resolution mentioned in this act,

. . . Bill 1 gives a free hand to the government to change any law on the books and to order "provincial entities" – which include any provincial agencies or institutions (municipalities, universities and even the police!) – to ignore or violate federal law, even criminal law.

Madam Speaker, these are considered opinions of distinguished Albertans about this piece of legislation.

Yes, Madam Speaker, there are UCP members as well who also had some choice words about this act. Not a few months ago the UCP government was repealing the extraordinary powers they gave themselves in Bill 10. That was a health-related bill. At the time the now Justice minister admitted it was excessive. He said – and I quote – that the power to modify legislation by ministerial order is unnecessary. Now, the Deputy Premier was also participating in that debate, and this is what the Deputy Premier said, the Lethbridge Deputy Premier: "No one person should be able to enact regulations without consultation."

Now all the UCP are happy to support a piece of legislation that is opposed by businesses, that is opposed by academia, that is opposed by all three treaty chiefs. They are happy to give their government

excessive powers to go around the Legislature and public oversight. That's shameful.

In addition, the hypocrisy of the UCP leadership candidates sitting around the Premier is astounding. Astounding. Not long ago they all held a joint news conference and told Albertans, promised Albertans how they will be voting against the sovereignty act. The Finance minister called it an economic time bomb. That's what the Finance minister said. The jobs minister called it a fairy tale. The Municipal Affairs minister called it anarchy, and the minister of trade said that it was like shooting ourselves in the foot. Yesterday all of them forgot about what they said six weeks ago. They failed to walk the talk. They prefer their positions over principles. That's also shameful. Albertans certainly deserve better.

4:30

The UCP government is focused on legislation that will destroy jobs, chase investment away, and stifle Alberta's economy at a time when we should all be focusing on building a better and brighter future for this province. That's the consensus among the business community, among academia and Indigenous leaders.

We have an unprecedented crisis in our health care system, and this government instead is focused on destroying the economy. Tens of thousands of Albertans don't have access to a family doctor. Wait times at emergency departments of children's hospitals have been as long as 16 hours, and now with the worst of the flu season yet to come, parents are struggling to find medication necessary to treat their sick children. That should be front and centre for this government, but, unfortunately, no.

Then there is the so-called affordability plan, the UCP's affordability plan, which doesn't even come close to undoing the extra costs piled onto families by the UCP for things like car insurance, for things like school fees, for things like utilities. I urge the members to talk to ordinary Albertans. What impact these things have on their pocketbooks any ordinary Albertan will be able to tell them. I invite them, any minister, to come walk with me in my constituency. You will get to meet many Albertans who are struggling to pay insurance, who are struggling to pay utilities, who are struggling to pay school costs, all piled onto them by this UCP government. Clearly, they are focused on attempting to distract Albertans from the issues that they are facing, and the government has no interest in addressing those issues.

Instead, they are focused on creating more chaos, more conflict, and more cost for Albertans with this sovereignty act. Business leaders are telling us that it will cost jobs, that it's not good for Alberta's economy. They want stability, they want certainty, not the sovereignty. It must be stopped. Business leaders, legal experts, Indigenous leaders, and even members of the UCP's own cabinet have rejected the sovereignty act as unconstitutional and harmful to Alberta's economy. Whether this act has any legal merit or not, it's already chasing investment away from this province.

Madam Speaker, Albertans don't want this. They want leadership that is stable, responsible, honest, and focused on issues facing Albertans. In our alternative Speech from the Throne we presented a better vision. We put forward a plan for economic growth that will create jobs and that will attract investment. We'll put a cap on utility costs, freeze insurance, and reverse the UCP fee hikes on families.

In six months, Madam Speaker, Albertans can elect a new government that will focus on their . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I rise to speak today to Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. You know, it's no secret that Alberta has long had to struggle to

escape the colonialism of central Canada's Laurentian elite, well, in fact, since before this province was even a province. To put it another way, Alberta has had to struggle to be accepted and join as an equal member of the eastern Canada confederation of provinces, and the struggle seems to never end.

Canada is a confederation. What is a confederation? We need to think about that, and I did some research into it, actually. Confederation, one dictionary says, is a permanent union of countries, of self-governing peoples. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* online version has an article on it in which they say that it's a "permanent union of sovereign states." Another says that it's a loose alliance of political units and goes on to say that the component states retain considerable independence. The members of a confederation often delegate only a few powers to the central authority. The word originates, actually, from Latin and means "an agreement."

I think that if we're to understand anything, it's not enough just to say what it is; you also have to say what it is not. So when you're looking into what a confederation is, it's not an autocracy. It's not a dictatorship, not a subservient relationship, not a delegated position but a meeting, an agreement of equal powers with defined areas of authority. When our federal partners try to abuse this agreement called a Constitution, then they must be challenged.

This is a position, actually, that the preceding North-West Territories Legislative Assembly took in negotiating the agreement to even join the confederation of eastern provinces. On May 2, 1900, they passed what they called the autonomy motion, which is really just another word for the sovereignty of provincial jurisdiction, and they requested in that motion the fullest inquiry into the terms upon which the territories might enter Confederation. I mean, that was the very negotiation from the very beginning: what terms can we have by which we should even consider being part of this confederation? It was all about provincial jurisdiction and equal status with the pre-existing provinces that were in confederation with each other. Should . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Will the member give way?

**Mr. Orr:** Sure.

**Mr. Williams:** I was wondering if the member could go into a bit more detail about how Canada is set up, not like it is in the United Kingdom, where there are constituent peoples and constituencies that are subject to expression of the Mother Parliament. Instead, we're equal partners in Confederation as provinces.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you. Yes, that is exactly how it is set up, and those were the exact terms upon which Alberta joined as a later signatory to those agreements, those mutual partnerships that formed the confederation. In fact, it was formed in part, a confederation, out of fears of U.S. aggression, but I won't go into all those details at this time. But those are exactly the terms upon which it was set up.

Then, interestingly enough, by May 21, 1902, every single candidate in the territorial election of the North-West Territories favoured the principle of provincial autonomy, or provincial sovereignty. They wanted, actually, to be part of Confederation but as an equal partner on fair, just, and equal terms, as the other Confederation provinces had been given. The feds continued to delay, to vastly underfund the needs of the west, so in 1903 the Assembly of the North-West Territories unanimously passed a motion demanding immediate autonomy.

This is not a new discussion in this province, my friends; this has been going on for a long, long time. To this day the fight has been carried forward by Premier after Premier after Premier, and we could argue for many, many hours about those details or delineate them. Time after time the federal government imposes rules that disproportionately affect this province and its people while Alberta

continues to drive this wonderful country as its economic engine. This is a problem that has persisted for far too long.

While Alberta is subject to the unbalanced decisions of the federal government, another province enjoys a substantial amount of sovereignty within its Confederation. How is that fair and equal? Outlined in our Constitution, as the Premier has clearly detailed, there are clear rules that delineate the areas of provincial and federal jurisdiction, and they do not overlap. Despite these enshrined separations of power in our Constitution, the federal government in Ottawa has imposed laws on Alberta that instead should be decided here at home by our peoples.

4:40

Pursuing Alberta's self-determination does not weaken or threaten our commitment to this nation. Our country will in fact be made stronger when this bill becomes law because a stronger Alberta is good for all Canadians. When we are allowed to protect our energy and agricultural sectors from unfair restrictions, all of Canada will benefit from less expensive food, energy, and transportation. When we take full control of the economic development of our province, all Canadians will benefit from the job growth that we produce. Greater sovereignty within provincial jurisdiction for Alberta isn't selfishness; it is pursued because of the love we have for this country and province, with the knowledge that more prosperity for Alberta means more prosperity for all Canadians.

Many of the laws implemented by the federal government that disproportionately affect all Albertans still impact the rest of Canada. For example, restrictions on fertilizer use that could seriously harm our country's agricultural sector and eventually lead to a food crisis, especially because this will drive up costs even further: right in the midst of an inflationary cycle the feds want to do this.

The fact that Alberta has done so much for our nation but is still punished by the federal government in Ottawa sets a very dangerous precedent to the Confederation itself. If Alberta doesn't stand up, who will? This problem will only get worse, and eventually other provinces will be stuck in the same spot as us. In fact, Saskatchewan recognizes this and has already moved on it.

Sadly, even though this bill supports the strength of Canada by reinforcing the constitutional separation between provincial and federal governments, the Alberta NDP obviously are going to attack it for personal and, quite frankly, simply partisan reasons, yet just last night we heard the Saskatchewan NDP voted in favour of second reading of a very complementary, similar bill in Saskatchewan. Maybe they should talk to their Saskatchewan neighbours and find out how it is that in Saskatchewan the NDP actually supports their province and their people but that in Alberta apparently they're only interested in partisan gain.

This bill does not isolate us from our fellow Canadians but brings us closer together as we share in the bounties of an unshackled economy. The NDP will stand in opposition to this bill because, supposedly, increasing Alberta's sovereignty in the face of smothering federal economic regulations will somehow make us a worse place to do business. That could never be farther from the truth. Empowering the provincial government to stand up for our people and our businesses, for its constitutionally enshrined rights will actually help attract investment as unreasonable and burdensome economic restrictions are lifted.

This bill, in fact, comes in response to Alberta industry members begging that Alberta retain authority over our resources and not give it up by default to federal oversight. The oil and gas industry has long advocated for a made-in-Alberta TIER equivalency regulation to the federal standards. We have that, and we will keep that. Forest industry members have requested in writing – I have the letter right here – that we push back against federal incursions into

Alberta regulatory space. They say: we need a strong provincial champion to clarify that Alberta will defend our interests.

When the feds threatened Quebec, the Premier of Quebec responded decisively, making it clear that he was prepared to go to court to defend his province. So will we. We are not the only province in Canada to pursue greater self-determination within Confederation. Quebec has it in many ways. Saskatchewan is moving in the same direction.

The NDP will just fearmonger over this bill, stating that it'll drive investment and economic interest out of our province. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only is this not true; it's just purely hypocritical. Nothing scared investors in Alberta away as much as the previous NDP government. Their leadership nearly crippled this province.

Now we have a unique opportunity to defend our economy, our province, and our people from an overbearing federal government, and we must take it, despite the words of those who would spread falsehoods and frighten Albertans away from reclaiming the rights that are enshrined in our Constitution. After all, we are conservatives, not socialists. Making sure our economy thrives is what we do best.

Now is the pivotal time for Alberta to stand up for itself and not act like disenfranchised minors and be subservient to an abusive partner. It's time for that to end. This bill would ensure that this Legislature has the necessary authority to protect this province, its people and economy, from further overreach by the federal government. It would also allow us to reverse some of those rules and regulations that are unfair, unconstitutional, and abusive. We cannot allow fearmongering from the opposition to prevent this government from doing what it must do to ensure the prosperity of Albertans for years to come. Strengthening this province's constitutional position does not endanger the livelihoods and prosperity of Albertans; it protects them and encourages their unstifled growth.

That is why this bill must pass. For the good of this province and our country we must stand up. Now is the time, this is the place, and we are the people. Vote for Bill 1. Thank you.

**Mr. Williams:** I move, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we adjourn debate on second reading of Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Toor moved, seconded by Ms Lovely, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my sincere honour to rise and accept the Speech from the Throne given by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor on putting forward provisions for the Legislature and the province we all enrich.

The throne speech clearly laid out the priorities our government will be pursuing this session as Alberta continues to recover,

diversify, and grow. I believe these priorities align with the priorities of all Albertans, who are rightly concerned about their rising cost of living, their province, their economy, and their health care system. With record-high inflation, caused in part by record spending from the federal government, our people are being forced to choose between the necessities of life and paying their bills, this despite our province experiencing the strongest job growth in the country, high wages, and a nearly full economic recovery from the pandemic.

To help Albertans to weather this inflation storm, we announced a substantial relief plan that starts with the introduction of the inflation relief act. This multibillion-dollar package of broad-based and targeted relief will help fight inflation and make life affordable for all Albertans but particularly for our vulnerable, our disabled, and our elderly. This is real relief that will help Albertans pay for fuel, water, heat, groceries, and more of their necessities. We're doing our part to help fight this inflation crisis.

At the same time, we continue to call on our federal counterparts to get spending under control and to scrap the federal carbon tax along with the disturbing plans to increase it by 300 per cent. Our government knows that affordability is the primary challenge facing Albertans right now and that families are counting on us to take decisive action to address the rising cost of living.

We also know that our government is in a position to deliver this timely and meaningful relief because we have gotten our fiscal house in order. Alberta's strong balance sheet and this multibillion-dollar relief package for Albertans do not exist in isolation, which is why I was also so glad to hear that our government will continue to focus on creating jobs, attracting investments, opening the door for new workers, keeping taxes low, and diversifying the economy. This government has worked tirelessly to restore Alberta's economy and build a new Alberta advantage, and we're now seeing the results of that hard work.

**4:50**

In my riding of Calgary-Falconridge small businesses are the largest employer, whether it's the restaurant industry, retail industry, trucking industry, construction industry. It's all booming. A lot of employers are calling me. They have a problem of labour shortage. When the economy is booming, a labour shortage might be a good problem to have. My message to them is that we are happy to deal with it, and I think that many of my colleagues are dealing with the same problem.

This economic boom is what is going to be creating more jobs and going to put a roof over the heads and food on the plate for average families in each of our constituencies in Alberta. We have seen hundreds of thousands of jobs created, landmark investments across the province, a rapid growth in new industries, and a spike in people coming to Alberta in search of either a family reunion or for economic opportunity.

I was pleased to hear that we will remain committed to defending the rights and interests of Alberta, the province, as I said before, that we all cherish, from jurisdictional overreach from Ottawa. We have already introduced Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, to stand up to the federal government overreach and interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, including in the areas of private property, natural resources, agriculture, firearms, immigration, regulation of the economy, and delivery of health care.

Albertans' rights are sacred, and they are enshrined in Canada's Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor said,

these personal and provincial rights are not something the federal government can simply supersede when it chooses.

Ottawa is not our ruler; Ottawa is our partner, and it needs to begin acting like it.

Like so many other Albertans, I'm a proud Canadian. I moved here about 25 years ago, and this country, and especially this province, has given me a lot: peace, opportunities, raising a family. Like other Albertans, I love Alberta. Our Canadian Constitution is very clear that the federal and provincial governments are equal, each with our own areas of exclusive jurisdiction, and our government will work to protect that.

We will also work to reform Alberta's health care system so that it is there for all our people when they need it. On this we have also taken immediate action by launching the health care reform plan, which nobly aims to improve EMS response times, decrease emergency room wait times, reduce wait times for surgeries, and develop long-term reforms through consultation with front-line workers, including finding solutions to restore decision-making to local health care professionals and authorities. We will not blindly throw more money at a broken system or kick the can further down the road on fixing it. We will act on behalf of health care workers, patients, and all Albertans to ensure that our system is strong and resilient for generations to come. We thank our world-class doctors, nurses, paramedics, and all front-line workers who keep our system running each and every day. They deserve a system that works, as do patients and their families. We're going to deliver that for them. We know this will take some time, but the hard work has already begun, and I have the utmost confidence that we will see measurable improvement soon.

The throne speech set our legislative agenda. It gives us a signpost that will guide our way to a more robust and affluent future. It highlights the challenges that lay before us, but it's also a call for faith and trust in the system we believe in to bring back the Alberta advantage.

After a long time I have seen that more Albertans are coming to than leaving Alberta. This is a sign that our province is back. Alberta is back, and we are moving in a direction where people want to be part of our economy. We are already leading Canada in economic growth, but I believe the legislation initiatives outlined in the throne speech will only further accentuate and enhance the momentum we are already currently seeing in our economy.

I'm proud to see our government pursuing an agenda that is attracting the best and the brightest from across Canada and all over the world to our province, as evidenced by the positive net migration numbers we continue to see. I'm also proud that our government is not shying away from doing the hard work that Albertans expect us to do. I have the utmost confidence that the work we're doing now will pay positive dividends for generations to come. We all look forward to the days ahead and to a stronger and freer future for Alberta.

As my time here comes to an end, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that it's been an honour to speak to this Legislature on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Falconridge. It's been my honour to move this thanks of accepting the throne speech from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of our great province. After the last few difficult years we've been through as a province, I want families, the business owners, all Albertans across the province to know that we're moving forward, that better days are ahead. Our government cares about you. We will always fight for you.

The Speech from the Throne articulates a broad vision of Alberta moving forward which is inclusive and welcoming to those who come. As I said before, it can be for different economic opportunities or maybe a family union. Alberta will be that place and that beacon of hope for the rest of the country to lead forward with these values that are infused into every single Albertan and infused into our past. That has brought us to where we are today.

It may be the beginning of a new chapter in Alberta's story, I believe, but we have to understand it is one chapter in a longer book. This is the Alberta that I believe in. That is why I'm grateful to move to accept the Speech from the Throne given by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.

God save the King, and may God bless Alberta. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose to second, and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre next.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and second the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne given by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The affordability crisis Albertans are facing is very serious. I've consulted with many constituents in my riding who are struggling to make ends meet, purchase essentials, and pay their bills. This is not something that any Albertan should have to deal with, especially at a time when our economy is doing so well.

I want to echo my colleague's comments regarding the federal government. The federal government has many more levers at its disposal than the provincial government when it comes to fighting inflation. The federal government has also helped fuel this inflation crisis through its record spending. We continue to urge the federal government to help make life more affordable for families by scrapping the federal fuel tax and the federal carbon tax along with any proposed plans to increase the carbon tax by 300 per cent. No elected representative who is serious about making life more affordable for families should support these taxes, especially at a time when inflation is so high.

**5:00**

I'm pleased our government is stepping up to act on behalf of Alberta families. The measures announced so far include but are not limited to extending the fuel tax cut; taking action on utilities, including expanding the electricity rebate to a total of up to \$500; reindexing benefits like AISH, PDD, and income support as well as the Alberta seniors' benefit and the Alberta child and family benefit; providing targeted payments for children under 18, seniors 65 and older, and vulnerable Albertans with household income below \$180,000; and last, providing additional support for low-income transit programs. These measures will help all Albertans, but they will provide specific support to those in need. Our government knows that affordability is the primary challenge facing Albertans right now and that families are counting on us to take decisive action to address the rising cost of living. That is why we are not hesitating to deliver this timely and meaningful support.

I'm also proud that our government is not hesitating in tackling health care reform, which is an ongoing concern in my riding and ridings across Alberta. I know this work won't be easy or fast, but I am confident that the health care reform plan, that has already been initiated, will deliver some immediate positive results for Albertans.

Finally, I'm proud we are addressing our province's relationship with the federal government. For too long we have watched as our provincial rights granted to us under the Constitution have been infringed upon by federal actors. For too long governments have failed to stand up, and enough is enough. The result is grave consequences for our industry, our economy, our workers. We are today saying that enough is enough. As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor said:

The Canadian Constitution is clear. The federal and provincial governments both have exclusive and sovereign areas of jurisdiction, and this government will no longer sit idly by as Ottawa infringes on our constitutional rights to develop our

resources, develop our economy, and deliver our social programs in the manner that Albertans see fit.

This is why I'm encouraged that the first piece of legislation under our new Premier is the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. If passed, this bill will be a constitutional shield that will protect the personal and provincial rights of Albertans from any unconstitutional or harmful acts by the federal government. Legislation like this is long overdue, and I'm glad that our government isn't hesitating to get it done for Albertans.

The people of my Camrose constituency are excited for the future again. Alberta has so many good things going on, but we need to get our arms around this inflation crisis before we can truly realize our potential. I would like to once again say that it is an honour to represent the good people of the Camrose constituency, and I am pleased to second the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in response to the Speech from the Throne, the first speech in this session of the Legislature, and to respond in both of my roles, as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre and initially as the Official Opposition critic for Health. I listened to the speech yesterday, and health care took up a significant portion of the speech. Certainly, I was reflecting on the response I'd provide today, so I want to speak to some of the comments that were made in the Speech from the Throne regarding health care.

In that speech it states: "The government must take action. More words and platitudes will not shorten wait times or free up hospital beds." Madam Speaker, it's this government's words, its platitudes, its rash, incompetent actions that have left our health care system in crisis, that have led to the situation we find ourselves in today. Throughout the pandemic we saw this government drag their feet. They fell back on words and platitudes when action was needed to curb rising waves of COVID-19. As front-line health care workers were becoming increasingly exhausted, their cries for help were met with words and platitudes from the former Premier, from the UCP's ministers of Health, until the rising case counts and indeed deaths forced them to act, but repeatedly they did so reluctantly. They acted last; they acted least.

The only actions they undertook with relish, Madam Speaker, were to attack front-line health care workers. Let's consider the impacts, for example, of this government's decisive action in regard to doctors in Alberta. They tore up their agreement. They imposed a series of changes that the then Health minister insisted were essential to reform the health care system and keep spending under control, changes that they decisively acted to move forward with in the midst of a growing pandemic, changes that went on to drive doctors out of practice and out of the province, and now we have tens of thousands of Albertans who have no access to a family doctor.

Our public operating rooms are struggling to catch up on waitlists that grew while this government dragged its feet, relied on words and platitudes, and now they're unable to operate at capacity because we don't have enough anaesthesiologists because, again, this government drove them out of the province, all because of this government's decisive action, much like they claim, in the throne speech, that they are going to be taking to reform the health care system today.

And here's the irony, Madam Speaker. The throne speech makes the claim that this government is here for health care workers, committed to ensuring resources are directed to where they are needed most, to emergency and operating rooms rather than to

boardrooms and consulting companies. Every one of those wrong-headed decisions made by this government, the damage that they did, were informed by their initial spending on boards, committees, and consulting companies, on carefully cherry-picked statistics from the MacKinnon report, from their carefully curated Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances, on recommendations from their report generated by their contract with the consulting firm Ernst & Young, a report that led to plans like laying off 11,000 of the front-line health care workers that they now purport they value and thank, including potentially up to 500 full-time nurses.

That's not a record, Madam Speaker, that gives me confidence in this Premier and this government's plan to upend our public health care system in the name of reform under the direction of a single administrator in six months, at a time when this system remains in deep crisis due in good part to the neglect, the attacks, and poor decisions of ministers who still sit in this cabinet, particularly given that this Premier is on the record advocating for policy changes to – and I quote – get used to the concept of paying out of pocket, for Albertans to get used to paying out of pocket for health care. Albertans are rightly concerned that the actions they are seeing this Premier undertake now are simply going to lead to more chaos and conflict at the cost of their access to health.

Now, in contrast, Madam Speaker, in the words of former health columnist Keith Gerein, Alberta's health system enjoyed one of its most uninterrupted periods of stability under the NDP's reign. That was our record from 2015 to 2019. He noted that yearly spending hikes were reduced to about 3 per cent, which made progress in slowing the cost of physicians, pharmacists, and dental care, while columnist Don Braid noted that we "calmed down the system, made significant improvements and provided stability for health planners, professionals and workers."

That's why, as we laid out in our alternative Speech from the Throne, Madam Speaker, we as the Alberta NDP caucus, should we have the opportunity to form government, would be relentless in pursuing and proposing real solutions. In fact, we're going to do that from opposition right now. We're bringing forward legislation this very session, carried by our leader, that will ensure that public health care is protected and strengthened, that would establish health care service standards' openness and transparency to Albertans, who should be able to get an ambulance, go to the emergency room, see their doctor when they need to. They deserve to have the information on how that's progressing. It's legislation that will ensure there's accountability for the care that Albertans depend on.

We're going to introduce the first major plank of our health care platform around community-based family care, primary care, Madam Speaker, something that was not even mentioned in the Speech from the Throne as this government scrambles to deal with the crisis that it created in part by undermining access to primary care here in the province of Alberta. We recognize how important it is that we have family doctors in this province, that we are attracting them to this province, not driving them away, and that we are ensuring that Albertans have access to them. Getting to the root of the issues in the health care system: that is truly preventative care.

We're going to continue to hold this government to account in terms of its promise to somehow in the next six months end the chaos they created in hospitals, in clinics and get EMS back on track. Truly, Madam Speaker, we are only going to get there with a government that truly believes in science and believes in investing in and not undermining our public health care system.

5:10

In regard to my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre, you know, in the throne speech, Madam Speaker, it talked about

protecting and supporting the most vulnerable among us. It says that that always “has and always will be the Alberta way.” Well, it wasn’t this government’s way when they deindexed AISH, income supports, and seniors’ benefits, that were received by hundreds of my constituents. It wasn’t this government’s way when they cut the additional housing support that constituents of mine depended on, pushing some of them out of their homes and onto the streets. It wasn’t this government’s way when it spent over two years refusing to partner with the city of Edmonton and the government of Canada to fund over 250 supportive housing units for those living houseless, many on the streets of my constituency.

This government brags about affordability measures, but they excluded many of my constituents who live in condos or apartments from their electricity and natural gas rebates, and it wasn’t this government’s way when they cut access to harm reduction supports in my constituency, leading to more people in my community being poisoned by a toxic street supply on the street, in our public spaces, and behind businesses and homes. This government was apparently prosperous enough to give billions away to profitable corporations and millions to an embarrassment of an energy war room but not enough to show real compassion for those most in need. Taking actions on those fronts, Madam Speaker, isn’t just the right thing to do for the people; it’s the best thing for our community and our local economy.

Now, for the past three years in my role as the MLA for Edmonton’s downtown I’ve talked with business and community leaders in and around our downtown as they asked how they could get the attention of this government to get them to take action on these issues that I’ve noted and many more. For three years, sadly, there was very little response. Then, finally, earlier this year, as part of the budget for 2022-2023, we did see the government step up in the UCP budget to provide \$5 million for downtown revitalization in Edmonton and Calgary.

Now, Madam Speaker, I will say that \$5 million isn’t a particularly large sum towards revitalization, but, hey, as the old adage says, never look a gift horse in the mouth. But the thing is that this is a horse that has yet to actually leave the barn. Talking with the mayor, talking with folks on the downtown revitalization task force here in Edmonton, that \$5 million has not been paid. We’re only a few months from the end of the budget year, and we have not seen the dollars this government committed in its budget. If this government is truly committed to, as it says in the throne speech, “its steadfast commitment to job creation and economic diversification,” perhaps they can follow through on this promise from 10 months ago.

I also recognize that after three years of asking, just before the former Premier left office, this government did finally step forward with some funding to address some of the serious issues around housing, substance use, and mental health, issues that fall squarely under provincial responsibility but that the city of Edmonton has been bearing a disproportionate burden for. Now, I’ll be watching closely to see if those dollars flow and follow through. I’ll also note that the funding fell short of providing enough funding to cover the number of shelter beds needed this winter here in the city of Edmonton so that Edmonton city council even now is having to debate dipping into their emergency reserve to ensure that the people in my constituency will be guaranteed to be able to have a warm bed if they need one instead of sleeping on the streets in freezing weather.

The city of Edmonton has asked this government for funding for the healthy streets operation centre. That’s a collaboration between the city of Edmonton, peace officers, fire, the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society – their outreach workers – Homeward Trust, police officers, and the HELP unit. That is to address issues around community safety. You know, this centre was in direct response to a

direct ask from leaders in the Chinese community to address concerns in Chinatown, which I also represent a portion of.

Now, my understanding is that the Minister of Culture promised them at a community meeting that that funding would be there for that operation centre, that they would make it happen. Well, presently the city has funded that operation centre for two years. They’ve sent a letter to the Minister of Justice asking for his support, and they have not received a response. This government is once again sitting on its hands, this government is not acting, and this government is not following through on its commitment to its promise to the community and failing to stand up and partner with the city of Edmonton.

They asked the Minister of Justice to consider how that centre could be supported with government of Alberta dollars, with programming or other investments that are discussed in their safety plan that was ordered by them, ordered that they provide by the Minister of Justice. [interjection] Go ahead, Minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Member, for accepting my intervention. I want to thank you for raising the issue of Edmonton’s Chinatown. The community has raised this issue. I also want to let you know that I was very pleased that not only myself but the minister of housing at the time and Justice and about six of us went down to Chinatown and met with the community there. Let me tell you this. Just before I changed my portfolio, we did make a public announcement in Edmonton for a \$184 million comprehensive response, not only on homelessness but addiction and mental health. At that time Mayor Sohi was there. Mayor Sohi personally thanked this government for the huge action we’ve taken. You know, just as you’re on this subject, I want to update the House that this comprehensive mental health and addictions and homelessness package: I have never seen that in my career of social work. I’ve never seen that across Canada.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, forgive me for the speaker’s intervention. My apologies. Interventions are not allowed on the throne speech. It’s not a regular occurrence. Not everyone is up to speed. I apologize to the speaker and everyone in this Assembly.

Please continue with your time.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I acknowledge the dollars that this government committed. Let’s be clear. Not all of those \$184 million, as I recall, were for the city of Edmonton; some of those were for Calgary as well. It was a larger package. So let’s be clear about where all those dollars are being divided.

I spoke with the mayor last week, and he is still waiting for a response on the funding for this operation centre, which this minister promised the community they would fund.

I appreciate the minister’s intervention. I appreciate the words that he has given, and I have acknowledged the dollars he has spoken of, but it still does not address the fact that it falls short of the emergency beds that are needed to ensure every person living houseless in Edmonton right now can access a warm place to stay. They still have not funded the operation centre that they promised, not to mention the fact that that was after three years of advocacy by myself, by my colleague for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and by multiple members of Edmonton city council over the course of two consecutive councils.

Do I appreciate the government stepping up and following through? I do. Do they deserve applause for doing so, once again, last and least? Well, I’ll let the people of Edmonton decide that.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that this government shows that it is more interested in shaking its fist at Ottawa and creating more constitutional drama and awarding more sweeping power to itself than actually addressing the concrete issues in front of us here in Alberta,

doing their actual job as a government, addressing the crisis in our health care system, a crisis that they made worse at every single turn.

I can tell you that when I talk to front-line health care workers, some just yesterday, they don't trust this government. They do not take the words that are in that throne speech of thanks and support very seriously because they have seen the actions of this government. They have heard the words of this Premier, and they see what her priorities are, which is about the consolidation of power, her own form of political fearmongering, and not truly speaking to the actual roots of the issues that Albertans care about.

I'll watch this affordability act very closely because, again, Madam Speaker, so many of this government's efforts do not help my constituents. They're not eligible for the energy rebates. They're seniors or students who do not drive, so the gas tax does nothing for them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the throne speech reply? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments in regard to the Speech from the Throne that we heard yesterday here in the Chamber, from the Lieutenant Governor.

5:20

You know, Madam Speaker, I've heard a lot of speeches from the throne in my time in the Legislature, and I must say that this one really misses the mark from where people are at in this province, the needs that they have at this point in time, and for a government to produce a speech like this, so out of step with what's actually going on on the ground: I find it to be quite astounding.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Let's just remember as well – I've heard a number of speakers from the UCP side talking about the words of the Lieutenant Governor in their speeches yesterday. These are the words of the government that she's reading, the words of the UCP, in her throne speech, just to clarify. To suggest that they can somehow disassociate themselves with a preoccupation with their sovereignty act, with going to war with Ottawa, to tilting at the windmills that they always seem to be obsessing about – right? – those are their ideas from this UCP caucus in this Chamber. That's not the Lieutenant Governor by any means, Mr. Speaker, so just as a word of clarification on that.

What I see, again, is a real disconnection between what people are concerned about across this province and then what this document espouses here for the future, for the next few months for the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we're in the worst affordability crisis in more than 40 years here in the province of Alberta. I know that there are many circumstances that have contributed to this affordability crisis, some issues that are outside of our borders, that are global issues as well, but it seems as though this UCP government has gone out of their way to only make those affordability issues worse.

We see in the midst of the very highest grocery prices moving through this province right now – you see record increases for groceries, for example. You see this government (a) not doing anything about that but (b) instead pivoting on to talking about their sovereignty act and spending most of the speech on their sovereignty act, in fact. Where are the issues that really concern people?

In my own constituency in Edmonton-North West people are suffering economically as a result of many larger issues and many specific issues that actually originate from this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. They're not something you can blame on a war with Russia. It's not something you can blame on supply chain issues. They are specific policies that this UCP government has instituted

over the last three and a half years that are hurting people in Edmonton-North West, and they're hurting people right across this province as well. That's what I was hoping this Speech from the Throne would address: these affordability issues and systemic issues that are causing people to get left behind here in the province.

I don't cheer for failure for this government or any other government because at the foundational level, Mr. Speaker, we are all here to serve the people of Alberta in the best way possible. When I anticipate a Speech from the Throne at a juncture when there are so many burgeoning crises around, then suddenly I'm looking for something that we can find hope in, something that can perhaps give us some vision for the future. Unfortunately, I just don't see it in this Speech from the Throne. In Edmonton-North West people are noticing that, and certainly I travel around a lot to other constituencies around the province. I didn't hear anybody talk about the sovereignty act when I banged on their door.

I was in Edmonton-North West a lot, but I was in places in Calgary, in Leduc, in Sherwood Park, all across the province. No one said: "Yeah; you've got to do something about this sovereignty thing. That's what we need to do," right? No. They talked about their car insurance being out of control, so they had to park the car. They talked about their grocery prices. They talked about the high cost of tuition and problems associated with K to 12 education. They talked about having a lack of security in knowing that the hospital emergency ward will be there when they need it for themselves and their families within a public health system. Those are the things that people talk about every single day, not the sovereignty act, not about tilting at windmills with Ottawa and so forth, right? They need to make sure that they are secure and safe in the place that they live and they're safe and secure for their families and for the next generation, too.

A lot of governance has a lot to do, Mr. Speaker, with trust. You see this UCP government scrambling. They've changed another Premier. I've seen this so many times; it's a pattern that's played out over the last 10 years or more. They dig themselves into a corner and try to change the leadership, they clean house and get a new Premier in place, and then they claim everything is better. Well, it's not. It's not better at all. A lot of people are literally falling behind. Wages are falling behind at the highest rate in the country here in the province of Alberta. Wait times for surgeries are falling behind as well. It compromises the safety and the security of everybody for these things to happen.

We know in smaller centres, as well, these problems get even worse. You have places where hospitals and emergency care centres, response centres, are literally closing. Their doors are closed. I've talked to people at the Rural Municipalities association, for example. They talked about how it would feel if you went to your hospital – in Boyle, let's say, for example – and the door is locked because there's inadequate staffing. The staffing is not there. The doctors aren't there. The nurses are not there. This is a long problem that this UCP government started when they went to war with health care workers here in the province of Alberta.

You can't just simply fix that with a new Premier and six months left in their term – right? – and say: "Oh, yeah. Well, we've turned a corner on that. You know, we're really sorry." It takes years to build capacity for our health care system to have trained the nurses, doctors, and support staff to fill those positions, to make sure that they have a long-term, stable, secure relationship with the government so that people can go into those professions and not say: "I'm not going to be a nurse; look, they treat them like dirt in Alberta. Why should I take four years of training and take \$50,000 worth of student loans when the job has been made insecure by this UCP government? Maybe that's not the way to go." That's the situation that we're facing, Mr. Speaker, right now. It's going to

take an effort, and it's going to take an investment in order to turn things around.

We're in the opposition now. Hopefully, we won't be for long, but while we are, we can still bring forward motions and initiatives here during this session to make life better for Alberta people. We will introduce a health bill here in the next few days where we would expect and demand support from all MLAs to build a strong public health system that will be there when people need it for themselves and their families. Make a significant investment not just in trailers in the parking lot for people to wait for emergency but an investment to train nurses, to train LPNs, to make sure that we have nurse practitioners, doctors, regular RNs going through the system not just to deal with the next six months but to deal with the next 50 years with a generation of renewed investment in public health care. That's what we need, and that's where we can start today.

We will bring forward a bill to freeze car insurance. Car insurance has been so out of control here in the last year, two years since this government gave such a wonderful deal to the insurance companies and allowed them to increase their car insurance so much that many people have to park their car. We will introduce a bill here, which I expect everyone will consider and support, that would freeze and make car insurance affordable again here in the province of Alberta.

We'll bring forward a motion on the investigation on grocery prices, that we can use the power of this legislative body to investigate and start to turn around this dreadful profiteering that we see in our retail food industry. We know it's happening; we can investigate, and we can send a strong message to turn that around.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, it's all about trust. You see some affordability issues being addressed in this throne speech. They all have a due date around election time. That's the kind of affordability that this government suddenly steps up and takes notice of. Yeah, they're behind in the polls. Let's give some people some money up till the next election. That's not an affordability strategy; that's a sign of desperation by a government. It's an election strategy. People aren't stupid; they can read it right away. They're saying, "They're going to try to bribe us with our own money," and I'll say, "Well, I don't know," and then, boom, sure enough, they did exactly that.

You need to make sure that you find the roots in places like with car insurance, with tuition, with groceries; you need to find the root and not just give people a hundred dollars for a couple of months, until the next election, but you need to find a way to make life affordable for Albertans on an ongoing basis.

5:30

I stand here as the MLA for Edmonton-North West but also as a representative who takes seriously the responsibility for all Albertans in this province of Alberta. You know that the Official Opposition is here to do so. We're here to help and certainly to be constructively critical in all ways possible. That's my take on the Speech from the Throne.

I would move, Mr. Speaker, to adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Government Motions

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a whole bunch of motions here we're going to move, so I'll get a glass of water here. We're going to get through these. Okay.

### Constituency Week

5. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that Standing Order 3(6), which provides for one constituency week for every three sitting weeks, not apply to the 2022 fall sitting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 5. This is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(j). Are there any members wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

### Committee Referral for Conflicts of Interest Act

7. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- the Conflicts of Interest Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 48 of that act;
  - the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued; and
  - in accordance with section 48 of the Conflicts of Interest Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within one year after beginning its review and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 7. This is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(j). Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a long one.

### Committee Membership Appointments

8. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Rowswell as chair, Mr. Orr replace Mr. Rowswell, Mrs. Allard replace Mr. Jones as deputy chair, Mr. Gotfried replace Mr. Jones, Ms Pon replace Mr. Rehn, and Ms Issik replace Mr. Singh;
  - on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Mr. Smith replace Mr. Rutherford as chair, Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Milliken as deputy chair, Mr. Hunter replace Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Toor replace Mr.



- Milliken, Mr. Rehn replace Mrs. Allard, Mr. Panda replace Mr. Long, and Mr. Orr replace Ms Rosin;
- C. on the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills that Mr. Williams replace Mr. Rutherford as chair, Mr. Williams replace Mr. Rutherford, Ms Rosin replace Mr. Jeremy Nixon as deputy chair, Ms Lovely replace Mr. Jeremy Nixon, Mr. Jason Nixon replace Mr. Amery, and Mr. Panda replace Mr. Long;
- D. on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing that Mr. Reid replace Mr. Smith as chair, Mr. Jason Nixon replace Mr. Smith, Mr. Gotfried replace Mr. Reid as deputy chair, Mr. Rehn replace Mr. Neudorf, Mrs. Allard replace Mr. Stephan, and Mr. Yao replace Mr. Williams;
- E. on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Hunter replace Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk, Mr. Stephan replace Mr. Rowswell, Mr. Turton replace Mr. Reid as deputy chair, Mr. Panda replace Mr. Reid, and Mr. Yaseen replace Mr. Walker;
- F. on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Mr. Williams replace Mr. Schow as deputy chair, Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Schow, Mr. Rowswell replace Mr. Sigurdson, Mr. McIver replace Mr. Neudorf, Ms Pon replace Mr. Long, and Ms Fir replace Mrs. Allard;
- G. on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Neudorf as chair, Mr. McIver replace Mr. Neudorf, Mrs. Allard replace Ms Rosin, Mr. Carson replace Ms Sweet, Mr. Feehan replace MLA Irwin, and that Mr. Stephan be appointed;
- H. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Mr. Long replace Mr. Amery, Mr. Yaseen replace Mr. Hunter, Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk replace Mr. Reid, Mr. Yao replace Mr. Loewen, and that Ms Fir be appointed;
- I. on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Ms Issik replace Mr. Guthrie, Mrs. Aheer replace Ms Lovely, Mr. Orr replace Mr. Rehn, Mr. Sigurdson replace Mr. Yao, Mr. Feehan replace Mr. Ceci as deputy chair, and Mr. Nielsen replace Mr. Ceci;
- J. on the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee that Ms Rosin replace Mr. Jeremy Nixon as chair, Mr. Smith replace Mr. Jeremy Nixon, and Mr. Williams replace Ms Rosin as deputy chair.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(h). Are there any members wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, I also understand that this is a significant government motion to be moved. If he is agreeable, he's welcome to, in his opening remarks, move the motion as proposed on the Order Paper, and we will accept that as part of the debate, and then you can proceed with some comments regarding that. The hon. the Government House Leader.

### Amendments to Standing Orders

9. Mr. Schow moved:
- A. Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective February 23, 2022, be amended as follows:
- (a) in Standing Order 7
- (i) in suborder (1) by striking out "God Save the Queen (Thursday)" and substituting "Royal Anthem (Thursday)";
- (ii) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
- (3) When Introduction of Guests is called and for a period not exceeding 4 minutes, brief introductions, each not exceeding 20 seconds, may be made of groups of students and, with the prior permission of the Speaker, of other visitors in the galleries.
- (iii) in suborder (4) by striking out "9 Members" and substituting "7 Members";
- (b) in Standing Order 8
- (i) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:
- 8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:
- Written Questions  
Motions for Returns  
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills  
Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders  
At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions
- (ii) in suborder (7)(c) by striking out "4 sitting days" wherever it occurs and substituting "8 sitting days";
- (c) by striking out Standing Order 13(5.1);
- (d) in Standing Order 23(k) by striking out "Her Majesty" and substituting "His Majesty";
- (e) in Standing Order 52(1)(c) by striking out "Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills" and substituting "Private Bills";
- (f) in Standing Order 52.01(1) by striking out clauses (a) to (c) and substituting the following:
- (a) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education; Culture; Forestry, Parks and Tourism; Infrastructure; Jobs, Economy and Northern Development; Skilled Trades and Professions; Technology and Innovation; Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism;
- (b) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services; Education;

- Health; Justice; Mental Health and Addiction; Public Safety and Emergency Services; Seniors, Community and Social Services; Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction;
- (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Affordability and Utilities; Agriculture and Irrigation; Energy; Environment and Protected Areas; Indigenous Relations; Municipal Affairs; Transportation and Economic Corridors; Treasury Board and Finance.
- (g) by striking out Standing Order 59.01(12);
- (h) in Standing Order 74.1
- (i) in the heading by striking out “Government Bill” and substituting “Bill”, and
- (ii) in suborder (1) by striking out all of the words after “read a second time,” and substituting “the following Members may, without notice, move a motion to refer the Bill to a standing or special committee:
- (a) with respect to a Government Bill, a member of the Executive Council;
- (b) with respect to a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the sponsor.”
- (i) by striking out Standing Order 74.11;
- (j) by striking out Standing Order 83(1) and substituting the following:  
83(1) The Assembly shall not adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or Bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the Assembly by Message of the Lieutenant Governor in the session that the vote, resolution, address or Bill is being proposed.
- (k) by striking out Standing Order 89 and substituting the following:  
Publication of deadline  
89 The Clerk of the Assembly shall publish a notice on the Legislative Assembly website that indicates the day on which the applicable period for receiving private Bills will expire
- (a) when a calendar is published under Standing Order 3(7), and
- (b) prior to the commencement of the first session of a Legislature.
- (l) in Standing Order 91
- (i) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:  
91(1) The petitioner shall publish a notice of the application once a week for 2 consecutive weeks in at least one newspaper of general circulation in each area of Alberta
- to which the application relates, commencing not earlier than November 1 of the year preceding the year in which the petition will be submitted.
- (2) The notice shall clearly specify
- (a) the nature and object of the private Bill,
- (b) the area of Alberta in which any proposed work or activity authorized by the private Bill may take place, and
- (c) the location of any property that may be affected by the private Bill.
- (ii) in suborder (4) by striking out “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills Committee”.
- (m) by striking out Standing Order 93;
- (n) in Standing Order 94 as follows:
- (i) in suborder (1)
- (A) by striking out “shall, within the time limited by suborder (2) deliver to the Clerk of the Assembly” and substituting “shall, in accordance with suborder (2), deliver the following to the Clerk of the Assembly:”;
- (B) in clause (b) by striking out “publication of a notice in accordance with Standing Order 91 by a statutory declaration” and substituting “publication of a notice of application, in accordance with Standing Order 91, in the form of a statutory declaration”;
- (C) in clause (c) by striking out “fee required by” and substituting “fee required under”, and
- (D) by striking out clause (d);
- (ii) in suborder (2)
- (A) by striking out “The fees and documents listed in suborder (1) shall all be delivered” and substituting “The petitioner shall deliver the fees and documents listed in suborder (1)”, and
- (B) by striking out “by the 15th day following the first day of the first sitting in any year” and substituting “no later than the 15th day following the first day of
- (a) the first sitting in a calendar year, or
- (b) the first session of a Legislature.”
- (o) in the following Standing Orders by striking out “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills

- Committee” and substituting “Private Bills Committee”:  
 Standing Order 96(2)  
 Standing Orders 98(1) and (3)  
 Standing Order 100(1)  
 Standing Order 101  
 Standing Order 102  
 Standing Order 103  
 Standing Order 104  
 Standing Order 105(1)  
 Standing Order 106;
- (p) in the headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100, and 105 by striking out “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills Committee”;
- (q) in Standing Order 108.1(b) by striking out “substitute” and substituting “shall substitute”.
- B. Be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion a bill that was referred under Standing Order 74.11(1) before the passage of this motion be placed on the Order Paper for second reading.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion come into force on passage.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone in this Chamber knows I am very agreeable.

I do rise to move Government Motion 9 on the Order Paper. I think, Mr. Speaker, that you are okay if I do not read that out in full, as you’ve mentioned. The changes proposed in Government Motion 9 will return the process of private members’ bills to that which existed prior to May 2019. It will also return the practice of members introducing their guests but with some time parameters. We’re also proposing to remove the ban on desk thumping.

[interjections] Feel free. I guess we have to approve the motion first. Members’ statements will go to seven per sitting day. The mandates of the legislative policy committees are being changed to reflect the new government ministries, and sadly a couple of changes were needed as a result of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Finally, recommendations were presented to us to improve the process for private bills, and we have presented those as part of this motion.

In closing, I do want to say that the government has worked collaboratively with the Official Opposition House Leader on these proposed changes. I do want to thank her and all the members of her caucus for their participation. I’m encouraged by the amount of collaboration we’ve had going forward thus far.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 9 as per the Order Paper. This is a debatable motion. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

If not, I am prepared to call on the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

5:40

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

**The Speaker:** Hear, hear.

The hon. the Government House Leader appears to be rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Man, that felt good. Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I thank all members of the Chamber this evening for your participation and bearing with me through those motions. At this time I do move that the Assembly be adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:41 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 30, 2022

Day 2

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
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Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk

Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and  
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees

Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary  
Programs

Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms



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Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Ms Rosin  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Bilous  
Goehring  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith, Mark

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Allard  
Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, hon. members. Please be seated.

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Toor moved, seconded by Ms Lovely, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LL.D, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Eggen]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, as I listened to this government's Speech from the Throne, my heart sank. This is a government that doesn't understand Albertans' priorities, and it is refusing to listen to the people of this province who just don't see themselves in this government's agenda. The throne speech made it clear that this government is focused above all on the job-killing sovereignty act. They're not going to address the crisis in children's health care. They're going to generate a whole new constitutional crisis. They're not going to support Albertans facing an affordability crisis. They're going to create a made-in-the-Premier's-office economic crisis. The truth is that when this government finally introduced the full text of the job-killing sovereignty act on Tuesday, yesterday, part of me was glad because it gave Albertans the full picture of what is at stake, not just our economy but our democracy itself.

Madam Speaker, we already knew that the sovereignty act would be catastrophic for Alberta before it was introduced. We knew that because the very same UCP cabinet members who lined up to vote for it on Tuesday have spent months telling us how bad it is. The Finance minister has said that the so-called sovereignty act would create "job-killing economic chaos." The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development said that the sovereignty act is nothing more than, quote, virtue signalling and a fiscal fairy tale that doesn't make any sense and won't work. The Minister of Environment and Protected Areas said that the sovereignty act "would create instability and chaos." The Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism said that the sovereignty act is intended to "provoke a constitutional crisis as a path to separation (as the authors of the Act seem to want)." The Minister of Municipal Affairs called it the Anarchy Act, saying that it's, quote, a false dream that will turn into a nightmare. It's not often that I agree with the UCP cabinet ministers, but I endorse every single one of those quotations.

But you know what's even more frightening? Those ministers were speaking before they knew exactly how bad the job-killing sovereignty act is. They didn't know it would include an antidemocratic, Henry VIII clause allowing the Premier and cabinet

to bypass the legislative processes and unilaterally amend provincial laws. They didn't know that it would severely limit the rights of Alberta citizens to challenge the act's extraordinary powers in court. The fact is that the job-killing sovereignty act seeks to upend Canada's constitutional order. It undermines the rule of law, it undermines our democracy, and it's going to be a disaster for our economy.

Madam Speaker, I am the proud MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, a place filled with generous, open-minded people who want what's best for our province. Calgary is the engine of Alberta's economy, but this legislation is going to be a disaster for my city and for the entire province. It will interfere with our ability to attract workers because no one wants to come to a province where the Premier is trying to set herself up with virtually dictatorial powers. It will undermine the ability of our energy sector to work collaboratively with the federal government through initiatives such as the Pathways Alliance, which is currently seeking federal support for a proposed multibillion-dollar carbon capture and storage project. It will undermine new investment by creating uncertainty, and it will leave many Calgary businesses looking to set up in more stable jurisdictions, whether they are local small businesses or large companies with head offices in Calgary. As the Calgary Chamber of Commerce CEO, Deborah Yedlin, said, quote: there is no shred of evidence that this act will lead to economic growth. End quote.

Madam Speaker, we don't have to shoot ourselves in the foot with this disastrous bill. There is a better way. The Alberta NDP opposition's alternative throne speech sets out a vision of a better future for Alberta. With the help of ATB former chief economist, senior economist Todd Hirsch we will build a resilient economy with good jobs that Albertans can rely on for generations. We will release a new investment framework which will outline how we can incentivize private-sector investment, pursue innovation, and grow Alberta companies by fostering economic certainty with a competitive regulatory environment. We will bring real, sustained action to help families struggling to pay their bills, and we will bring forward legislation that ensures public health care is protected and strengthened and that establishes health care service standards.

These are the things we should be focused on. Instead, we are here, waiting to see exactly how many UCP MLAs are going to vote to undermine our democracy, our economy, and our entire province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join in on the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Speech from the Throne. I think this Speech from the Throne is in some ways emblematic of this government because it is nothing but a giant bait and switch. It's a speech that went on to talk about the things that are important to Albertans, to talk about health care, affordability, jobs, but then the very next thing this government did was turn around and introduce an act that will worsen the affordability crisis and destroy investment and jobs in this province.

You know, the Speech from the Throne was filled with some pretty words, words that even acknowledged that the Constitution covers the division of power, not an act passed by this government, but in the very next breath turns around and claims that they can create a constitutional shield. It's a Speech from the Throne, I think, that was intended to placate Albertans, and, Madam Speaker, I think that that is the worst thing this government could be doing. Albertans need real help. They need a government that is focused on solving the problem, not pretending to solve the problem or pretending that there is no problem.

This is a government that, you know, claims to care about health care but picked fights with doctors, picked fights with nurses, drove the health care system to the brink of collapse repeatedly. We have a Premier who has mused about bringing in health care spending accounts that maybe pay for other things but maybe pay for your doctor. She's been back and forth and all over the map, won't give a clear message, and it's incredibly concerning because Albertans deserve to know that those services will be there for them.

I am a parent of a child, Madam Speaker, as I know you are a parent as well. I speak to other parents, and people are worried. They are worried that their children will get sick and that they will spend hours waiting outside a hospital to get triaged because of the actions of this government. Rather than being laser focused on solving that problem, on fixing the crisis in hospitals, on giving the people of this province confidence that if their children get sick, the health care system will be there for them, that they'll be able to go to the emergency room or call an ambulance or see their family doctor, this government is focused on bringing in an act that purports to do something which it cannot do, that is clearly unconstitutional, and that will create mass uncertainty. I think that that is an enormous problem.

7:40

This is, you know, a government that came forward and talked about affordability, that pretends to be doing something about the crisis, but their measures are entirely short-term and temporary fixes. We see no attempt to solve the larger problem, which is that inflation is high and wages aren't keeping pace. We see no attempt to reverse their damaging policies. Insurance skyrocketed under this government. Electricity rates skyrocketed under this government. They may have finally chosen to reverse their tax grab, but they haven't gone back in time and fixed the problem in retrospective years for Albertans. They certainly haven't done anything about the policies of theirs which have forced property taxes up throughout the province: the cutting of MSI, the downloading of policing costs onto municipalities. These things raised people's property taxes in some rural areas with their policing thing up to \$400 a household. That's a lot of money, Madam Speaker. This is a government that is all about lip service and not at all about solutions.

Albertans are looking to see their future here. They want their children to look to this province and see a future with good-paying, sustainable jobs, jobs on which they can afford to have a mortgage and pay their bills and have a reasonable lifestyle, just like we all have had in this province. Instead of doing something to build that economy in the future, to build those sustainable jobs, to ensure that we are investing in the right way, this is a government that is bringing in an act which began driving away investment before it was even tabled.

The problem is the uncertainty. The problem is that investors want to look to this province and be able to know what the laws are. That's not, I think, a huge request. We see this the world over. When there is uncertainty about what the laws in a jurisdiction are, investment flees, and that is exactly what is happening and what will continue to happen here in Alberta because this government has introduced an act that will allow them to overwrite laws, laws of this Legislature, in cabinet.

That's a huge problem. It means laws could change on a moment's notice. It means investors look to this jurisdiction and say: we can't predict what the outcome of our investment will be. That is a huge problem going forward into the future. If there is one thing that industry has been asking for consistently, it is certainty. They want to know what the rules will be so they can make investment decisions on that basis. That is not an unreasonable request. It kind of feels like in an advanced democracy the very least

we can do for investors is to provide them with certainty, but this government has brought in an act that will create mass uncertainty.

It isn't just me saying that. UCP cabinet ministers, UCP members have said that about this act, have promised Albertans that they would stand up against it. Now they're turning around and trying to mislead Albertans about what the act does, and I think that that is incredibly problematic. They're trying to say: oh, I had concerns, but those concerns have been placated. Well, honestly, Madam Speaker, this act is worse than I expected it to be – and I expected it to be bad – because in addition to being an attack on the Constitution, it is also fundamentally undemocratic. It uses the same language that caused Albertans so much concern when this government passed it in Bill 10 and apparently has learned zero lessons from that.

I would say, Madam Speaker, that at the end of the day my concern with this throne speech is that it does not address the pressing issues which presently face Albertans, and they are incredibly pressing issues. We have e-mails into my office all the time of people who can't find doctors, who can't get an ambulance, who are terrified that their children will get sick and that they will be waiting outside the children's hospital. We have messages every day of people who can't keep up with the cost of living, much of which was created by decisions this government made to raise taxes, to raise insurance rates, to allow electricity rates to skyrocket, to force up tuition and interest on student loans and all sorts of costs at a time when Albertans can least afford them. Add to that the fact that wages are nowhere near keeping pace, and people are concerned about their jobs and about having jobs that can cover their mortgage. This government has chosen not to do anything about that either, to make the situation worse by creating uncertainty that will drive away investment and drive out jobs.

I would say I am incredibly concerned, Madam Speaker, about this Speech from the Throne. I would say it is an attempt to pay, at best, lip service to the real and pressing and urgent concerns of the people in this province, people that every single one of us in this room was sent here to serve. I would urge the members opposite to consider that solemn duty that has been placed in us and take some real action on the real problems that face their constituents.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very pleased this evening to rise and speak to the throne speech and join the debate that has been started by members on my side of the House.

I'll start by talking about some of the reactions to the lead-up to the throne speech that I've heard in my constituency. They are not my adjectives, Madam Speaker; they are those words used by constituents in my riding as I was door-knocking in places that normally I wouldn't expect to have heard these adjectives, words like: nuts, crackers, whacko, dangerous. These words, along with words like "hijacked," are words used by constituents who are in their 80s and 90s, particularly women, to describe what they were hearing coming in the form of policy from the UCP government leading up to the throne speech, where we find the standing-up-to-Ottawa clause is really the skeleton upon which the throne speech is hung.

What they're asking and wondering aloud, long-term former Conservative supporters who will never vote Conservative again according to them, those women who were telling me these adjectives to describe what they felt the UCP policy was meaning to them, these seniors in particular are wondering: why? What is it all about? Why in the world do the Conservative members feel the

need to come up with a policy right now in the midst of the fear that they have for their own livelihoods – why bring on this uncertainty in the attack against Ottawa at this point in time when they're worried about making ends meet? They're worried about being able to afford a bus pass or maybe having to go to the food bank for the first time in their life.

I've never, Madam Speaker, had an 80- or 90-year-old woman, former Conservative voter, declare to me that they were never going to vote Conservative again and use words like "nuts" and "whacko" and "crackers," to quote directly from them, talking about their Conservative government that they feel has been hijacked. Indeed, the tail has been wagging the dog for a while in the party that's currently making government policy right now. It seems to be the fact that the tail is actually at the front bench, and the rump of the party is making those decisions. Indeed, there seems to be some truth to the word "hijacked," in the words of the constituents I'm talking to, in terms of who is actually in control of policy-making in the party, and it's Albertans who will suffer as a result of this hijacking.

The uncertainty that the standing-up-to-Ottawa portion of the job-killing sovereignty act inclusion in the Speech from the Throne is already something that's been remarked about by organizations as important as the Calgary Chamber of commerce, who have come out saying that it's going to be a detriment to our economy.

7:50

The focus really isn't something that should be on something like the sovereignty act right now; the focus should be on looking after those seniors who are concerned about their livelihood, making sure students feel that they can have a job to go to after they graduate if they decide to go to university here in the province at all, the people who were on AISH, who now are asked to give thanks to the government for giving back what they took from them before and, in fact, leaving them \$3,000 less well off than they otherwise would have been under an NDP policy. It's like drilling a hole in a boat and then asking the passengers to thank you for throwing them a life preserver. That's the analogy that comes to mind when I think of what the government has done with respect to benefits like AISH. The cruelty of it behooves me. Why indeed would the Premier decide it was a good thing to do to seek the thanks and generous goodwill of the people who are now getting AISH benefits reindexed when, in fact, they're \$3,000 less well off than they otherwise would have been?

I can think of some choice words that those constituents might use at the doorsteps regarding the government policy and the sovereignty act that's going to kill jobs because of the uncertainty it creates in this province, but "Why now; what for?" is the big question I'm hearing at the doors. Standing up to Ottawa? Sure. Protection of your interests? Sure. But focus on what's going on in the province right now, whether it's the small businesses that are in my constituency hoping that this Christmas shopping season just might allow them to survive into the next year, hoping that individuals might have enough money, perhaps, to spend in their stores to allow them to hire that one extra student to work part-time, hoping that the focus of the government is going to be on making sure that the support payments that people have relied upon are not going to be yanked and then handed back on an elastic-band method of looking after people in this province.

The uncertainty that the sovereignty act, that is included in the Speech from the Throne, is creating is being heralded as the exact wrong thing for the province to be considering right now, when, in fact, we're coming out of a pandemic, Madam Speaker. We're, hopefully, going to be seeing an incidence of smaller numbers

filling our emergency wards and children's emergency wards, but that's not happening right now. We have people who can't get medication for their children, children whose surgeries are being postponed. These are life-threatening issues, and what we're having the government focused on is creating a fight with Ottawa. That is something that's leaving people scratching their heads, not only the seniors in my riding but students and business owners as well, thinking: what in the world is the priority of this government doing, looking at something like picking a constitutional fight with Ottawa when, in fact, we've got some serious business at home to look after? Jobs, economy, health care, affordability: these things should be the focus of the government.

Yet the government is telling us, with respect to this sovereignty act, that indeed it doesn't do what we say it does. In fact, what it does: it gives them powers to change legislation without going back to the House. I've heard even the Premier, Madam Speaker, say that, no, that's not what it does. Well, we can read. Albertans are being taken for fools, because they can read as well, and that's exactly what this act allows the government to do. In fact, it's created quite a stir across the country because people are aghast that any government would have the audacity to try to grant these powers unto themselves, to usurp the legislative authority, to go around the course. That is alarming.

On many fronts this throne speech is an affront to Albertans, and I'm hearing that loud and clear at the doors. Madam Speaker, they're telling me that they want the election to happen sooner rather than later. They're ready. We're ready.

Let's adjourn debate, please.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Williams]

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise today and to take a few minutes to address the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, Bill 1. I think it's appropriate that we bring this into this Legislature to have this discussion.

Canada is a federal nation where the power to govern is divided between the federal government and the provincial governments across this nation. We are the second-largest nation in the world by geography, and we are a diverse people with unique languages and cultures. It is not possible to provide the government that this great nation needs and deserves by centralizing the power of government in one national body. Our founding fathers of Confederation understood this, so they crafted a constitution that recognizes this fact.

A strong federal system recognizes that national decisions need to be made by a national government and that the more local decisions must reflect the local realities and must be represented by the provincial levels of government. This federal relationship is not one of a parent-child relationship. Our federal system does not build in a power imbalance between a national government and the 10 provinces of this nation. The national government and the provinces are partners, having been given different responsibilities and different capacities to make law in the governing of our great nation.

These powers are outlined in the Canadian Constitution, primarily in sections 91 and 92, and it is the reason that we can clearly defend the statement that the powers set out in section 92 to the provinces of Canada are their sovereign powers or their rights. These rights are not, in most cases, constrained by the federal government or overseen by the federal government. They are not given to the provinces by the federal government, so they are the provinces' sovereign rights. For instance, the federal government oversees the funding and the deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces and the protection of our national sovereignty. Provinces have been derogated the power to oversee areas like education and health care. As of the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, Alberta has the right to ownership and to oversee the harvesting and the deployment of our natural resources.

Albertans have a long and, at times, acrimonious relationship with the federal government when the federal government attempts to interfere in our provincial rights, that are clearly outlined and defined in the Canadian Constitution. The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act has been drafted and, should it be passed, will, firstly, protect Albertans from federal legislation or policies that are unconstitutional or harmful to our province, to our people, or to our economic prosperity. It will enforce the Canadian Constitution's division of powers in recognition of both the federal and the provincial governments' respective and exclusive and sovereign areas of constitutional jurisdiction. In other words, unlike what some people will argue, this legislation actually upholds the democratic institution of federalism in this nation.

This will provide authority to the cabinet, when authorized by this Legislative Assembly, under the act to direct provincial entities to not enforce specific federal laws or policies with regard to provincial resources. It could create opportunities for building national awareness of federal intrusion into provincial areas that are the exclusive jurisdiction of this province, and it would shift the burden to the federal government to legally challenge Alberta's refusal to enforce unconstitutional or harmful federal laws or policies instead of Alberta having to initiate legal challenges and waiting years for a decision while those same federal laws or policies harm Albertans day in and day out.

Madam Speaker, in the short time that this bill has been before the House, His Majesty's Official Opposition has exaggerated and mischaracterized this bill. It is therefore time to set aside the spurious objections of the NDP and time to address how the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, should it be passed through this Legislature, will actually function and work.

8:00

A member of the Executive Council – that is, any minister, including the Premier – would introduce a motion in the Legislative Assembly for a proposed use of the act. This motion would identify a federal initiative, like a policy or a piece of legislation, as being, in the opinion of the consensus of the Legislative Assembly, unconstitutional, contrary to the Charter, or otherwise harmful to Albertans along with the nature of that harm.

In section 2 of the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act the bill clearly states:

Nothing in this Act is to be construed as

- (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the Constitution of Canada.

Full stop. I hope the opposition is listening.

- (b) authorizing any directive to a person, other than a provincial entity, that would compel the person to act contrary to or otherwise in violation of any federal law.

This act is saying that no one can be forced to break the law.

- (c) abrogating or derogating from any existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act.

There goes away another one of those arguments that we're taking away Canada's First Nations' rights. Hmm. Maybe they ought to read the act.

Clearly, many of the concerns of the opposition should be put to rest with this section of the bill. No action by the government of Alberta when enacting the provisions of this bill will "be contrary to the Constitution of Canada." This bill will not let the Alberta government pass legislation or enact regulations that will, unlike the actions of the federal government, intervene in an unconstitutional fashion in the rights of another level of government. This bill will not direct any person or provincial entity or business to be in violation of any federal law, and this bill recognizes and affirms Aboriginal treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act. Many of the Official Opposition's concerns are either the result of not reading the bill set before this House, or they are more interested in opposing for the sake of opposing rather than doing the actual job of being in opposition.

One of the mischaracterizations of the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act is that it is undemocratic. The Saskatchewan government has also passed a bill to address their concerns regarding the federal overreach into provincial jurisdiction called the Saskatchewan First Act, with the support, by the way, of the Saskatchewan NDP. Now, this act from the province of my birth is meant to confirm its exclusive provincial authority over its natural resources. Yet there is one key difference between the two acts. Saskatchewan's act sets up a tribunal, independent from the government, to determine if a federal measure is harmful or unconstitutional, and that tribunal makes recommendations to cabinet. Well, Alberta gives that authority to the people that should actually have it, the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly, to determine if a federal measure is harmful or unconstitutional. [interjection] Sir.

**Mr. McIver:** I was just listening intently to the speaker, and I was just curious if you had an opinion on why the Saskatchewan NDP is so much smarter than the Alberta NDP.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, sir. I would harbour that perhaps, like many of the farmers in Saskatchewan and across this province of Alberta, they tend to be very practical people, unlike perhaps some of the NDP that inhabit Alberta, and we see that this group of people look out for the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, just as the United Conservative Party is trying to look out for the people of Alberta.

The Alberta act gives the authority to decide if something is constitutional or unconstitutional to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, and that just makes sense. We're the ones that have been elected. We're the ones that should be looking at it. We're the ones that should be deciding on the interests and on behalf of the people of Alberta whether or not this should move forward, and we should look at whether an act or a bill that's been passed through the federal Parliament is actually unconstitutional.

In order to enhance the democratic transparency of this process, the government has committed to allowing free votes of all members in the consideration of the motion brought before the Chamber. Free debate, dialogue, and consideration of constituents' concerns will be the primary consideration, not party solidarity, not party discipline, but a free vote by the members of the Legislature.

If, in the collective wisdom of the Legislature, they pass a motion that

- (a) states that the resolution is made in accordance with this Act,
- (b) states that, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly, a federal initiative
  - (i) is unconstitutional on the basis that it
    - (A) intrudes into an area of provincial legislative jurisdiction under the Constitution of Canada, or
    - (B) violates the rights and freedoms of one or more Albertans under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
  - or
  - (ii) causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans . . .
- (d) identifies a measure or measures that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should consider taking in respect of the federal initiative . . .

So three things.

Regardless of the fearmongering surrounding this bill, it clearly states in this bill that it must have the democratic support of the Legislature. Our elected representatives must agree that the federal initiative is either unconstitutional or likely to create great harm to Albertans' rights and, finally and clearly, identify what should be done to address this federal overreach, all duly passed by this Legislature and constituting the democratic will of the people of Alberta through their elected representatives.

Mature democracies have a system of checks and balances, and the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act ensures that this happens by building in a judicial review within 30 days after the date of the decision or act. While some will suggest that 30 days is not long enough, I would argue that it is long enough and quite possible for a judicial challenge to move forward within this period of time.

Madam Speaker, to this point I've only covered what a federal system of government is and what the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act will actually do and how it will actually function. There are so many historical examples that could be used to justify the passage of this act, but today I'm only going to focus in on one example of why this act is so critical if Albertans and Canadians are going to continue to live within a federal system of government.

In its division of powers Canada's Constitution does not assign the environment to either the federal Parliament or to the provincial Legislatures. The Parliament can pass environmental law in an area of federal jurisdiction like fisheries and the provinces within their constitutional jurisdictions.

In June 2019 the federal government enacted Bill C-69, the Impact Assessment Act, or what became known in Alberta as the no-more-pipelines act. This act was passed through the House of Commons by the federal Liberal Party with the support of the federal NDP. This act established various types of federal assessments for oil and gas projects like pipelines. Alberta has argued that the Impact Assessment Act provided an effective federal veto over the development of Alberta owned and constitutionally recognized resources.

The actions of the federal government in passing this legislation have destabilized the economy of Alberta, it scared billions of dollars of capital out of the province, and it's resulted in hundreds if not thousands of businesses and individuals going bankrupt and becoming unemployed.

While the NDP were unwilling to confront this directly, the United Conservative Party government was willing to take this to the Alberta Court of Appeal and to get a ruling as to whether this

federal intrusion into Alberta's constitutional right to develop its resources was actually constitutional. While the court was listening to the arguments and considering its ruling, Albertans suffered. While the court took many months, finally the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled on May 10, 2022.

What did the Court of Appeal decide? One, they found the IAA to be, in their words, a "breathtaking pre-emption of provincial legislative authority." [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired] I'm going to have to leave it there.

**8:10**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The sovereignty act. There is no shred of evidence that this act will lead to economic growth: that's not me; it's Deborah Yedlin, the CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce. She talked about how the details of this act have gone further than business even expected, so essentially the act is worse than people feared it would be.

A ticking time bomb for the UCP's future: that's the Minister of Finance. It will create a constitutional and economic crisis that will hurt Alberta: that is the former Minister of Transportation and current minister of . . .

**An Hon. Member:** It doesn't matter.

**Ms Ganley:** It doesn't matter. Okay.

The minister of economic development: it's counterproductive and harmful.

I could go on. The CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce referred to it as an act that would create transactional friction and cause companies to rethink their decisions to come to Alberta. She went on to say that for people wanting to come here and build a life in this province, to take advantage of the opportunities that we have, the views that are being presented right now are not necessarily supporting the attraction of talent that we need.

The current minister of environment, former Minister of Energy, said, "I can tell you for certain, that the Sovereignty Act is not the solution . . . The Sovereignty Act [will] create instability and chaos."

This act is incredibly damaging. Madam Speaker, what investment needs is to know what the rules are. People who are making investment decisions, particularly large investment decisions, particularly in projects like carbon capture and storage, which are essential to the economic future of our province, look at those investment decisions very seriously. They look to the jurisdiction they are about to invest in, and do you know what one of the first things they look at is? Whether or not the rules will continue to be the rules into the future, whether or not they can have certainty that the rules under which they make their investment decisions will continue to be the rules that govern that decision while the investment is recouped and begins producing revenues.

That is absolutely essential. We saw it when Quebec threatened to leave the country. We have seen it in other nations that have had legal and political uncertainty. Investment flees. It is a consistent and well-documented . . . [interjection] Oh, I will cede the floor.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague. We're using some very strong language right now about the chilling effect on investment of a bill that was introduced yesterday, and I know that this is because that chilling effect on investment has been in place and working for many, many months as this bill was debated throughout the UCP leadership race. That chilling effect, what we're hearing from chambers of commerce, from the energy

industry, from business and investors, was one of the key reasons why the Official Opposition caucus decided to not just oppose Bill 1 at first reading but cause a standing division, to make clear our objection to this piece of legislation, which is already damaging the Alberta economy. I wondered if my hon. colleague would be able to speak a little bit to what we are hearing from business not just since the bill has been introduced but as it has already been in place for the last several months.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes, and thank you very much to my hon. colleague for the question. The bill has started having an effect already. What we are hearing from people in the business sector, from people in the oil and gas sector is that the impact on investment was being felt before the bill was even introduced. Now, that may seem odd, but again the problem, Madam Speaker, is the destabilizing effect, and it has that destabilizing effect regardless of what the actual impacts are. Bringing forward a bill on behalf of the government that is essentially intended to allow the government to overwrite different jurisdictions and different legislation is incredibly problematic. It gives people uncertainty as to what the rules are.

The truth is that with respect to this bill, with respect to the sovereignty act, it was never, under any circumstances, able to do what the government claimed it would do. The division of powers is set out in the Constitution. They can pass whatever act they want on the government side, and it won't change that fact. The division of powers is set out in the Constitution. Acts that federal and provincial governments undertake are illegal or they are not.

What the sovereignty act does do is create mass uncertainty. It means that people invest, and then someone can challenge the law or the government can attempt to overwrite the law and they have to sue, and they are tied up in court for years. I don't know, Madam Speaker, if you've ever been involved in a legal action, especially large commercial actions, but they can take years to make their way through the court system. In the interim that money that has been invested is not generating a return. So why would anyone ever choose to invest their money where it could be tied up in years of legal action, having no returns, while we try to sort out whether or not the government can overwrite the Constitution – they can't; that will be the answer – but that doesn't mean that it won't take an incredibly long time for this to go through the system.

That's where I'd like to begin. I'd like to also turn to the act, because, fortunately, it's incredibly short, so I've had the opportunity to read it since it was introduced, multiple times. [interjection] It's true.

The substance of the act is in section 4. What it allows the government to do is that – and these are the operative words – the Lieutenant Governor in Council, cabinet, can

suspend or modify the application or operation of all or part of an enactment . . . or specify or set out provisions that apply in addition to, or instead of, any provision of an enactment.

An enactment is legislation. That means that Executive Council, i.e. cabinet, is essentially deleting and rewriting legislation – that is pretty fundamentally antidemocratic – legislation which my constituents, incidentally, sent me here to review. I think that that is incredibly concerning.

**Member Ceci:** Can I cut in?

**Ms Ganley:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Colleague. It's part 4 that I've heard described as a Henry VIII clause. I wonder if you could talk about the antidemocratic or dictatorial process that then got codified as a Henry VIII clause. That would be helpful.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much to my hon. colleague for that question. That's a delightful, legal nerd question, so I'm happy to answer it. A Henry VIII clause is titled after Henry VIII because he essentially attempted to circumvent the Parliament so as to allow himself to legislate without the Parliament or the legislative branch. And that's exactly what this does. These things are referred to as Henry VIII clauses when they make an attempt to work around the legislative branch, because in our system of democracy the Legislature serves a certain function. Now, it happens to be the case that when you have a majority government, they can normally get their legislation passed.

But I think the opposition still serves an incredibly important democratic function, regardless of who sits in opposition, because they do several things. They can propose amendments – maybe those amendments get voted down, but in this place, this room, everything we do and say is on the record. What that means is that the citizens of this province, who are governed by those laws, can listen to what we say. They can read what we say. The media can come into this place. They can hear what we say, and they can report on it. That means that the public knows what's going on in here.

8:20

The public does not know what's going on in cabinet. Those discussions occur behind closed doors. Even government private members aren't necessarily privy to the discussions that are occurring in that room, to the decisions that are being made in that room, so circumventing the Legislature is incredibly problematic for democracy because it means that laws are becoming laws before the public has had a chance to see them.

The thing about the legislative branch is that it takes a while to legislate. It takes a while for acts to pass through this House. The importance of that isn't what we all in here get to say about the acts; it's that that information gets to the public. People in the public who understand the area of law, who will be governed by these laws have the opportunity to stand up and object and say: you know, that's not going to work for the following reason. They have the opportunity to bring their values and their expertise to bear and to essentially shine sunlight on what's going on, and then other people can object. I mean, that's how democracy is supposed to work at its core, so that's incredibly problematic.

Now, as the member stated, in order for cabinet, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to have this power, we have to pass a motion in this House. I think the important distinction here is that the motion doesn't say what the law that cabinet ultimately writes is going to do. It's just a motion that says, essentially: we think what the federal government did was bad. That's what the substance of the motion is. I mean, that doesn't tell the public what the law is going to say. That doesn't serve the same function that the legislative branch is supposed to serve. The motion is not what my constituents sent me here to debate. My constituents did not send me here to bless a motion that says, "We don't like some law of the federal government's" and then have that law rewritten behind closed doors in the privacy of a cabinet room. That is not how democracy is intended to work, and it is fundamentally antidemocratic. [interjection]

**Ms Gray:** Thank you to my colleague. In the debate on Bill 1 there seems to be an argument between the government and all experts and the opposition around what needs to happen in the Legislature in order to enable these things to happen. One of my main concerns is the fact that it will take only a motion passed by the majority here to enable changing of legislation.



Right now, when we make laws, as we are doing with the debate of Bill 1, bills become introduced, they are debated at multiple stages, there is a Committee of the Whole process, there is transparency, and we are all involved in that, and it's a lot of work. But a single government motion to then kick off a cabinet making changes to laws is a completely different thing, and I don't think we're talking about apples to apples. We're talking about something else entirely, and saying that the motion is sufficient strikes me as ridiculous.

Does the legislation, I ask my colleague, define how the motion needs to read?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much for the question. The legislation does in fact talk about what the motion needs to do, and I think that this is incredibly important because in legislation what the actual words say is incredibly important. In this case there is a very critical "or" in the legislation. It talks about the Assembly approving a resolution. It needs to be made in accordance with the act, and it needs to state either/or that "in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly a federal initiative is unconstitutional [because] it intrudes into provincial . . . jurisdiction" – I'm not really sure why the Legislative Assembly is having a legal opinion, but there we go – or it "violates the rights and freedoms" or – a very important "or" – "causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans." Then it has to set out the harm but only if the harm was the basis of the motion.

So what it means is that there are two different paths, potentially, for this motion to come through the House, and it doesn't necessarily need to set out exactly what the problem is. It could just say that, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly, it's unconstitutional, which, given some of the legal opinions we've been hearing in here today, is, I would say, deeply troubling.

It also talks about identifying measures that they should consider. Well, I mean, that's not helpful. Again: should consider. It doesn't in any way impede cabinet's ability to do a lot more or a lot less than that. That is highly problematic. It also – again, a motion is different than an act. An act has to be debated at multiple stages, and it's not about the number of hours of debate; it's about the number of hours that the thing is before the House.

The real democratic process isn't just occurring in here; it's occurring out there in the public. It means that reporters need to be live to the concern; they need to write stories, stories that get to the public. People talk to each other, more stories are generated, people call their MLAs, MLAs say things in the House, and it goes to more stories: that's how democracy is supposed to work. That sort of public, media portion of that is absolutely critical. So the idea that you could pass a motion in one afternoon or one evening and that it somehow serves the same function as a fulsome public debate on legislation is just absurd. It's absurd.

Now, the members also seem to like to mention this interpretation section, section 2, which I would honestly call basically the legal equivalent of an incantation, as if the government thinks that it can wave its hand over something and say, "Unconstitutional," and that somehow renders it so. That's not how it works, Madam Speaker. It's not how it works. You can't just – the way the act operates is either unconstitutional or it isn't. Simply naming it constitutional – they could've called it the constitutional act; that wouldn't have changed it either. The operation of the act is what renders it constitutional or unconstitutional. Calling it that is entirely unhelpful. I think that, you know, obviously the government is attempting – attempting – to achieve something here, but I think they're failing on the clear substance of the issue.

It's also worth talking about the judicial review provisions. I know that my hon. colleague who spoke before me was saying that 30 days is plenty of time; I would beg to differ. First of all,

it's 30 days not just to file but to serve. It needs to be filed and served within 30 days, so someone has to object to the decision, get to a lawyer, get it drafted, have the legal research done, get an opinion, get it filed in the court, and then manage to serve it as well. I mean, it's a lot for 30 days, and it's going to really reduce the number of people and public agencies that are able to engage in this process.

In addition, I think one of the things that's funny about this, that's worth noting anyway, is that the government has suggested that the standard of review to be applied by the court is patent unreasonableness. The interesting thing is that in 2008 the Supreme Court did away with the three standards of review. There used to be correctness, reasonableness, and patent unreasonableness, and the court said: "You know, this is a bit silly to have these three standards. We're just going to have, like, either you're reviewing it for correctness or you're reviewing it for reasonableness."

Now, I'm not saying that the Legislature can't put that language in; they certainly can, but it's a really obvious and transparent attempt to try to oust the constitutional jurisdiction of the court as much as possible. It's essentially the government saying: we don't think our decisions would stand up to a normal standard of review, so we're going to try to impose this additional standard of review, and we're going to try to shorten the timeframe as much as possible to keep people out. All of these steps, every section of this legislation is essentially intended to oust democracy, to allow cabinet to pass laws under secrecy. This, to return to the original point, is what creates the economic chaos.

**8:30**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise to speak to Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This bill will be one of the most important put forth by this government, and I am proud to speak and be a part of its review in this House.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

To start with, I would like to read the preamble to give a sense of the purpose of the bill and the reasons for introducing this act. The preamble states:

Whereas Albertans possess a unique culture and shared identity within Canada;

I would agree.

Whereas it is the role of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to preserve and promote this unique culture and shared identity;

Whereas the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 are foundational documents that establish the rights and freedoms of Albertans and the relationship between the provincial and federal orders of government, including the division of legislative powers between them;

Whereas the Province of Alberta is granted rights and powers under the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 and is not subordinate to the Government of Canada;

Whereas actions taken by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada have infringed on these sovereign provincial rights and powers with increasing frequency and have unfairly prejudiced Albertans;

Whereas actions taken by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada have infringed on the rights and freedoms of Albertans enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in an unjustified and unconstitutional manner;

Whereas the people of Alberta expect the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada to respect the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 as the governing documents of the relationship between Canada and Alberta and to abide by the division of powers and other provisions set out in those documents;

Whereas the people of Alberta expect the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada to respect the rights and freedoms of Albertans enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and

Whereas it is necessary and appropriate for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to set out measures that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should consider taking in respect of actions of the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada that are unconstitutional or harmful to Albertans and for Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to have a free vote on such measures according to their individual judgment . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government was elected to represent the interests and values of Albertans. However, when our government is prevented from exercising its full capacity to govern, it must take the necessary steps to regain its power. For too long Alberta has been a victim of federal overreach within multiple areas of our jurisdiction. As a result, our economic development and our rights have been impeded by those at the federal level of government. This means that Albertans are being held back, which is something that pains me to see.

The sovereignty act addresses this by providing a mechanism for our province to identify areas where the federal government has been reaching beyond its jurisdiction or significantly harming Albertans. From there, the House would debate resolutions and regain our rightful authority over the decision-making process. When our government has the ability to exercise itself fully, we have the ability to do what the good people of this province have entrusted us to do, and that's put Alberta first. Bill 1 allows us to fight back against unjustified mandates that rob our citizens of the right to choose their own path and follow the Alberta dream.

As the parliamentary secretary for agrifood and someone who has been heavily involved in the agricultural industry for my entire life, this bill restores my hope for the agricultural sector, a hope that has been threatened because of ill-informed and intrusive federal policy. For example, the federal government has recently vowed to reduce Canadian agriculture emissions by 30 per cent by 2030 with no clear plan to get there. In seven short years they expect to reduce agricultural emissions by 30 per cent. Mr. Speaker, to me, this is a clear display of their complete lack of understanding and, if I can be quite frank, the complete devaluation of Alberta's farming industry. In the name of reducing GHG emissions by .045 of a per cent, the federal government is supporting a project that will harm farmers and put Alberta's food supply at risk.

The price of fertilizer has already gone up due to many factors. One of them is the increasing energy costs; another is global instability in trade sanctions with Russia and the export curbs in China, two of the world's largest fertilizer exporters. But now farmers are being told that these necessary supplies are Trudeau's next target. Fertilizer use directly improves crop yield; we all know that. When agricultural production suffers, the price of food increases. This means that in addition to the financial difficulties facilitated by poor federal inflation policy and the rising cost of gas and energy, grocery bills will continue to rise. Once again, working Albertans will suffer the consequences of tone-deaf federal goals.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are exhausted from the constant war the federal government is waging on our pivotal industries. I am proud to be a part of a government that refuses to sit back and have our province's economy stripped away. That is why Bill 1 exists. It's

not just farmers that the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act aims to protect. It is firearms owners. It is those who want to choose their own medical treatments. It is everyone affected by the stunting of Alberta's energy sectors, from business owners to the oil workers. It is all Albertans who are tired of being left behind, forgotten, and disregarded until, of course, it is time for the federal government to come collect their taxes.

Our government standing up for Alberta does not mean we are looking to cause major disruption. We will follow any Supreme Court rulings regarding our use of Bill 1, and it's important to note that this bill is designed to be used only when it is drastically necessary. Our provincial government is willing to work with the federal government wherever we can reasonably do so, and we have shown that through our co-operation over the years. However, when we are ordered to uphold laws and regulations that are unconstitutional or otherwise harmful, we cannot sit back at the mercy of any institution that violates the rights of our citizens.

I also want to assure Albertans that this legislation is in no way meant to cause division between our provincial government and our federal counterparts. We are actually looking to unify, not divide. However, that can only be done when Alberta is respected as a partner and a major contributor to our country, and while it is unfortunate that we must take such measures to do so, we are justified in using this legislation to demand our rightful place in this Confederation. Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members in this House are immensely proud to call Canada home. I wake up every day with gratitude for the opportunity to live, work, and be a part of history within this great country.

In allowing our provincial government to act in accordance with our constitutional jurisdiction, this act will ease the clear tensions that have been caused by federal overreach. It is with the security this act provides that we can begin to move forward as partners with, rather than subjects of, the federal government. It is because of the immense respect I have for the work that has gone into making our country what it is that I believe we should honour the Constitution that founded the country of Canada to begin with. Within this Constitution provinces are given the right to govern areas of their domain, matters of local nature, with confidence. It is through the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act that we aim to protect this right. I look forward to seeing many members here stand with me in support of this act, in support of our province, in support of Alberta and all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there members wishing to add to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton . . .

**Ms Pancholi:** Whitemud.

**The Acting Speaker:** Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Come on.

**The Acting Speaker:** It's been a long time.

**8:40**

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long time, and it's a pleasure to rise to speak today to Bill 1, which I think – let's be honest; we all know it's called the Alberta sovereignty act. We'll just leave it at that because that's what it is.

Mr. Speaker, I really struggle to know where to begin because there are so many fundamental flaws not only with the bill itself but actually with the nature of the debate that we are hearing in the Legislature today. If there is ever any proof or evidence needed as to why it is inappropriate for Members of this Legislative Assembly

to be the determining body of whether or not something is unconstitutional or not, it is just the quality of debate that we're hearing tonight from the UCP members that will confirm that, because they clearly do not understand the Constitution. They do not understand the rule of law. They do not understand their role as legislators when it comes to enacting legislation and reviewing legislation. They do not understand the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our government. They do not understand federalism and division of powers. So clearly the current members of the government caucus are not qualified to be making any sort of determination about, you know, what's constitutional, what causes harm.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, from my position, when I think about what causes and is causing harm to Albertans right now, it's perhaps this government's ignoring of a crisis in children's health care. That is causing harm to Albertans, but they don't seem to be caring about that, so I don't really trust the government's judgment when it comes to making determinations about what causes harm to Albertans when they are the ones causing harm.

Let's go back, because it's been very interesting to hear members of the government caucus pick and choose sort of the clauses of the bill that clearly they've been told to read out to show that this is a constitutional bill and it'll be fine and it's not so bad without actually getting into the meat of the bill. Now, I know that not all members of the cabinet had actually even read the bill before they declared they were going to support it. We know that the deputy-deputy Premier, co-Deputy Premier, second to the right-hand man of the right-hand man of the Premier – not entirely sure what the Member for Lethbridge-East's current title is, but he acknowledged publicly that he had not even read the bill before he decided that he was in support of it. So to help him along and any other members of the UCP caucus that haven't taken the lengthy amount of time it takes to read seven pages, Mr. Speaker, of their government Bill 1, we'll help them out because I think it's very important that all Albertans are clear about what's actually contained in this bill.

First of all, let's begin by citing out and reading out the whereas clauses. That's very flowery and very nice, but that is not actually the meat and potatoes of the act. The whereas clauses are very nice to sort of set the tone, but they are actually not legally enforceable the way Members of this Legislative Assembly on the government side would like to believe.

Similarly, simply in section 2 stating, "Don't worry; this is all constitutional; don't worry; we're not going to abrogate or derogate from any existing Aboriginal rights," does not make it so, Mr. Speaker, just like saying, "This is a lawful law," does not make it lawful. They actually have to look at the rest of the provisions of the bill and in the act and see how they would be applied, how they'd be interpreted, how they will be in operation to actually determine whether or not it's constitutional. Let's do that, because I think that's critically important.

Now, I want to highlight that the members of the government caucus would like to think that it is the NDP who are criticizing this bill, and I am not surprised that that would be very, I guess, convenient for them in terms of their understanding of the world and sort of what's happening here. It's just easy to make it political partisanship.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you got a chance. I enjoyed watching the press conference as the Premier tried to speak to Bill 1 and her Minister of Justice, who couldn't even answer questions fundamentally about the bill, was trying to bring in his deputy minister to answer questions, who, by the way, refused to. It was very clear, from the technical briefing and from everything we've heard since, that the press, the media, political scientists, constitutional

lawyers across this province, across this country have been very clear that the intent of this act, the implications of this act, and actually how it will be operationalized is not only an affront to the Constitution, but it's an affront to democracy and to the rule of law. They can try to pin this on the opposition – I understand why it might be convenient for their little zone of echo chamber – but the reality is that Albertans, experts, constitutional lawyers across this country have noted that there are significant problems with this bill not just around the unconstitutionality. [interjection] Yes, I give way.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my hon. colleague. I just was going to suggest that, yes, there have been so many lawyers and analysts, reporters who have written stories and are doing analysis on this bill. I was just looking at one titled Danielle Smith and the War Against Ottawa Measures Act, that has nearly 9,000 comments, with the most liked comment being: "Incredibly Draconian attempt at a power grab from an embarrassing political party." This is just one of hundreds of articles and commentary pieces that lawyers and many, many others are putting out there because of how badly this impacts Alberta's ability to go forward and to be seen as a great place to do business. It is putting a chill on investment, and people are watching very, very closely the debate that is happening here in this place and the concerns that are being raised.

I simply wanted to say that I think it's important to note that.

**Ms Pancholi:** Yeah. I want to thank you for adding to my comments, to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, because it's true. It is widespread concern and, frankly, outrage from Albertans and Canadians about the content of this bill. What's important, Mr. Speaker, is – I've read the sort of tortured clarification or explanation that came out from the Premier today trying to clarify how this bill will work, but none of what was clarified is actually what's in the content of the bill.

Let's be clear that the bill, in section 3, indicates that a motion may be brought forward by a cabinet member and that the Legislative Assembly may approve that motion. Contrary to what the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon said, it's not a unanimous motion that needs to be passed; it's merely by a majority. The Legislative Assembly can simply pass a motion saying we believe something is unconstitutional or we believe it "causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans." They just have to claim that they're making this motion under this act, and then they can, under subsection (d), "identify a measure or measures that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should consider taking in respect of the federal initiative."

This is important, Mr. Speaker, because today we heard the Premier try to claim that in the motion any amendments that would happen to an enactment, any changes, any suspensions would be contained in the motion that is passed by the Legislative Assembly. That is, frankly, not what is in the bill. The bill actually frames it very clearly in subsection (d) that the motion that would be passed by the Legislative Assembly would be a recommendation. It would be something where they would identify "a measure or measures" – not specific legislative amendments to bills – that the cabinet should consider. "Consider" means they can choose to do otherwise. It is a recommendation, and that is all.

So this motion is not a substitute, Mr. Speaker, for the legislative process, which I would think all of the members of this House would have a vested interest in ensuring that we protect. That process is, of course – apparently, we need to remind the members on the government side how legislation is passed, but it requires three readings. There's an opportunity for amendments at Committee of the Whole. There's the time that is spent and invested

in making sure that all members have the opportunity to speak at length and at three different readings about the content of the bill.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Speaker?

**Ms Pancholi:** I'll give way.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you for that. You know, I had to jump up because I had the honour of sitting in while the Premier spoke to this bill on first reading earlier. You know, I should have looked at *Hansard*, but I was actually paying fairly close attention. She said something along the lines of being open to working with opposition and being open to discussion here on the Chamber floor. To your point, I'll be very curious because we've not heard – there are some lawyers on that side of the House as well, and we've not heard from them yet. I'm not saying they won't join debate; I'm certain they will. I am actually quite curious to see if the members on that side of the House will be open to discussion and to possible amendments from our side of the House. As it seems so far, they're not. In fact, from some of the comments we've heard tonight, they seem to be in denial of the substance of the bill.

8:50

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for bringing that up because I actually think there should be a potential for significant amendments that would come from the government side. The reason for that is that I can imagine that there should be a lot of concern, particularly from private members of the government caucus, about the fact that their ability as legislators is being significantly hamstrung by this bill. What it is doing is that they're giving up their privileges and entitlements as private members to be able to represent their constituents in debating amendments to legislation. They're giving that up, and they're giving it to their cabinet colleagues.

Now, let's be clear. At this point in time, of the government caucus – what? – almost half, three-quarters are now part of cabinet. I don't know; it's such a large cabinet amongst all of their cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries. Most of them feel pretty okay about it because I guess they get to be part of that cabinet that gets to make changes to legislation without going through the Legislative Assembly. But there's still a handful, I think, a few government members that are not in cabinet, and those ones, Mr. Speaker, I think would have a vested interest in making sure that their rights as an elected member of this House and their privileges to be able to debate legislation are preserved.

This is my challenge to the government members. If they are so okay with this idea that changes to legislation can be made solely by cabinet on the recommendation, perhaps, of the Legislative Assembly, that the cabinet can then go away and suspend or modify or add to legislation by an order in council, if they are comfortable with that, I ask them to consider if they would be comfortable with that if the Alberta NDP were in government and it was an Alberta NDP cabinet.

This is precisely, this bill – I know that this government is pretty short-sighted in how it makes decisions and how it implements things and how it brings forward things, but they're bringing this forward to really centralize power in the cabinet and the Premier, Mr. Speaker. That's what this does. It allows the cabinet to make legislation and to take away the privileges of private members. If they're not concerned about it now because they are the government, I ask them to think how they will feel six months from now, when some of them are still here as opposition members and they think of the prospect of an Alberta NDP government doing the same thing.

You ask to give way?

**Member Irwin:** Yes. Thank you. You know, I just wanted to quickly jump in – and then we won't intervene anymore; I promise – and echo that point. It was actually our colleague from Lethbridge-West who has been quite vocal on Bill 1. I'd like to just quote her. She mentioned a very similar point, saying: "If the NDP win in May, would the UCP want us to have these grossly undemocratic and dictator-like powers? If not... why do the UCP..."

**An Hon. Member:** Fearmongering.

**Member Irwin:** "... think it's a good idea that they have them?"

Fearmongering, sure. This is the heckling that we're hearing from the other side. I'd love to hear, perhaps, you know, the Member for Lethbridge-East; he might want to weigh in. As has been noted also by my colleague for Lethbridge-West, the Deputy Premier supports the act, although he admitted he hadn't read it all, and he did mention that the Premier's office didn't tell him how to vote on it. I'd love to hear him join debate and perhaps defend his position on a bill that he's not read. Yay. Listen, I'm no lawyer. I've said that – oh, I don't know – a thousand times in this House, but even I've read the bill multiple times. Did I understand it all? Maybe not, but I've read it.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. You know, as I mentioned, I'm willing to maybe even read it out to the Member for Lethbridge-East. It won't take very long; it's a very short bill. It is important to note that this is the key point, I think, for the government members. We hear the minister for – I'm sorry; I'm going to forget. He was Infrastructure. I can't keep up now with all the changes.

The Member for Calgary-Currie had talked about how this is fearmongering, right? You know, that member, I believe, is also a lawyer, I understand. So I wonder, you know, what he thinks about the idea of section 4 of the bill. Subsection (1)(a) actually says:

- (a) if the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that doing so is in the public interest ...

Again, that's cabinet.

... [may] direct a Minister responsible for an enactment ... under ... the Government Organization Act to, by order,

Those two words, "by order," are carrying a lot of weight. Basically, what it says is that by an order in council the cabinet can

- (i) suspend or modify the application or operation of all or part of an enactment ...
- (ii) specify or set out provisions that apply in addition to, or instead of, any provision of an enactment.

That basically means, Mr. Speaker – we've been through this as this Legislature. This group of MLAs has been through this before. This is the same language that appeared in the Public Health Act, that granted emergency powers to cabinet to change legislation.

This is the same language of legislation that drew the outrage and ire not only generally of Albertans but particularly of members of the UCP party, Mr. Speaker, members who are on the far right, who said: this is the centralization of too much power into cabinet and into the Premier's hands. They were deeply concerned. In fact, I would have to look – and there's a whole slew of information I'd have to go through to dig it up – but I'm sure that our Premier now had commented on the Public Health Act, and I'm sure she was outraged about that granting of emergency powers in the context of public health to cabinet and the Premier because it is so extraordinary to bypass the function of the Legislative Assembly.

Those provisions: I don't need to remind this government about what happened when they tried to make those changes to the Public

Health Act. We ended up having a committee and a review. They tried to reverse – and they did – most of the changes that they made because it so outraged Albertans and Canadians. So when members now of this government caucus say that we are fearmongering, this is the exact same language that caused them no end of grief.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Honestly, I sit here and I think: I don't want to convince these members to change their minds. They clearly haven't been convinced by the law, by their constituents, by, you know, the business community, who's saying: you're absolutely creating uncertainty; you're going to be creating economic chaos; you're going to drive away investors and development and growth; there's nothing in this act that's going to actually contribute to economic growth. They're not listening to that. That's fine. I would like all of these UCP MLAs to be on the record, as they already are, in support of this bill because that is showing Albertans who they truly are.

In particular, I have to highlight the stellar cast of leadership candidates, who all went on the record to say how outrageous the sovereignty act is with the economic uncertainty, the chaos, that this was going to be for sure an election loser for them. The current Minister of Municipal Affairs, the current Minister of Finance – I can't remember – the current Minister of Jobs, Economy, and Northern Development, of trade and immigration: all those candidates stood up and talked about how bad the sovereignty act would be for Alberta, how bad it would be for their party. Yet, ooh, a title change in the name of the bill or – I don't know – maybe being given a cushy cabinet position and then not just given a cushy cabinet position but given all these powers under the sovereignty act as a cabinet member to be able to make legislative changes: well, we know how strong their principles are and how deeply they run, Mr. Speaker. Now they're on record to show Albertans.

Now, we've always in the opposition been pretty clear as to what we believed the values of this party to be, which, frankly, has been really hard to follow. They don't seem to be guided by values but by self-preservation, although, honestly, clearly they're not even very good at that because I don't think this bill is going to help them with that at all. But let's be clear about who we are, right? And I think that's actually what the UCP is doing. The Premier and every MLA and every cabinet minister are being pretty clear about who they are. They are very comfortable, Mr. Speaker, with undermining democracy, with usurping democratic institutions, with centralizing power in a cabinet, with undermining the rights of locally elected representatives to represent their constituents, to be engaged in debate on legislation, to do their jobs as legislators. They are very comfortable with all of that being thrown under the water if they think they can stick it to Ottawa. And that's fine. I think: be on the record; be on the record for who you are.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in my constituency nobody brings this up. Nobody cares about this. Actually, I should mention, not just in my constituency. I spent a fair bit of time in constituencies all across this province, from Fort McMurray to Calgary, all over Calgary, to Lethbridge, to Medicine Hat, and I've talked to constituents all over this province. And guess what? What they care about is affordability. They care about being able to pay their bills. They care about being able to access health care for their senior parents, for their own needs, and for their children. That's what they care about. They care about a resilient jobs economy, not scaring away investment, not scaring away talent.

Mr. Speaker, if you listen to anybody in Calgary right now who is talking about the number one challenge they face in their economy, it is attracting talent. That's where it's all at. Who is going to want to come and invest their dollars, their life, their family in Alberta when they have a dictatorial provincial government who

is creating incredible uncertainty and a lack of predictability? We've already seen the implications of that.

The UCP members of this Assembly want to focus on putting their name on the record for centralizing power in the growing, maybe, cabinet. That's fine, Mr. Speaker.

9:00

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner is going to add to the debate tonight.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me here tonight. I want to stand and be on the record to say that I support the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

I want to talk about this from maybe a little different perspective. I want to talk about how we actually got here. Why did Albertans ask us to introduce a bill that reminds everyone in Canada what constitutional rights we have as a province? Because our equal partner – not parent or senior partner but an equal partner – in Confederation is driving drunk. They just can't stay in their lane, Mr. Speaker, and this is the reason why this bill has come forward now.

When we take a look, when Albertans take a look at these types of legislation, I think that they need to take a look at: what is their litmus test? What's the litmus test that Albertans can use to determine which way to go on this issue? I recommend that they read or watch CBC. You heard me right, Mr. Speaker. After all, CBC, which receives 1.2 billion of Trudeau bucks every year is simply just state media. If you hear it on CBC, you can be sure that the Trudeau-NDP coalition wrote it. So my recommendation is that if you hear it on CBC, you know exactly which way you need to go in Alberta.

What we've heard here tonight, even in this Chamber, is the NDP constantly going with their leader Jagmeet Singh and his close friend and ally and coalition member Justin Trudeau to continue to stop what is the Alberta advantage. The NDP here in Alberta had four years to be able prove to Albertans whether or not they could do it better, and in 2019 a million Albertans said: no more; we won't do that again. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Mr. Speaker, they will not be fooled again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about another reason why we are where we are here today. According to the Library of Parliament, in 2018 Alberta sent \$46.7 billion of tax revenue to Ottawa. What did we receive back? Twenty-nine point five billion in expenditures into Alberta. That comes in the health transfers, social transfers. But what's the difference? Seventeen point two billion dollars stayed in Ottawa. What did they do with it? Did they take that to make a better Canada? Did they make it a better place? No, they used it to buy votes in eastern Canada. This is what's bothering Albertans and has been bothering Albertans for decades. This is the reason why we are here now talking about a piece of legislation that reminds Ottawa, reminds Justin Trudeau and his close friend Jagmeet Singh that they need to stay in their own lane.

We have enumerated constitutional rights. This Constitution shows us as equal partners in Confederation, but we have seen anything but an equal partnership. Now, in the 1950s and '60s – I'll give you an example in terms of health spending – the feds gave us back 50 per cent. In other words, we transferred money over; they gave us back 50 per cent. Well, that's terrible, you'd think, because we should get back the full 100 per cent, but we don't. They gave us back 50 per cent, but is that bad? It's bad, but you know what? It's worse today. They only give us 21.5 per cent for health transfers back into our province today. Where's the rest of the money, Mr. Speaker?

This is what's bothering Albertans – this is what bothers Albertans – to know that this money, that they work hard for, is

going over to Ottawa for their own pet projects, not coming back into Alberta to make Alberta a great place to raise a family, to start a business, to be able to have prosperity. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House the Conservatives will continue always to fight for the prosperity of Albertans. That's our first and primary responsibility in this House. Yet all we've heard tonight – and I've been listening carefully to the members opposite – is them running a block for their good friend Justin Trudeau in Ottawa.

What would the federal response be, Mr. Speaker, if we decided to move outside of our lane and go into federally protected constitutional rights? What if we went and collected our own income tax and said: "You know what? We'll cut you a cheque for what you're worth." Maybe Albertans might be okay with that, but that is not our constitutional right, and that's why we don't do it. You have never heard arguments in this House or arguments in Alberta to go into federally protected constitutional territory. But on a regular basis what we see from the federal government is moving into provincial territory.

Not only do they do that, Mr. Speaker – and I just showed you those health transfer funds – are they giving us less for the money that we send over there, but also any money that we actually do give them: there are always strings attached to it; we have to do it their way. Well, the things that are done in Alberta are different than they are done in Toronto. We need to recognize that. Our society here runs differently than it does over – maybe the NDP does the same thing as in Toronto, and maybe they should move there if they want to. But here in Alberta we'd like to be able to keep what we have, and we'd also like to be able to make sure that we have good-quality products, services, health, and education. Keeping some of that money here to be able to provide for Albertans' needs is what I'd like to see.

Mr. Speaker, you know all too well the golden rule: he who has the gold makes the rules. Unfortunately, this is what we've seen from Ottawa on a regular basis. They've got the ability to tax, they take the money, and they decide what's going to happen in Alberta, and this is what's bothering Albertans.

I want to finish with an example here. In my riding, Lantic sugar, better known as Rogers sugar, is the only place that they actually produce sugar beets to create sugar. We compete: Lantic sugar in Taber, Alberta, against cane sugar, which comes from other jurisdictions. We don't obviously produce cane here in Canada. On

a regular basis, I have these guys, the owners of Lantic sugar, telling me: "You know what, sir? We are constantly asking ourselves: when the United States does not have a carbon tax, why do we do it up here in Canada, just across the border?" Mr. Speaker, as you know, my riding of Taber-Warner is right on the border. I am always seeing businesses saying: "Why wouldn't we go down over the border? They don't have a carbon tax down there." But we have a federal government that thinks the solution is to triple that carbon tax. Is that the solution to be able to keep Lantic sugar in Taber, Alberta? Is that the answer to keep businesses in Edmonton, that these members opposite are supposed to be championing? I doubt it.

We've chased too many businesses out of this province through the carbon tax, through bad policy when the NDP were in there. In fact, I think there was an interesting report that I read a few years ago that said that the NDP, when they were in power, chased billions, tens of billions of dollars out of this province through the introduction of the carbon tax and other egregious pieces of legislation. Mr. Speaker, it's rich to hear the members opposite lecturing us on a bill that's going to chase out businesses when, when they were in government, for four years they chased out tens of billions of dollars because of their poor business understanding.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I just want to finish by once again stating what I started with. It is my pleasure to be able to support the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act to hopefully hold Ottawa in their lane so that we can have a strong Canada foundation to be able to build a prosperous society for all people rather than having them dictate to us how we should do things in Alberta.

**9:10**

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 1.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:11 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 1, 2022

Day 3

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Ms Rosin  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Bilous  
Goehring  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith, Mark

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Allard  
Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 1, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Ms Brooklyn Elhard. Please join in in the language of your choice.

#### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Minister of Technology and Innovation has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the students and teachers from Heritage Hills elementary. Heritage Hills is my home. I live in that neighbourhood, and I look forward to sending my son Max to their French immersion program in a couple of years. It's an amazing school, amazing teachers, and amazing students. Given the interest these students showed on their tour so far today, I wouldn't be surprised if we have a future MLA sitting right up there. I would like to invite them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

#### Legislative Process and Federal-provincial Relations

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, over the past several days we have heard nonstop hysteria, both in and out of this House, as the NDP opposition, its leader, and their allies continue their desperate attempt to paint the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act as some sort of undemocratic power grab threatening the very foundation of democracy, that somehow this act gives power to cabinet to unilaterally alter legislation behind closed doors despite the fact that it does not.

It is a shameful display of fearmongering and fabrication that Albertans will remember well when they see how democratically and effectively this constitutional shield will be used in the coming months and years ahead to protect the rights and welfare of Albertans from Ottawa's continuous, unconstitutional, and harmful overreach.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not why I'm standing today to address my fellow elected members of the Legislature. You see, as unseemly as the NDP has acted these past 72 hours, voting against a bill they hadn't even read, making accusations and statements without a shred of truth that had to be deleted from Twitter, despite it all, these sorts of antics and tactics, for better or for worse, are part of our democratic process.

In this Legislative Assembly the government proposes legislation. We debate, we argue, and we advocate our positions passionately. Then we in this Chamber each vote on the bill as duly elected members of the people of Alberta. If that vote passes with a majority, that bill becomes the binding and constitutionally enforceable law of the province of Alberta. This is how democracy works. This is the rule of law. It is the very foundation of our democracy.

Yesterday the leader of the NDP opposition spoke with the media outside this Chamber, and when told by a reporter that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was taking no option off the table, including the potential of Mr. Trudeau unilaterally revoking and quashing the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act should it pass in this elected Assembly, the NDP leader stated, and I quote: I think if they revoke the act, that would be the right thing to do. Unquote.

The meaning of the NDP leader's words is crystal clear. This member clearly believes that her dear friend Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should unilaterally quash and override a law of Alberta because she disagrees with it, and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that in my lifetime I have never heard a more undemocratic statement or thought uttered by an elected official in this province, let alone one who sees herself fit for the office of Premier. It is astounding both for its raw, undemocratic meaning and its level of pure hypocrisy. Having later realized the magnitude of her statement, this member got up on CBC and on Twitter yesterday evening to deny she had even said it when, in fact, she could not have said it more clearly.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard this member and caucus wrongfully accuse this government of attempting to subvert democracy, yet in a moment of pristine clarity this NDP leader let it slip just how little regard she has for the very Alberta democracy she seeks to lead. Is that her plan? When the NDP leader doesn't get her way in this democratically elected Assembly, will she just call up her good friend Justin Trudeau and her federal party leader, Jagmeet Singh, to direct their coalition government to quash and override the laws of our land? What sort of rule of law is this? This member and her party are quick to dig up statements from 24 months or 24 years ago to inform Albertans of my alleged positions of today. Well, how about 24 hours ago? Because 24 hours ago this member made it clear that, in her view, when the chips are down, it's Ottawa before Alberta; it's Justin and Jagmeet before the Constitution.

This member should apologize immediately for her lapse of judgment and affirm her commitment to upholding the laws of our province, whomever may have written them. As for me, let me be clear. I know I'm not perfect, but I will never apologize for defending Albertans against federal actions harmful to our province. I will never deviate from putting this province above any federal leader. My loyalty is to Albertans. I will accept their judgment of me and this government, whatever that may be, and I will never call upon any federal Prime Minister to override or strike down a law passed by this Legislative Assembly.

That's the point here. That would be the ultimate betrayal to this Assembly, of the rule of law, and of the millions of Albertans we represent here. Albertans are a proud and free people. We are not mere subjects of politicians in Ottawa able to quash the laws of this elected Assembly upon request. I'd ask this hon. member and everyone in this

House to remember who we serve, because, for me, at this side of the House, there is no debate. We serve Albertans first, always.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

A member of the Official Opposition should they choose to respond. [interjections] Order. Order. [interjections] Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that statement was both desperate and delusional. In the quote “they” referred to them, the UCP government. No one in this Chamber wants Ottawa interfering with our House, and the suggestion just now by the Premier is about as real as her phone call with the Arctic Winter Games, which we all know was not so much.

Now, this week the Premier and this government introduced a bill that was so bad in its intent and its drafting that the uproar has been immediate and loud from every corner of the province, not just from Alberta NDP allies, although that number does grow, but from everybody in the economy, from business leaders, community leaders, and, most significantly, many Indigenous leaders. This Premier’s bill creates deep economic uncertainty across Alberta. It is doing that already, inviting more chaos, cost, and conflict.

1:40

Let’s talk about why specifically. We know that investment and economic growth depend on clear, fair, and known rules of engagement, but this bill gives the Premier and her cabinet unprecedented and undemocratic power to change the law unilaterally without the approval of the Legislative Assembly and without notice to the Albertans who rely on those laws, including investors. The bill then restricts those Albertans who’ve been hurt by the change from challenging it with draconian timelines. It further constrains the ability of the courts to rule that any range of actions under the bill are unreasonable. Furthermore, it’s been argued by some that asking the Legislature to determine the constitutionality of a federal act is in and of itself unconstitutional, usurping the role of the courts.

In short, there are multiple, multiple layers of uncertainty, contradiction, and illegality that could impact almost any law in Alberta. Taken as a whole, investors are saying: “No. Thanks.” In a volatile world businesses must invest their money, grow their companies, and attract their workers to places that are stable, where the rules are reasonable, where they’re transparent. The Calgary Chamber of commerce and CAPP and others have all said so; you know, those NDP allies. Not only that, but treaty chiefs have stated that the introduction of this act, with zero meaningful consultation, runs roughshod over their treaty rights. This Legislature cannot scramble after the fact on these kinds of matters, and many of you over there know that. You must withdraw and consult first.

We are at a pivotal moment in Alberta. We need a clear plan to create good-paying jobs, build a resilient economy now and for generations to come. We need to drive investment opportunities, not drive away investors. My message today to the government is to simply withdraw this mess of a bill.

## Members’ Statements

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Mr. Schmidt:** The new Premier and government are working hard to spin their disastrous Bill 1. We just saw the Premier try desperately again minutes ago. They’ve tried renaming it; they’ve tried gaslighting Albertans by claiming that what the bill says isn’t actually what the bill says. One Deputy Premier spent the morning trolling credible

constitutional lawyers about the bill, claiming they were liars and wrong about the legislation. He then said that he may amend the bill: never a good sign. The other Deputy Premier admitted yesterday he hasn’t even read the bill but said he was briefed on it. The jobs minister, who called the bill a “bait and switch” before getting a cabinet job, now says that the bill is great, but he can’t say why.

Despite this, Albertans see the bill for exactly what it is. It’s the job-killing sovereignty act. The Calgary Chamber of commerce and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers have spoken out about the harm it will cause to investment, to jobs, and to our economic future. That’s just the tip of the iceberg. Our phones are ringing off the hook. People wanting to invest here or with investments already locked in here are terrified. They can’t get an audience with the government and specifically with the Premier, who is more focused on giving herself supreme power despite being selected by 1 per cent of Albertans.

I want to tell the people reaching out, the Albertans fearing for their jobs, fearing for the quality of life for their kids, that Alberta’s NDP is here. We’re listening. We will do everything in our power to stop this Premier. We will put forward a real plan to create good-paying jobs and build a resilient economy now and for future generations. I and all of my colleagues will stand in this House every day on behalf of our constituents, on behalf of all Albertans, and say no to the job-killing sovereignty act. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

### Early Childhood Educator Wage Supplement

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Early childhood educators are the heartbeat of our child care system. They provide high-quality child care for Albertan kids, and they provide peace of mind for Albertan parents. Today our government announced that we are providing early childhood educators with a one-time payment and wage top-up to help recruit and retain staff and to help make life affordable for those important Albertans. This one-time payment and wage top-up represents an investment of over \$174 million in federal and provincial funds through to the end of the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Every dollar matters, Mr. Speaker. This fund will help child care operators recruit and retain staff and help critical workers pay their bills as we head into the Christmas season.

All employed early childhood educators who claimed hours in October and November of 2022 and worked an average of 30-plus hours per week and continue to work in December will also be eligible to receive a one-time payment of \$900 while those averaging fewer than 30 hours per week will be eligible for a \$450 payment. This is real inflation relief for Albertans at the most important time of the year. This also means a strong overall child care system for parents and families.

Alberta’s economy has recovered from the pandemic, and we are seen now leading the nation in job growth. A strong child care system gives parents, particularly women, the confidence they need to re-enter our workforce and participate in our growing economy. I’m pleased our government is providing this critical support, and I’m proud to know we will continue to support our early childhood educators as they continue to provide high-quality child care. Our government will continue to provide real affordability relief to Albertans in need at a challenging time. Alberta’s child care system is strong because operators and workers make it strong. We’ll be there to support them now and for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.



### Gender-based Violence and Coercive Control Prevention

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen in the past week direct steps to ensure employers make responsible decisions to not discriminate against their workers with respect to vaccine mandates. In the same week, November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, marks the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Thank you to all members of the Legislature for their commentary and to those who are actively doing work every single day to change the culture.

It seems only fitting that while we work to protect human rights in the workplace, it includes calls for action from organizations and individuals for the prevention and the elimination of gender-based violence. These co-occurring endeavours highlight the fact that this mandate has the capacity to be extended and leveraged so that organizations across all sectors are held responsible to address instances of gender-based human rights violations, sexual violence, domestic abuse, harassment, and coercive control. For these issues, prevention is key.

Women are 51 per cent of the population and in every field valued and resilient but are at greater risk of violence due to prevailing societal culture. This has a direct impact on our economy. A cultural shift is necessary in order to allow individuals to speak up and challenge the unabating violent attitudes and behaviours in our communities. All human rights violations, regardless of organization, level of government, or institution, as they occur are continuously being swept under the carpet. Clearly, we have the strength to address these issues, especially when it comes to occupational workplace safety. All Albertans expect us to expand the strength of pertinent issues such as gender-based violence and coercive control to our agenda.

Thank you.

### Government and Official Opposition Policies

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, in the last week Albertans have had the opportunity to hear two fundamentally different visions for the future of Alberta. The UCP government's Speech from the Throne and job-killing sovereignty act envision an Alberta where the Premier and cabinet can unilaterally amend provincial laws, where citizens have severely curtailed rights to challenge unjust government action, and where the government will focus on endless constitutional bickering instead of on growing the economy and fixing the children's health care crisis. Thankfully, the Alberta NDP opposition's alternative Speech from the Throne sets out a different vision, a vision for a better future for Alberta.

With the help of former ATB senior economist Todd Hirsch we will build a resilient economy with good jobs that Albertans can rely on for generations. We'll release a new investment framework, which will outline how we can incentivize private-sector investment, pursue innovation, and grow Alberta companies by fostering economic certainty. We will bring sustained action to help families struggling to pay their bills, and we will bring forward legislation that ensures public health care is protected and strengthened and that establishes health care service standards. Albertans can go to [www.albertasfuture.ca](http://www.albertasfuture.ca) to read the full speech.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from hundreds of Albertans in the past week. They don't see themselves reflected in this government's antieconomy, antidemocracy, job-killing sovereignty act. They want a government that will bring stability, not chaos. They want a government who will focus on growing the economy, not driving away investment. They want to know that when their children get sick, the public health care they need will be there. And they want

to know that their Premier respects democracy. I'm glad to say that they will get all those things when they vote for an Alberta NDP government on May 29, 2023. [interjections]

1:50

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

Hon. members, prior to calling Oral Question Period this afternoon, I'd like to bring to your attention that the green sheets of the new standing orders pursuant to Government Motion 9, effective March 30, 2022, have been placed on each of your desks. Updated standing order packages will be delivered to you in due course.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, standing up for the rights and interests of Albertans is one of our most important jobs as elected officials, but how we do that matters, and it matters when business leaders tell the government that they got it wrong. Now, the Calgary Chamber says that the sovereignty act will introduce, quote, a very significant element of risk and uncertainty to businesses in Alberta. The question is, then: why won't the Premier take the chamber's advice? Stop, think, and dial it back.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the only thing that is creating investor uncertainty right now is the anti-industry, anti oil and gas policies of the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa. That has chased over \$100 billion of investment out of our province, and that is the reason why we need to pass the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, to draw a very clear constitutional line. They need to stay in their lane so that we can stay in our lane and create the kind of business environment that is going to attract investment into oil and natural gas and all of our other sectors.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll listen to investors when they tell me that they're uncertain.

Speaking of that, it's not just the chamber. CAPP also expressed concerns yesterday – quote: we are concerned about any government policy that has the potential to create uncertainty for investors – and there will be more. So will the Premier admit that her plan is more likely to kill jobs in the oil patch than create them and revoke her ridiculous mess of an act?

**Ms Smith:** Well, we know that the only thing that would create investor uncertainty is if this opposition ever formed government again. In fact, when I go back and look at the investment that fled this province once they became government, we sure don't want to repeat that again. I just saw the stats, actually. We are now at the lowest level of unemployment. We haven't seen unemployment levels this low since the members opposite formed government in 2015. I think that's a testament to the fact that people are investing in this province because they have a stable government, because they know that we will protect them against federal overreach.

**Ms Notley:** That's not what businesses are saying right now.

The CEO of Avatar Innovations in Calgary yesterday said that the sovereignty act signals to international investors that Alberta is not a safe place to do business. He warned that this plan risks federal funding that energy companies need to continue their efforts to create jobs and cut emissions. Once again, will the Premier answer

the question: why is she risking Alberta's future just to cater to her far-right, fringe, separatist base? Stop it. Think of Albertans and revoke . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** You know, the only thing that creates investor uncertainty is the kind of policies that the members opposite brought in when they were in this chair, bringing through an emissions cap on the oil sands. Where do you think the federal Liberal-NDP coalition got that idea from? Now they want to come through and bring in a 42 per cent reduction in oil and gas emissions, a 30 per cent reduction in fertilizer emissions. We know that that kind of emissions reduction is a de facto production cap. That is not in line with our Constitution. We have the right to develop our resources in our own way, and I would invite the members opposite to stand with us in supporting pushing back against Ottawa.

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

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the serious damage this will have on our economic future, there are other reasons the act has to be withdrawn, including how it runs over the rights of Indigenous people. Yesterday the chiefs of Treaty 6 said it best, quote: we believe the proposed act is self-centred; we take this opportunity to remind Albertans that we are all treaty people, and we invite non-Indigenous people to join us in opposition to this divisive proposed legislation. We stand with the chiefs. Why is the Premier ignoring them?

**Ms Smith:** Now, I've been delighted to have Chief Billy Morin as part of my advisory team, and he is going to work very hard with us to make sure that the chiefs understand that this approach that we're taking in the government is to make sure that we have economic reconciliation with our First Nations partners. It's very clear in the sovereignty act that we will respect Indigenous rights, respect treaty rights. In fact, I think our approach of economic reconciliation, lending out a hand to work together on major projects going across our province and our country, is what's going to lead to the best relationship with our First Nations people.

**Ms Notley:** Wow. Mr. Speaker, it impacts their rights if you introduce the bill before you ever speak to the treaty chiefs. Back in July the UCP signed a relationship agreement between Treaty 6 and the GOA. It set out a formalized government-to-government relationship that was supposed to be based on collaboration, commitment, and co-operation, yet when it came to introducing the Premier's flagship bill, the chiefs say that no one spoke to them. Not one phone call. To the Premier. This is your bill. Why couldn't you pick up the phone? Why were you not focused on doing . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, I think the answer to the question is right in the legislation: because nothing abrogates or derogates from anything in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that protects the rights of our Indigenous citizens. Section 35 is very clear. I'm surprised after all these days that the member opposite hasn't had a chance to read the bill yet, because it says right in there that we are going to respect the rights of our Indigenous . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** We are going to respect the rights of our Indigenous people. This is about asserting the rights of Albertans under the Constitution,

section 92A. We have the right to develop our resources, and we're going to continue . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that's a lovely future-tense statement, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is that the Premier has already failed to respect the rights of Indigenous people. Treaty 8 says: Premier Danielle Smith, as parliamentary Crown representative you and your government are in dishonour of Treaty 8; treaties are essential to all people, including Albertans. As with many things related to this bill, the Premier is now scrambling after the fact to consult. So why will she not do the right thing? Withdraw the bill, do meaningful consultation, and then consider reintroducing it if necessary.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition will be aware that even if she is quoting someone else's words, it's inappropriate to use a proper name of a member of the Assembly.

The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very clear to me that the provisions we are setting out in this act are designed to make sure that we are protecting the provincial rights that are guaranteed in the Constitution. That is what this is about. It's sections 92, 92A, 93, 95, and that's what we're trying to do here. The Leader of the Official Opposition . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members of the opposition, I'm having a real challenge hearing the Premier. She has every opportunity to answer a question, just like you have one to ask it.

The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you. I have a very good relationship with First Nations. When I was in this position before in the Legislature, I was the critic for Indigenous affairs. I've reached out to various chiefs and various Indigenous leaders, and we're going to keep doing that as we develop the province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her third set of questions.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have heard from no less than seven different legal experts, public servants, and constitutional lawyers who confirm a simple truth: this bill gives the Premier the so-called Henry VIII power to write laws behind closed doors with zero input from this Assembly. Now, it's parliamentary to give members a chance to correct the record, so to the Premier: can you tell us where it says that the Assembly will pass a bill after the motion, or will you admit that you're the one who misread your own bill?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, part of the reason why we go through this process, putting through a bill and putting it through first reading and second reading and Committee of the Whole and third reading, is so that if there are any amendments that need to be made, they can be made at that time. I on this side of the Chamber am always open to hearing feedback, and if the hon. members would like to make a couple of amendments to improve the bill, we are more than happy to work collaboratively with them. I would note that in Saskatchewan, our neighbouring province, the NDP there supported the Saskatchewan

government in their effort to push back against Ottawa. They voted in favour of the Saskatchewan First Act. I'd invite them to do the same.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, based on previous claims, I swear the Premier must be writing in invisible ink, because the things she claims are just not in the bill. On the one hand we have the Premier and her ministers saying, "Trust us; we won't abuse these extraordinary powers that don't exist," and on the other hand we have public servants, lawyers, constitutional experts, and every single person who's actually read the legislation speaking about how it overrules parliamentary tradition and attacks our democracy. So if the Premier wants to go all God mode in the Legislature, why can't she just be honest about it so we can debate what it is she is trying to do to the people of Alberta?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who runs to her federal counterparts asking them to disallow bills that are debated in this Legislature, I believe in the process of this Legislature. We put bills forward, we allow them to go into reading one, reading two, Committee of the Whole, where we make amendments, and then pass in third reading, and it becomes the law of the land. I invite the Leader of the Opposition and her party to be constructive in this process. I will absolutely entertain any amendments that they put forward, and I hope that we will be able to secure their support in standing up for Albertans rather than standing up for Ottawa. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, this bill creates economic and investor uncertainty, no question. That is very well established. But you know what else creates uncertainty? Having a Premier who can't read her own laws, who won't admit when she got it wrong, who seizes power and steps on the rights of Albertans while arrogantly refusing to acknowledge that she's done it. Albertans just had a Premier like that, and – spoiler alert – he resigned this week. Does the Premier want to go down the same road? Is that the way she's headed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This, I guess, is the problem when you prewrite your questions and don't listen to the answers. I have said very clearly that we go through a process in this Legislative Assembly. This is what democracy is: you go through a process, you put forward amendments. Look, if the NDP opposition has some proposals that they want to put forward so that we can gain their support on this legislation, I would welcome it because I would like to send a very clear message to the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa that all members of this Legislature will stand up for Alberta first.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for the fourth set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the bill is beyond fixing. It must be revoked. It's a mess.

### Health Care System

**Ms Notley:** Meanwhile the government should be focusing on the hundreds of thousands of Albertans who cannot find a family doctor, leaving many families with nowhere to go but the ER, increasing pressure there. When that happens, it creates more delays in the EMS system and more Albertans waiting in pain. So today our party is introducing a pragmatic framework to make things

better. Our bill would create a process for public health delivery standards to be set so all Albertans have high-quality care in a well-functioning system. Could the Premier consider focusing away from her mess of a bill and instead supporting our Bill 1?

**Ms Smith:** I'm looking forward to having more support from the members opposite on our proposal for how we're going to reform health care. We listened; we heard. We know that health care is the number one issue. It's part of the reason why we've asked the board to step aside and we've put in place Dr. John Cowell as the official administrator. And I must tell you that every single day we are going to get feedback and be able to drive changes through Alberta Health Services to make sure that we are not only addressing the long waits in emergency rooms, making sure that we have efficient drop-off for paramedics, and we're going to be reducing the surgical wait times. I'm looking forward to the NDP supporting us on that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that instead of taking accountability and showing leadership to fix health care, she's turning around and blaming everyone else, including front-line health workers, for her own government's failure. She has collapsed accountability down to one person, as she's said, and now she's having secret conversations behind closed doors with that person and who knows who else. No one seems to know. She won't tell us. Our bill would create transparency. It would create accountability. It would ensure results for Alberta patients. Why is the Premier so afraid of those principles?

**Ms Smith:** Every decision that we are making is putting patients first. Every decision we are making is putting our doctors and our nurses and our paramedics and other front-line health professionals first. The members opposite want to continue to support the administration doing study after study and paying consultant after consultant. That is fundamentally the problem: way too much money going into the layers of management at the top and way too little money going into the front line to make sure that we do have enough doctors in rural Alberta, we do have enough nurses on the front line when we face pressure, and we do have enough paramedics to get people efficiently to the hospital so they can be treated. That's what we support.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that she's got no plan to deal with that. Meanwhile we have wait times in our children's hospital that are going above 15, sometimes 20 hours. The Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary has had to build a temporary trailer to extend the size of the waiting room. The fact is that this can't go on, and the fixes cannot go on behind closed doors. Our approach would guarantee that those kids are treated inside a hospital, not outside, that Albertans would see how that work was done. Why is the Premier more concerned about phoning movie sets about vaccine mandates than transparently and effectively attacking the problem and the crisis . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** I know that the member opposite – her approach is: we'll just trust the experts, hands off, and we won't have any direction given to the biggest expense of our government. That approach has failed. It's part of the reason why we ended up in the situation that we're in today. We have made great progress in making sure that we're putting more money into the front line. We are giving more money to the front line, and we are making the decisions now that are finally freeing up decision-making at the local level so that we can make decisions in the best interests of Albertans, and we can make

sure that we are always supporting our front-line health professionals. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has a question.

#### Early Childhood Educator Wage Supplement

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government is providing a one-time payment and wage top-up for early childhood educators. This is great news for child care workers, who are the heartbeat of our child care system, and this is great news for families who rely on these workers for quality child care. With Christmas just around the corner, can the minister please explain how this decision will improve wages for child care operators and when?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member today identified, we announced additional support measures for our front-line early childhood educators, who will not only see additional wage top-ups, but they will also see a significant one-time cash payment just before the holidays. As you know, this is one of the most expensive times of the year for families. Full-time ECEs will receive a one-time payment of \$900, and part-time ECEs will receive \$450. Our government will continue to support families and our child care workers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that our government supports parental choice in child care and education and given that our government has worked very hard to protect Alberta's diverse child care system, can the minister please explain how these wage top-ups will help both private and not-for-profit operators attract new workers and create a more viable system overall?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. By increasing wages, we are encouraging and incentivizing our current and prospective workforce to attain higher level certifications, which will spur further investment and space creation by child care entrepreneurs. These new, competitive wages will be able to attract new child care workers and ensure that with increased staffing we are able to provide more spaces and improved care. Our government will ensure that both private and not-for-profit operators will have the support that they need to continue to create a more viable system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that answer. Given that Alberta has come back strong from the pandemic and is leading the nation in job growth, creating more demand than ever for quality child care, and given that this new funding will help bolster our child care system for child care workers and the families who rely on them, can the minister explain how this funding will help get Albertans, particularly women, back to work?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for that question. The majority of child care facilities in this province are in fact owned and operated by women. Our

announcement this morning will support our province's amazing female entrepreneurs and their businesses and will ensure that their employees continue to be supported while incentivizing all of our child care entrepreneurs to open new facilities and increase spaces, which will also increase employment and training opportunities for all.

Thank you.

#### 2:10 Homeless Supports and Affordable Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, a homeless Albertan died yesterday due to the lack of shelter. The same thing happened the day before and the day before. The death toll is rising and entirely preventable. Cold winters in Alberta are never a surprise, yet there have been multiple cold weather related deaths, a staggering number of injuries, and an alarmingly high rate of amputation. The minister likes to brag about his funding of temporary winter shelters, which should not be temporary and, in fact, should be balanced with funding for permanent homes. Why is the UCP allowing Albertans to live in reprehensible conditions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her advocacy and her passion on this issue. This is a personal issue for me, too. As somebody who used to work in shelters and has known many people who've lost their lives to cold weather, knowing many more who've lost their life to addiction on our streets, I am committed to working with our municipalities to make sure that we have an appropriate amount of shelter space in this province so that nobody has to face the cold this winter. Last night I'm happy to report that we had 88 per cent – I guess I'm not happy to report this, but last night we were at 88 per cent occupancy, so there was space in our shelter, and we're going to continue to work to make sure that there is enough space.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the government has failed to implement a winter emergency protocol and adequately support municipalities. Given that despite the responsibility to fund shelters and housing, this Premier has seen fit to abolish the housing ministry, expecting cities to step up while the UCP does nothing, and given that last night the city of Edmonton used their emergency reserve to fund 209 additional spaces and given that local leaders have been brought to tears begging for aid, can the minister explain the rationale for forcing municipalities to fill in the gaps created by this government's inaction and bad decision-making?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that we are taking a proactive response to addressing homelessness. This government – this government – doubled shelter space, permanent shelter space, when we took office, and now we've doubled shelter space heading into the winter so that we make sure that nobody has to face the cold. We are taking a proactive approach to making sure that we can end people's experience of homelessness. We've added \$19 million in Edmonton alone this year to make sure that there are supports so that we can help people move beyond the street. In addition to that, we're investing in additional supports for mental health and addiction so we can help end people's experience of . . .

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** The price is paid in life and limb. Given that we don't know the total number of people dying on the streets as the province does not monitor deaths and given that leaving someone

unhoused costs more than housing them and given that this government may leave \$1.5 billion in funding on the table for the third time while letting the Premier's petty rivalries and sovereignty act take priority over helping Albertans, Minister, what will it be? Will this government do what it takes to prevent people from freezing to death, or will he stand by the sovereignty act and leave money in Ottawa that could literally save lives?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we have an important question to ask, and I ask this sincerely: do we work towards adding more permanent shelter spaces, or do we work towards adding more solutions that are actually going to help end people's experience of homelessness? That's what we're doing. In regard to the earlier question in regard to where housing fits, I am the housing minister, and I'm taking this very seriously. We are working towards expanding housing across this province to make sure people have a place to call home. Through our stronger foundations plan we are partnering with municipalities, we are partnering with not-for-profits to leverage government resources to make the best use and make sure that we have homes for people.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans expect their elected officials to stand up for the rights and interests of our great province, no question. But this week Albertans learned that the sovereignty act is not a defence mechanism but, rather, a full on power grab. The Premier is granting herself and her cabinet the ability to write laws in secret, in the backroom, behind closed doors. No votes, no review, no checks or balances. This is the most unprecedented abuse of cabinet authority in the history of our province. To the Premier: why does Bill 1 look like something less Albertan and more like something out of Vladimir Putin's playbook?

**Mr. Shandro:** Oh, come on, Mr. Speaker. We're not hearing from the NDP; we're hearing from the Anti-DP over here. This is the caucus that had their leader asking Justin Trudeau to step up and void and overrule legislation passed by the democratically elected members of this Assembly. Will this member stand in this Assembly now and apologize to Albertans for that advocacy? Just say yes. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that all of this dictatorial power grabbing is exactly the opposite of what our investment community is looking for and given that the Calgary Chamber, CAPP, and many more are lining up against the sovereignty act because they know it will kill jobs, drive away investment, and harm our economic future, will the Premier or perhaps one of her ministers professing to care about the economy ...

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Mr. Bilous:** ... stand and explain why the Premier's push for power is more important than Alberta's economic prosperity? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

A point of order is noted at 2:16.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. This begins with a process that is a resolution in this Chamber, an open, democratic process for all of us to pass and all of us to vote on. What the NDP are mad about, what they're upset about is a government that would

stand up against Justin Trudeau. What they want is for us to capitulate to the Trudeau-NDP alliance in Ottawa, and it makes them angry that this is a government that is now proposing to stand up against that alliance in Ottawa.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that I was proud to serve as minister of economic development – in fact, it was a highlight of my career – I'm hearing from my stakeholders that they are terrified and they're considering pulling out of Alberta altogether. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development: does he commit in this House here and now that if one investor pulls out of Alberta or a single job is lost as a result of this undemocratic and harmful sovereignty act, he will stand up to the Premier and help us defeat this disastrous legislation?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's rich coming from the NDP, that drove out thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in economic investment. Where are we today? We're at record levels of weekly earnings for Albertans. We're at record levels of venture capital investment in Alberta. We're at record levels of so much investment in Alberta, and no thanks to the NDP. It's thanks to this government and future-looking government that stands up and sticks up for Albertans.

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

#### Energy Industries

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's oil and gas industries are the leader in technology and innovation. We also exceed global environmental, human rights, and labour standards, which is why we are continuing to promote Alberta's energy in venues like the Canadian Energy Centre and events like COP 27. I also believe that it is important that we continue to create energy corridors while building partnerships with like-minded provinces, states, and countries. Alberta energy is the solution to the world's energy crisis. To the Energy minister: how do you plan to put Alberta on the map and make us the first choice when it comes to providing oil and gas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy is rising.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's oil and gas industry is a leader in technology and innovation. We set the bar for global environmental, human rights, and labour standards, which is why we continue to promote Alberta's energy through avenues like the Canadian Energy Centre and events like COP 27. We also believe that it is important that we continue to create energy corridors while building partnerships with like-minded provinces, states, and countries. Alberta energy is the solution to the global energy crisis and powering a low-carbon world.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the pilots currently under consideration is the liability management incentive program. This program is two-pronged. First, it is to encourage the cleanup of some of the oldest and most troubling wells. Second, after cleanup is complete, companies will receive a royalty credit on new production. This has the potential to be a huge win for industry, the province, and the people of Alberta. To the same minister: what policies are you working on to encourage reclamation, and how will this help Alberta?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned, the province is currently working, and under consideration is a liability management incentive program. The program is two-pronged: first, to encourage the cleanup of some of the oldest and most troubling wells, dating back decades; and second, after the cleanup is complete, companies will receive a royalty credit on new production only, creating jobs and encouraging new investment. This has the potential to be a huge win for the province, industry, and, most importantly, the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the sovereignty act will get Ottawa's attention. We just so happen to have the most affordable, reliable, responsible oil and gas on the planet. This act should be a reminder to the federal government that Alberta is the rightful owner of our resources and we're serious about defending our interests. Although diversifying our energy sector is important, oil and gas is not going anywhere in the near future. By opposing Alberta, Canada is supporting dictator oil, which should be unacceptable to Canadians. What strategies are being implemented to stand up to the federal government infringing on Alberta's resources?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the sovereignty act will get Ottawa's attention. This act should be a reminder to the federal government that Alberta is the rightful owner of our resources, and we are serious about defending our interests, which just so happens to have the most responsible, reliable, and secure oil and gas on this planet. Although diversifying our energy sector is important, oil and gas is not going anywhere soon. By opposing Alberta oil in support of dictator oil, Canada is going a direction that does not align with the values of Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

*(continued)*

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In an opinion piece published on August 23, 2022, the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development described the sovereignty act as "likely unconstitutional," "virtue signalling," and said that it "would create . . . worse uncertainty" for our economy and investors than anything that Ottawa had done to the economy. The minister was then trying to win the UCP leadership race, which he didn't win. Now today the jobs minister says that the act is great despite it being worse than we could have ever imagined. Can the minister explain what changed? Did he trade his own ethics for a cabinet post?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to work in a government and work with a Premier that listens, unlike what I've seen from past Premiers, especially in the NDP government. We have a Premier that listens not just to caucus and cabinet but continues to listen to Albertans. That's why we've changed some things in the sovereignty act. That's why we're continuing to be

open minded, to listen even to the opposition, that might come up with a good idea from time to time. But we're not going to take any lessons from the NDP, who drove our economy into a terrible place. We're going to take steps to make our economy better and to stand up for Albertans, especially stand up to Ottawa.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Minister of Finance told Albertans to vote for him so that he could stop the sovereignty act, which he said was a ticking time bomb and was not a solution for Alberta's problems, but given that those people who believed him were blindsided by his rush to reclaim his seat at the cabinet table and now his steadfast praise of the bill, that's worse than anyone could imagine, and given that the minister's own stakeholders are slamming the bill, including the Calgary Chamber, did the Minister of Finance just sell out Alberta's economic future so he could keep his seat at cabinet?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I did have legitimate concerns over the concept of the sovereignty act. I've shared my concerns throughout the development of the bill, and those concerns have been heard. My concern was that this bill would be constitutional, my concern was that this bill would not undermine the rule of law, and my concern was that it would be implemented in a way that would provide business certainty because we've done too much to attract investment and create jobs in the economy to see it unwound. This bill will not unwind it.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism was a fierce critic of the sovereignty act until she got her cabinet seat under the new Premier and given that in August, while campaigning, the minister demanded a general election before it was passed so that the public could weigh in on a bill that she said provides no value to Albertans beyond thumping our chests but that today she says that her concerns were addressed when the title of the bill was changed, can the minister tell this House for the record if she has actually read the bill and what specifically changed in it and perhaps cite a section?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course I have read the bill. I have read it multiple times. It's no secret that I was adamantly opposed to a previous version of the sovereignty act, but to the Premier's credit she took the feedback from cabinet and caucus and made significant changes to the bill that have made it palatable. Today I was speaking to international investors who are very satisfied with Bill 1, who are excited to bring investment into Alberta.

### Organizational Vaccine Policies

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, this week many professionals in our film sector were nervous over comments made by this Premier where she claimed she and her ministers were calling groups to interfere in their business operations. One example she gave even exclaimed to have withheld government funding for a desired result. The film sector was very concerned about this. As you're aware, many Alberta projects rely on grants. Now they're fearful they will be denied the funding if they don't allow the Premier to interfere in their private business operations. Will the Premier promise this sector that she won't meddle with their business function for her own ideological stance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture has risen.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has always worked in hand with our partners, including stakeholders, respectfully. Regarding this change of the vaccine mandate, on November 15 my department shared my concerns over the obsolete federal vaccine policy that prevented many Albertan athletes from participating in it. To my satisfaction, three days later the organizing committee publicly revoked that obsolete policy. Today Albertans have more opportunity to participate in the games, and we are very pleased about that.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that one of the film groups in Alberta e-mailed the Premier's office asking for clarification on her comments, saying that, quote, productions in place are now concerned about these words; it could drive away business, investment, and production and licences being signed; the mere mention of it could limit employment projects being drawn to Alberta. End quote. Given that the Premier's investment-killing sovereignty act is raising red flags across multiple industries to stay away from Alberta, will the Minister of Culture promise film groups he will not withhold funding from projects based on what they create and secure investments on?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased to be able to rise today and talk about the film industry. The film industry is investing record amounts into Alberta because they understand we're pro business, and this is an important industry for our future. But we will continue to strongly encourage all Alberta employers to respect the decision of their employees and customers as it relates to their personal health choices. Vaccines are certainly none of my business about personal choices, and it's certainly none of theirs.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that we have varying reports from this government on the controls their investment-killing sovereignty act will give them, one from the Justice minister telling the media it's correct that cabinet will have unilateral power to change provincial laws and another from the Premier claiming that's not true, and given that to have sustained and substantial investment in the province, especially in the creative industries, we need consistency and stability in our government, not this chaos and confusion we see on the other side, how are investors and film shops supposed to believe this government when they change tune moment to moment? They're like a really bad movie over there, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

**The Speaker:** I may just provide a little bit of caution. I'm having a bit of difficulty connecting the third question to the previous two questions. I appreciate tangentially they were about the film and television industry, but the connection is broad at best.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, she is right about one thing: investors want certainty. They want to have confidence in our economy, and they do right now, so much, in fact, that net migration to Alberta is at record levels. People are moving, flocking to our province because they understand they've got certainty and they've got, more importantly, a Premier and a government that is going to stand up for them, stand up for the industries. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The minister has the call.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a Premier and a government that is going to stand up for the industry, stand up for the businesses, and stand up for all Albertans against Ottawa and infringement on our jurisdiction. What more could Albertans want?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

2:30

## Athabasca University

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the great institutions in my constituency is Athabasca University. The university was relocated to Athabasca from Edmonton in 1984 to help create jobs and foster economic growth and opportunity in the northern region. I've heard from many constituents who are concerned that Athabasca University's move to a near-virtual model has diminished AU's physical presence in the area, as jobs leave the town, straining the region's economic outlook. To the Minister of Advanced Education: does this government share those concerns?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I want to commend him on relaying the concerns of his constituents to me and the government more broadly.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we share those concerns, which is why our government has taken action to work with the university to create more jobs in the community. More specifically, as recently as yesterday the board of governors of Athabasca University has agreed upon a new investment management agreement that provides stipulations to increase job numbers in the community. I'm very proud that we've taken this step. When the issue was raised when the NDP was in government, they did nothing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a key factor in ensuring the development and sustainability of the Athabasca region is having physical employees in Athabasca as well as having local talent as a part of those employees and given that last night the minister announced that an investment management agreement was signed with the board of governors of the Athabasca University, to the same minister: can you provide specific details of what that agreement contains?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Sure. I'd be happy to, Mr. Speaker. The investment management agreement stipulates that 44 per cent of the institution's executive team must be based in Athabasca within three years. To put that in real terms, that's 4 out of 9 executive members. It also stipulates that the university should increase the number of local employees from its current base of 252 to 277. Again, that's within three years. This is particularly important. The university has an important role to play in bringing jobs to the community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his dedication and for his responsiveness to the concerns community members have raised.

Given that Athabasca University was originally created as a correspondence university and given that it has grown into a world leader in higher learning for those Albertans and Canadians who can't physically travel to classes in urban centres, to the same minister: how will this new agreement ensure Athabasca remains a home for the online delivery of learning and can continue to succeed into the future?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, Athabasca University is a critical gem for the province of Alberta and all of Canada. As our premier online learning provider it ensures that individuals who can't physically get on to a university campus are able to access postsecondary education. I'm looking forward to working with the

institution to continue to strengthen their online delivery model, with a strong base of operations in the town of Athabasca.

### Wage Growth and Cost of Living

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, recent data shows that Alberta workers have the second-slowest wage growth in Canada. Alberta's average weekly earnings grew by just 2.6 per cent, far behind the rest of Canada. During a time of rising costs, this is completely unacceptable and shows that this government can't get the job done on protecting Alberta's economy. During the worst affordability crisis we've seen in generations, wages are not keeping up, and workers are falling further behind. Why does this government think it's acceptable that Alberta's wage growth is so far behind the rest of the country?

**Mr. Jean:** That's a good question, Mr. Speaker, but let me tell you that when you're number one, it moves a little slower than the rest, and we are. We have the highest weekly earnings in the country, and not only that – good news; I appreciate the member giving me this opportunity – we have 100,000 jobs here in Alberta that are not filled right now. So come on out to Alberta. It is the land of opportunity for individual employees and for businesses.

**Ms Gray:** Given that in budget estimates the Finance minister said, "We're predicting average weekly earnings to go up by well over 3 per cent... in excess of inflation" and given that clearly the Finance minister's prediction was incredibly wrong and many families are suffering from the additional costs that this government has put on them – deindexing taxes, park fees, new fees for seniors' medical exams, skyrocketing car insurance, utilities; it goes on and on, Mr. Speaker – does the Finance minister understand that his government's paltry utilities rebate isn't solving this crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government inherited a fiscal and economic train wreck from the members opposite. From day one we worked hard to position this economy for competitiveness, investment attraction, job creation, and economic diversification, and our plan worked. Our economy is growing and leading the nation in economic growth. The economy is diversifying at rates I've not seen in my lifetime. In this year, since January 1, 28 per cent of the jobs in all of Canada were created in Alberta.

**Ms Gray:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that it's clear the Finance minister does not understand the crisis Alberta families are experiencing and given that their poorly thought-out inflation-relief measures leave out 2 million Albertans and given that prices are continuing to grow at a rate far beyond Alberta's anemic wage growth rates under this government, I know they thought a labour minister was something optional, but perhaps, as Alberta workers fall further and further behind, this Premier may want to consider actually having one of her endless array of cabinet ministers care and fight for workers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone in this Chamber has heard from their constituents about the challenges associated with record inflation and the heightened cost of living, and that's why we're pleased to come forward with immediate relief. Over \$2 billion will be announced over the coming weeks to support the vast majority and, in many cases, all Albertans. This includes an estimated benefit of \$900 alone to an average household, and there's more for seniors,

families with children, and disabled Albertans, who we know have been hit particularly hard by the inflation and affordability crisis.

### Health Care System

*(continued)*

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, from the day it was elected, this government's attitude towards our front-line health care workers can be summed up with two words, aggression and attack. The UCP tore up deals. They threatened pay cuts. They attacked their wages, accused them of playing politics, repeatedly chose to underfund them and the life-saving work that they do. Now front-line health care workers report that the Health minister is refusing to meet with them to talk about how they can work together to recruit and retain more colleagues to support their heroic efforts to keep our health care system going. Why is the health care minister dragging his feet on meeting with the front-line workers he claims he supports?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. His information is out of date. I have meetings scheduled with each of the leaders of the health care units to talk about that exact issue in terms of attraction and retention. I'd like to point out a few other things. We have invested more money in health care than ever in this province, \$22 billion this year. We added \$600 million this year, \$600 million next year, \$600 million the year after that. We have more doctors working in this province than ever before. We have more health nurses working in this province than ever before. We are expanding and building capacity to deliver the health care that Albertans need.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, this government has longer wait times than ever before, more Albertans than ever before who can't see a doctor. Given that while this minister is happy not meeting with Albertans on the front lines who deliver health care and the Premier is consulting with a secret group of supposed doctors and given that she publicly stated that this shadowy group of advisers was apparently eager to talk to Paul Alexander, a man who called the COVID-19 vaccine a bioweapon, can the Health minister explain why front-line health care workers are still waiting outside the building for a meeting while fringe conspiracy theorists apparently are being given a path directly to the Premier's office?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, that simply is incorrect. Over the course of the summer and also into the fall I travelled across the province, held 41 workshops to talk with health care workers and those in the continuing care sector and the primary care sector as well as health care advocates and included a number of unionized workers, AHS employees. I spoke with over 1,100 employees and representatives from across the province, getting their input. I have heard them, and I am looking forward to meeting with the unions to talk about: how do we further expand our work?

2:40

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that this Premier seems to support her shadow advisers arranging to meet with Paul Alexander, who encouraged the rampant spread of COVID-19 amongst children and in addition told millions of vaccinated Albertans they were infected with a bioweapon, and given that this suggests that these discredited, disturbing views are getting an audience with this Premier while credible health care professionals are told to take a hike, will the Minister of Health advise this House just who is advising the Premier when it comes to the health and safety of Albertans? Will he table the names of this advisory group of apparent fans of Paul Alexander?



**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our office continues to work with health care professionals from across the province. We continue to listen to health care professionals to be able to provide services to Albertans. We are working with the AMA. I was very pleased to get an agreement with the AMA and look at: how do we actually deal with the challenges together? We are working with Albertans. We are working with health care workers to be able to improve the services and ensure that Albertans get the health care services that they need.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of Members' Statements.

The hon. the Government House Leader, I believe, has a brief question to ask.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine may continue beyond 3 p.m.

## Members' Statements

*(continued)*

### Economic Indicators

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, our province was in shambles – years of economic decline, rising debts – and our future looked grim. Thank goodness we got hired, because now Alberta is on a roll with a rapidly growing and diversifying economy. We had record investments in venture capital in 2020 of \$445 million, beat that record in 2021 with \$561 million. In Q3 this year we are already at \$509 million and continuing to increase while the rest of the country is on the downturn.

On the tech front we are seeing thousands of jobs created. Infosys and Mphasis each announced a thousand jobs in Calgary, Amazon Web Services announced a \$4 billion investment and a thousand jobs in Calgary, and RBC announced a key 300 jobs. Why are those jobs key? Because we pulled those jobs right away from Toronto's Bay Street and put them where? That's right: Calgary.

We are reeling over a record year in film and television, with over a billion dollars of investment. We have had record years in agriculture and forestry. We are becoming a logistics hub with major investments in distribution centres, including little known names like Walmart and Rona-Lowe's. This is in addition to multibillion-dollar announcements in hydrogen from Air Products and an ethylene cracker and derivatives facility by Dow Chemical. Tourism is also roaring back to prepandemic levels, with a growing trajectory that I anticipate will surpass the double of revenues that we are aiming for.

All of this has led to the aviation sector flying under the radar, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it is taking off in this province. De Havilland announced a 1500-job manufacturing facility, WestJet is moving from eastern Canada back to Alberta, Flair Airlines announced a 5,000-job growth plan, and Lynx Air is expanding by several thousand jobs as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have the hottest economy in the country. There are over a hundred thousand job openings. We balanced the budget on \$70 oil, and because we have cut red tape, provided investor certainty, and lowered the corporate tax rate, we have seen a billion more dollars of corporate tax revenue than at the NDP rate of 12 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is back, Alberta is calling, and we're just getting started.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a statement.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past September 1 celebrated the inaugural Alberta Day in recognition of Alberta joining the existing Canadian Confederation on September 1, 1905. The champion and architect of Alberta joining Confederation was Sir Frederick Haultain, Premier of the Legislature of the North-West Territories. There's a building in his honour on these grounds, but few know of the heroic work he did in negotiating for a fair and equal status in the Confederation dream.

His endless challenge was to confront the colonial attitudes and behaviours of central Canada. The first great struggle was to gain recognition for the legislative authority of the Northwest Territories. We sit here today, so clearly that was wrested from Ottawa. The second, pressing great challenge was to gain adequate funding and budget control to provide the services needed for the rapidly growing west. This Ottawa continually refused to do, and it even limited the power of the province to raise its own funding.

One infamous act of skulduggery by Ottawa was with regard to Yukon, which was then part of the North-West Territories. When gold was discovered there, the Territories rightly expected that there would be a source of revenue. Ottawa also saw this need, though, and immediately carved out the Yukon as a separate territory as a way to ensure that all revenues from the gold rush went to Ottawa, not Alberta and Saskatchewan. They would continue to be hamstrung and kept in a begging status for an annual but minuscule allocation from Ottawa.

Equally egregious arrangements by Ottawa to hinder the west were the Dominion Lands Act and the Canadian Pacific Railway Act. Premier Haultain continued to seek a fair and equal deal. His success was always limited by delay and outright denial by the Ottawa elite. Haultain proposed a province which included the territories of Saskatchewan and Alberta united; he felt this would make for a stronger province with fewer expenses. Ottawa flatly denied that, wanting two provinces in order to keep them weaker and divided so that Ottawa could maintain control.

Thank you, Premier Haultain, for your determined resolve to enter into a fair and equal Confederation agreement and . . .

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

### Child Care

**Ms Pancholi:** Yesterday was the National Day of Action for early learning and child care, calling for a system of early learning and child care which properly compensates early childhood educators, provides access for all families, and ensures quality. The Alberta NDP is proud to add our voices to this call; but more than that, we will act.

Albertans know which party has always been committed to affordable, quality child care to support our economy, working parents, and children's early learning, and that's the Alberta NDP. The UCP only cares about child care when they want to play games with the federal government. They waited three and a half years to finally increase educator wage top-ups while, at the same time, the Premier's throne speech calls the federal funding they're using to do it an intentional interference and an unconstitutional federal program. They're jeopardizing parents' access to affordable child care and the child care workforce with their job-killing sovereignty act.

Since we know child care is critical to economic growth, the Premier is showing once again how bad she is for Alberta's economy. We understand that a responsible government stands up for Albertans

by doing the work. That means funding child care properly. An Alberta NDP government will increase provincial funding for child care, not underfund it, siphon dollars away to the war room, or wait for the feds to pay for it, like the UCP. We'll address the number one issue facing all child care providers: attracting and retaining qualified early childhood educators.

Let me be clear: we would have increased wages the day the federal deal was signed. While the UCP fails to meet their target of 10,000 new nonprofit spaces, we won't fail because we will work with operators, nonprofits, and municipalities to fund it properly and get it done. We won't play games and delay the cost-control framework for for-profit child care providers, like the UCP. We need new spaces for Alberta families now.

We will include the thousands of Alberta families who use out of school care, because all families are struggling with affordability right now. The Alberta NDP has never wavered on this. We are committed to a quality, affordable, accessible system of early learning and child care in Alberta, and we will get the job done.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 11 in my name: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its opposition to any action taken by the government of Canada to disallow a law passed by the Legislative Assembly."

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 201

#### Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave to introduce Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act.

If passed, this bill will make a real difference in the lives of Albertans who need help when they get sick or injured. This bill compels the establishment of health delivery standards and then requires the government to be held accountable on delivering on those standards. There is a crisis in health care right now. Albertans should be able to expect an ambulance to arrive within minutes, to be able to access an emergency room within a few hours, and to see a family doctor within a day or two. This legislation would require governments of any party to be transparent and held accountable to delivering those standards within public health care. I hope that all members in the Assembly will support it and allow it to be debated fully as a primary priority in this House.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:50 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Guthrie	Sabir
Amery	Hanson	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Irwin	Schmidt
Bilous	Jones	Schow
Carson	LaGrange	Shepherd
Copping	Loewen	Sigurdson, L.

Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson, R.J.
Deol	Luan	Smith, Danielle
Dreeshen	Madu	Smith, Mark
Eggen	Neudorf	Stephan
Ellis	Notley	Sweet
Feehan	Orr	Toor
Fir	Pancholi	Turton
Getson	Pon	Walker
Goehring	Reid	Williams
Gotfried	Renaud	Wilson
Gray	Rosin	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 51	Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 201 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 202

#### Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to request leave to introduce Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

Charity is the greatest amongst all virtues. It has been the watchword of Albertans and the watermark of our province since our conception. Through every crisis, from dust bowls to wildfires, Albertans have come to their neighbours' aid through charities, and these charities are beloved institutions in need of support more now than ever. That's why I am so pleased to introduce this private member's bill today.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Congratulations to all members on a first-reading bill.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, in accordance with section 4(7) of the Election Act and section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I am pleased to table the 2021-22 annual report for Elections Alberta. Pursuant to sections 19(1) and 19(5) of the Auditor General Act it is also my honour to table the required number of copies of the results report for the year ended March 31, 2022, for the office of the Auditor General.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, I have you on my list.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the Premier's policy paper in which she argues for, amongst other things, the creation of health savings accounts to help Albertans get used to the concept of paying out of pocket for health care, including currently insured services like visits to their family doctor.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is rising and moving about the Chamber. I'm not sure if she has a tabling or if she's just wandering while the Speaker is speaking.

Are there others?

Seeing none, I do have four tablings to make: the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner 2021-2022 annual report, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate 2021-2022 annual report, Public Interest Commissioner 2021-2022 annual report, the Property Rights Advocate annual report 2019-2021. That concludes my tablings.

### 3:10 **Tablings to the Clerk**

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Education, College of Alberta School Superintendents 2021-22 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and at 2:16 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### **Point of Order** **Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I rise on a point of order, 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically the portion about using language that causes a disruption within the Chamber. The time when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was speaking, asking his question, he said – and I do have the benefit of the Blues – the following: “To the Premier: why does Bill 1 look like something less Albertan and more like something out of Vladimir Putin’s playbook?” I do find that this kind of language absolutely causes disruption within this Chamber, comparing policies or a bill in the Alberta Legislature to something out of a brutal, dare I say, dictator out of Russia who is currently invading Ukraine, and this called by a member whose family lineage is from Ukraine. I do find this to be quite disruptive, quite inappropriate, and I would ask that that member apologize and not use further language. This is uncharacteristic for that member, and I don’t understand why he would choose to use this kind of language in this context.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This language and this comparison were chosen because this bill is currently debating a piece of legislation that looks remarkably similar to the actions we see from dictators in other countries. Putin is a dictator who makes decisions behind closed doors, who denies evidence and says that things are one way when there is proof that they are not. True democracies debate legislation and laws in public. They don’t, quote, try something new by subverting democratic debate and transparency. In Bill 1 we see powers allowing cabinet to make decisions behind closed doors. The language chosen was deliberate. It is not a point of order. I think it is an apt comparison, and I look forward to continuing to debate Bill 1 here in the Legislature as well as in the public, in the media, where similar comparisons are being made. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. the Government House Leader will come to order.

Are there others who wish to join or provide new information to the debate?

I am prepared to rule. While I would provide caution to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – it is a very slippery slope that one heads down when making such comparisons, but for the purposes of this point of order I will quote the hon. Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker of the House of Commons in the U.K., when she said: you’ve got to ensure that the holders of an opinion, however unpopular, are allowed to get their views across. I consider this matter a matter of debate. However, I do provide some caution

to the hon. member when making comparisons to such world leaders or dictators. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

## **Orders of the Day**

### **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading**

#### **Bill 1**

#### **Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act**

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Hunter]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen to join in the debate.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. This bill seeks to provide a clear framework outlining how Alberta will stand up to Ottawa and federal overreach and preserve our constitutional and provincial rights as Albertans. Albertans are proud to be Albertan, and we are proud to be Canadian. We love both our nation and our home province dearly. That said, Albertans are tired of having our economic prosperity obstructed and provincial jurisdiction encroached upon by federal overreach and federal politicians such as Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh.

The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, if passed, will be used as a shield to protect Albertans from any federal overreach and interference in areas of Alberta’s jurisdiction, overreach, Mr. Speaker, that is costing Alberta’s economy billions of dollars each year in lost investment and is costing Alberta families untold jobs and opportunities, damaging interference in the areas of private property, natural resources, agriculture, forestry, firearms, regulation of the economy, and delivery of health, education, and other social programs. We want made-in-Alberta solutions. Through this legislation the Premier has not only shown that she listens to Albertans, but she’s also demonstrated her dedication to protecting our province and its people.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

If passed, this act will address federal overreach by providing a legislative framework to protect Albertans from federal legislation or policies that are unconstitutional and/or harmful to our province, our people, or economic prosperity. It will address federal interference by enforcing the Canadian Constitution’s division of powers in recognition of both the federal and provincial governments’ respective exclusive and sovereign areas of constitutional jurisdiction. That’s both, Mr. Speaker. The act will protect our province by providing authority to the cabinet when authorized by the Legislative Assembly under the act. I’ll say that again: it will protect our province by providing authority to the cabinet, when authorized by the Legislative Assembly under the act, to direct provincial entities to not enforce specific federal laws or policies with provincial resources.

Despite these numerous benefits, the legislation introduced has been vilified by the NDP as being divisive and unconstitutional. In reality, Mr. Speaker, this bill was created to be respectful of court decisions, respectful of Indigenous and treaty rights and the constitutional rights of diverse provinces within a united Canada. It is notable, for example, that our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan has passed very similar legislation in that province. Despite dangerous and false rhetoric coming from the NDP, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act will assert provincial jurisdiction already delineated in the Canadian Constitution. Additionally, Alberta will continue to respect,

not disregard, court rulings. If the Alberta government's use of the act against any federal initiative is challenged in court, the decision of the court will be respected and upheld.

While we are on the topic of disinformation, I'd like to take this time to clarify the intent of this bill. There is nothing in the act that relates in any way to the topic of separation. This is simply fearmongering from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. The act will not be used to create an independent Alberta. Rather, it is about making Alberta more prosperous while remaining within a more unified Canada.

Speaking of fearmongering, the NDP also like to argue that the act will risk creating economic chaos. Mr. Speaker, in fact, the use of the act won't harm Alberta's economy whatsoever. Instead, it will help protect Alberta's freedoms, interests, economic growth, and prosperity from intrusive federal policies and legislation that have caused hundreds of billions of dollars – hundreds of billions of dollars – to flee Alberta to other jurisdictions over the past decade. By re-establishing the rule of constitutional law back into the Canadian legal system, businesses will be able to flourish from the resulting increase in stability and predictability here in Alberta and right across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this government has been committed to ensuring that Alberta's voice remains strong on our priorities, our interests, and our concerns. As we continue to remain true to our word, our government is now taking action to stand up for Albertans and get a better deal for Alberta within Canada. Protecting Albertans from federal government overreach, defending Alberta's interests, and enhancing trade and investments are critical to Alberta's economic future and, by extension, the future generations of Albertans that we are here to serve. The Premier has been clear that we will respond to unconstitutional federal encroachments on areas of provincial jurisdiction and develop made-in-Alberta strategies to manage our own resources.

Mr. Speaker, this act allows us to stay true to our word, to stand up for Albertans and the future of our province, and that is why I support Bill 1, so that we can continue to focus on the meaningful work that keeps Albertans prosperous and our voice respected. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations, officially being in the chair as Deputy Chair of Committees. It's my pleasure and honour to rise to speak to Bill 1 today, the sovereignty act, and I want to start off by stating what we all know. I want to start off by stating that every legislator in this Chamber stands up for Alberta first and foremost and that Alberta's interests are our top priority. That is why we are provincial politicians and not federal politicians.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I understand the rationale behind the Premier bringing up this bill. However, this bill is damaging and has already caused damage to Alberta's reputation. I'm not speaking just from my own words. I appreciate that members may say, "Well, that's your opinion," but we as a caucus and myself personally have talked to many business leaders across the province and have heard not just the concerns but the fact that the tabling of this bill has already caused damage to Alberta's reputation. It's caused damage because, as most members know, the business community globally looks for jurisdictions that are stable and predictable and have certainty. The very act of tabling this legislation – in fact, this uncertainty in the business community started months ago, when the current Premier was campaigning on this notion.

Now, as I started off – we have examples, and I'll talk about a few examples, Mr. Speaker, where our government, when we were government, stood up to Ottawa and stood up to Ottawa for Alberta's interests.

As you know, there has been a process for provinces to interject when the federal government overreaches into provincial boundaries. That's why we have the courts. It's decided by a separate entity. Our very democracy relies on the division of powers. This bill puts those powers directly into the hands of legislators. Quite frankly, it's dangerous. There are examples of when provinces have challenged the federal government through the courts when they've deemed an action of the federal government to be unconstitutional, and provinces have won those appeals. To say that Alberta needs this to stand up to Ottawa is false because there are mechanisms that are already in place.

Now, maybe the government doesn't like that process, but it doesn't give them the right to introduce a bill that usurps and undermines democracy. The fact that this bill allows cabinet to amend legislation without having to bring legislation through the Chamber is in and of itself undemocratic. All legislation must pass through the three readings and Committee of the Whole before receiving royal assent. This bill completely undermines the process of our Westminster system.

Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that the current government, who claims to be allies of the business community, isn't standing up for the business community, who is ringing the alarm bells about investment. Anyone who says, "Well, this hasn't or won't impact investment coming to Alberta": they're wrong. It has. We've been in touch with companies that were looking to invest in Alberta and have said: Alberta is off the table; we need stability.

The fact that the CEO of CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, has sounded the alarm bells: if that's not a wake-up call for members on that side of the Chamber, then maybe they still have their earplugs in from the former Premier. You have the Calgary Chamber of commerce sounding the alarm bell. Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that this government will hear more businesses getting vocal about the damage that this bill has caused and will continue to cause.

Now, again, as I started my comments, I'm in favour of when Alberta needs to stand up to the federal government, whoever the federal government is. On bad decisions we should be standing up to the federal government to say: that's not in the best interest of Alberta. Again, there's a process and a mechanism for that.

I'll give you a great example, Mr. Speaker, of how, when we were government, our former Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, not only stood up to Ottawa but ensured that the only pipeline that is being built and that has been built in the past 30 years wasn't going to die. She forced the Prime Minister to buy the TMX to ensure that it would be built. That's standing up. That's actually getting more done for the oil and gas sector than this current government has done. In fact, I was out for a coffee with an executive from one of the largest gas-producing companies in Canada, and he said to me: your government did more for our sector than the current government has in three and a half years.

From modernizing the royalties, which meant that producers could continue to be profitable through the full life cycle of the well – I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we also engaged in a campaign to promote the need for pipelines as the safest way to transport our energy resources in Canada. It was called the Keep Canada Working campaign. [interjection] I encourage the minister to listen to this; he may learn something. Four in 10 Canadians were in support of the TMX before we launched our campaign, Keep Canada Working. The campaign was a national campaign across the country. By the end of that campaign 7 in 10 Canadians were in favour of the TMX being built. We moved the needle more effectively in our time in government than predecessors did.

In fact, I remember when former Premier Redford was in this Chamber. She continued to go on trade missions to try to sell our product, but the approach was all wrong and didn't end up moving the needle at all. As we saw – I mean, even under this government they bet \$1.5 billion on Donald Trump and lost that bet. We've seen not just meaningful action, but we've seen outcomes, positive outcomes, for our energy sector and for Canadians under our government.

Under this government what we have is a bill that is creating chaos. It's creating chaos in investments. In fact, I know that investors have either moved off of Alberta – Alberta was one of the jurisdictions they were looking at investing in, and they said no. If we're lucky, at best they've pushed the pause button. The only way that this government can bring back that confidence is to scrap this bill. Start over. This bill, the way it's currently written, will continue to do damage to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am moving a referral motion. I'll just pause while it gets to you. With your approval, I'll read this referral into the record.

3:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes. If you could read it into the record, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill is negatively impacting investment decisions and the Alberta economy and should not proceed in order to protect the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this reasoned amendment is just that. It's a reasoned amendment, and the approach that we are taking is that this bill needs to – I appreciate that earlier today the Premier talked about amendments. The problem is that the bill is so problematic that it cannot be amended to be good enough to be legislation that's passed in this Chamber, so this bill needs to not proceed. The government needs to go back to the drawing board on this.

Part of the reason that this bill is also so problematic: I know my good colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has been in constant contact with many chiefs in Alberta, and our Indigenous sisters and brothers have not been consulted on this bill. They have not been contacted at all. So for the Premier or any minister to say after a bill is tabled, “We will go and consult with you,” that's not consultation. That's actually insulting, and the chiefs recognize that talking to them after legislation is already written is backwards, that the government should be consulting with Indigenous communities, Indigenous leaders before the bill is drafted so that they can have not just meaningful input but to be able to sit down and provide their insights and perspectives on the bill to ensure that there aren't unintended consequences.

Now, I don't know if the Premier and cabinet realized in their debates, when they were talking about this bill, what some of the unintended consequences are, but I know for a fact that a member cannot stand up in this House and say: oh, no, the business community thinks this is great, and I've not heard one negative thing about this bill or the chill that it has put on investment decisions. I know for a fact that every MLA has been receiving correspondence, whether phone calls or e-mails, about this bill and its impact. [interjection] I see my friend the Member for Edmonton-North West would like to say a few words.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks. I appreciate you giving way. I know that we've been out canvassing a lot, and I know you've been helping in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Thank you very much for that. In all

the many kilometres that you've put in throughout Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talking to people, has the sovereignty of Alberta ever come up at the door as a top-of-mind issue for your constituents? I certainly have not seen it, you know, and I've not just been in my own constituency. I've been in Calgary and Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, Red Deer, suburban Edmonton, Edmonton, and I've never had anybody come up and tell me about this thing. So I'm just curious if that has ever happened to you.

**Mr. Bilous:** Great question. The short answer is no. Now, you know, I will say that at times as I've canvassed around the province, whether door-knocking or meeting with stakeholders, people have expressed frustration with Ottawa, frustration with Ottawa's decisions. I share that frustration for some decisions that they've made. I share some of the frustrations with the current government, and I also have different opinions on policies from the federal NDs. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, again, there is a process. If the federal government passes legislation that impacts Alberta that we believe is unconstitutional, then absolutely we will take them to court and we will fight them, and I'm confident that we will win if they are overreaching and reaching into areas of provincial jurisdiction.

But what this bill does is that it undermines our very democratic system because you have cabinet being able to amend legislation. That has never happened in Alberta in our history, that through a simple motion cabinet can go back and completely rewrite a bill that was passed by all 87 members through the process of passing legislation. If a motion in this Chamber is the exact same as a bill, which it's not, because a motion doesn't go through three readings and Committee of the Whole – so for the government to try to argue that a simple motion in the Chamber gives them the right to amend legislation, it honestly shocks me, Mr. Speaker, that members of the other side have accepted that. Members who have railed about democracy over the past eight years that they've been in this Chamber suddenly now feel that this is acceptable.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, just for the record we're referring to this amendment as RA1.

Anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member opposite. Unfortunately, he didn't accept an intervention. I think we're just getting back there. I'd love to speak to the point where he said that in all the plethora of doors – and I have a ton of respect for this member because he's literally, like, the sole person of the capitalist caucus over there. There was one other member, actually, who wanted a correction on that because he also understood business. I do respect when that member speaks.

But something I have as a bit of a quandary is that when a member of his own caucus asks if there was anybody that showed concerns about overreach from the federal government in the context of a sovereignty question or how this act was going to stand up for us, his answer was that, no, he's never heard that once. As a former minister of jobs and economy he's going to tell me in this House – like, this House is supposed to be a place of truth and sometimes, on their side, truthiness – as a moment of truth, that no one in the business community has ever experienced any issues with Ottawa overreach or bills that would harm our economy?

**Mr. Bilous:** That's not what I said.

**Mr. Getson:** Well, if he would have accepted the intervention, through you to him, maybe we could have had this dialogue, but he had his member prescribe if anyone has asked him specifically about this bill and if anyone asked him about sovereignty. So I'll

give him the slippery slope and the truthiness that he likes to utilize. I'll give him the same courtesy he gave me.

With that point, he claims that no one has any concerns in this province about government overreach impacting them. He's concerned about the flight of capital from this province because of us standing up for Albertans. His own leader is convinced that she can lay prostrate and have Trudeau override what we come up with in this House, and he has the audacity to talk about democracy and the nuances of putting a motion in the House versus a bill. This is wild.

To the people out there at home who might be tuning into this on Bill 1, here's what the NDP – and they kind of act like a gang of bullies sometimes down in Ottawa, and maybe that's why Jagmeet and Trudeau are there. You know, I watch this show called *Sons of Anarchy*, and usually what happens is that they patch over at the other club. I'm wondering when that's going to become formal, because they basically wrote a little contract with each other to backstop them and keep going on this. They've been overreaching nonstop.

The Fair Deal Panel went around. That was one of the things that came back, and I'm sure that that member has heard that on his doors in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I have a shirttail aunt and uncle that live over there. They've had some concerns for their entire life over the overreach of Ottawa and some of the connotations that take place, and their business decisions have been impacted by a lot of that as well. Anybody in the energy sector had been impacted. Trudeau Sr. with the national energy program: that didn't affect any business? We're seeing the same methodology.

I spoke in here about economic corridors, literally a way of pulling together northwest Canada to work together and collaboratively, and that member knows full well what that means. That opposition voted against that motion. Now we have economic corridors right to the minister of transportation's door to do that. When we're talking about standing up for Albertans and what's in the context of this act, it is one hundred per cent within the Constitution. But in dealing with bullies in the schoolyard, sometimes you've got to let them know that if they keep coming across that fence, if they keep coming into your way, maybe you might bop them in the nose. We're not going to put the onus on business to do that. The government will take it on, and we'll take it on through this House. That's the concept.

3:40

Here's what the opposition is so worried about: inflammatory things, that we want to scare away business. Right from the bill:

Whereas Albertans possess a unique culture and shared identity within Canada.

Oh, my gosh.

Whereas it is the role of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to preserve and promote this unique culture and shared identity.

Oh, my gosh. Outlandish. Oh, pack up the wagons; we're heading east.

Whereas the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 are foundational documents that establish the rights and freedoms of Albertans and the relationship between the provincial and federal orders of government, including the division of legislative powers between them,

recognizing that our Constitution is valid, all of those constitutional acts that got us to this point.

The reason is that we're tired. Albertans are tired of it. We fight way above our weight class. We pay more. We're disproportionately allowed in the voting process. Every time it happens. Their methodology before was appeasement, kind of like Chamberlain did with the leader of Germany. Churchill had to come in and fix that because you know what? Keep giving more, and they just take it all.

Whereas the Province of Alberta is granted rights and powers under the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and . . .

Let me guess.

. . . the Constitution Act, 1982.

There you go. These are things that just freak them out. When they talk about democracy, they have this other construct. It's more of a socialist democracy. It's right in the way they operate.

Whereas actions taken by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada have infringed on these sovereign provincial rights and powers with increasing frequency and have unfairly prejudiced Albertans.

I remember seeing cartoons from 1910 talking about that out west. This isn't something new. This isn't something that happened in the last year. We're not doing this on a whim. We've tried a ton of other things, and it's not working. Finally they're paying attention.

The fact that, again, their leader, when asked by CBC if she would allow Trudeau to overrule us: "Well, that's a grand idea. Oh, oh, oh. What did I say? Oh, inside voice came out. Oh, my gosh. Let's delete my tweet." But, you know, the good thing with Twitter now? Elon Musk bought it. I'm actually tempted to go and sign up on it because I might get my voice heard versus this other slanted stuff we keep hearing and hearing otherwise.

Whereas the people of Alberta expect the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada to respect the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930 and the Constitution Act, 1982 as the governing documents of the relationship between Canada and Alberta and to abide by the division of powers and other provisions set out in those documents.

Now, the opposition was heckling because I'm just reading the whereas. It's kind of the context of how it sets it up, not some fairy tale, pixie dust, Trudeau-loving, fan-waving, Jagmeet thing. Like, why don't they just call it the National Socialist Party of Canada and do us all a favour? They're all one party anyway. Like, just knock off the posing.

That's the problem when you call a bully on it. You call a bully on it, and all of a sudden they're crying, wailing, gnashing their teeth, running back to mommy. "That little kid beat me up. He said no. He wouldn't let me take his lunch money anymore." I'm tired of this.

Whereas it is necessary and appropriate for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to set out measures that the Lieutenant Governor in Council should consider taking in respect of actions of the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Canada that are unconstitutional or harmful to Albertans and for Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to have a free vote . . .

Free. Imagine that. What's more free than that? Democracy. Thank goodness we're standing up for it.

. . . on such measures according to their individual judgment.

[interjection] They're heckling. I'm sure he'll get his point to intervene. I'd like to take an intervention from that fellow because, wow, can he weave a good yarn.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Getson:** The part that they're getting tied up in is parlance of when this is being introduced into the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

#### **Point of Order Insulting Language**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). I've been listening to the member for a while now. He's making wild comparisons, referring to Nazis, and now attacking an hon. member personally, making fun of him. I think that if he has

anything to add to the bill, he should talk about the bill, talk about the amendment that we are on, how this bill impacts the business community. The language the member is using is grossly insulting, and it should not be used in this Chamber.

**The Acting Speaker:** The deputy government whip.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that this is a matter of debate. I've heard no offensive language that would bring the House to any kind of disunity or discord. I would also make the point that I can't wait to hear which it is going forward, (h), (i), or (j) in 23. It's been driving me nuts for four years. I wish we could pick one of these subclauses.

**The Acting Speaker:** Something extra to add to the debate, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, you know, I appreciate differences of opinion, but the member did refer to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford as "gnarly" when he gets up and speaks. That is calling an individual member a name and is unparliamentary.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Something extra to add?

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Just clarity. You know, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I do have the benefit of what I said. Now, how they heard it is different. I said that he could "weave a good yarn". Weave a good yarn. So if they hear "gnarly," I can't help what they hear, but what I said – and perhaps they're not picking up my Albertan accent, who stands up for the province, very well.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right. Hon. members, in relation to this point of order that's been called, I do want to caution members about inflammatory or disruptive language. I did say a couple of days ago, when I was running for Deputy Chair of Committees, that one of my hopes was to ensure that we do have healthy debate and decorum in this House. At this time I do not find a point of order, but I will again request of all members healthy debate and respect for one another.

**Mr. Getson:** I appreciate the ruling, Mr. Speaker, and bringing me back to a higher degree of decorum. I shouldn't be sinking to their level when they reference, you know, foreign leaders invading countries, as an example, and those types of things. But that's not offensive to them, only to us.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Getson:** Back with the amendment. They basically want to gas the whole thing – can it, send it back, everything else – instead of following the democratic process as outlined in this House itself. This is the second reading, where the amendments typically come forward on the act and we get a chance to debate it. We're all for that. We heard our new Premier say that today, but instead: fire and brimstone. We want to say that everyone is fleeing the province because – oh, my gosh – we're standing up for them and following the Constitution. Really? Really?

Mr. Speaker, as you can probably tell and those at home, I am not in favour of this amendment. I strongly encourage my fellow members to vote no to this. Let's get back to the bill. Let's do what we can to help Albertans stand up against Ottawa and the NDP, federal and provincial, Liberal alliance, against the nonstop overreach into our areas. It's time to tell the bullies that we respect the rule of law, that we know the rules of the law, that we're equals

in this country. You better start treating us like it, or we're just going to tell you no.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to the chair. I would love to have an opportunity to speak to this bill because, of course, it is quite a contentious bill, for good reason. It is rejected largely by all segments of society other than the government members, and as such it is one that we should take very, very seriously.

I know that, you know, such left-wing people as the CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce and the CEO of CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, have come out and said that this bill is – using words like "dangerous" and "problematic." So it's not really an issue of left versus right – is it? – when these kinds of organizations are coming out and saying that this bill is deeply problematic.

3:50

I know that constitutional scholars from across Canada have weighed in on this and have addressed the fact that, as the previous member has said: oh, we say in the bill that this doesn't actually violate the Constitution. The constitutional scholars say: you can say that, but then if you actually then go on to violate the Constitution, what you said is irrelevant. That's exactly the answer to the previous speaker as he reads out the sections early on that deny what is actually happening later on in the very same bill. It just tells us how irrelevant their earlier clauses are, where they try to set the tone in order to slide underneath that somewhat deceptive tone the reality that they're actually challenging the rule of law in Canada, that they are actually making the attempt to establish a set of laws in Alberta that will undermine the laws of Canada, that when a law is a duly established law in Canada, it will be neglected or unenforced in the province of Alberta, which is by its definition a denial of the rule of law.

So what we have is a party and a government that is actually working against the fundamentals of the democratic society. They can deny that all they want, but the people who are experts in this area, the constitutional experts, tell us that that is, in fact, what they are doing. You know, I think that that's something that they should take very seriously.

We know that many of the members opposite who are currently ministers of various ministries came out against this originally, before they got their jobs and their jobs were on the line. They said the very things that we're saying now about this bill being bad for the province of Alberta, bad for investment, bad for the economy moving forward. All of them stood up and, in fact, voted in their own little election to not have the leader come in who was going to bring in this bill. I'm assuming they all voted for themselves.

In fact, you know, the ministers of these – Treasury Board and Finance, the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism, the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development, the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, the Minister of Municipal Affairs – all have already voted not to have this bill. Now, they have suggested that somehow there are some changes to the bill since it was originally announced and that that makes it acceptable, but they have not – not one has stood up and said: this is the specific change that has allowed me to change my opinion on this particular bill. [interjection] I see that there is a request for an intervention.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, hon. member. Yeah. I mean, my question and, I guess, the most obvious one hanging out there is:

what exactly was in there before that they changed somehow? I would be very concerned because, I mean, what we do see in here – right? – defies the division of democratic decision-making in a parliamentary Westminster system. That’s still there. I mean, Lord knows what they took out, right? You know, the very existence of the bill, I would suggest, has a chilling effect on investment and the business community and just the confidence and the reputation of our province. Even the title, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, seems like it sort of has a built-in excuse right into the title, like, oh, no, it wasn’t like the Alberta separation thing that we were thinking about before; it’s within the framework of something else. It feels like there’s an excuse for this built right into the title of the bill. Then, of course, as you flip along, sure enough, it does subvert the Westminster system.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much for that intervention. It is interesting to imagine what was in this bill that was so horrendous that the fact that a bill that has come out that is both unconstitutional and against the rule of law and defying the traditional rules of Westminster democracy – if there was something worse than that in the bill before, then that’s quite an amazing statement on the part of all of these ministers who stood up and said publicly to the citizens of the province of Alberta that this was a terrible bill. Somehow they don’t think it’s terrible now that they’re actually challenging the rule of law, challenging Westminster democracy, and challenging the right of citizens to have a voice in the construction of laws in this province.

All of that is here in this bill. We know that because constitutional scholars have looked at this bill, and they say that, yes, we understand that this government has put in statements early in the bill saying, “Don’t really listen to the rest of this bill,” but it doesn’t matter if you do that if, in fact, in the body of the bill you actually do defy the rule of law.

Let me give you one very specific example here, and that is section 2(c). Section 2(c) attempts to make the attempt to say that this does not undermine in any way treaty rights. But I just received a phone call from one of the chiefs, who went to their lawyers and said: does this protect us? And the constitutional lawyer who spoke to this treaty chief said quite clearly: no, it does not. It does not clearly say that this law is secondary to treaty agreements that have existed prior to. It says that one should not assume this law subverts, but again that clause has no standing in terms of limiting the effects of the rest of the bill.

That’s exactly what the chiefs are concerned about. You know, the chiefs have repeatedly said – for example, Chief Tony Alexis said: please have this government hold off on passing the sovereignty act at least until the next election. Why? So that there can be a discussion about what is proceeding.

The grand chief of Treaty 8 has said that this law undermines the authority and duty of the sovereign nations that entered into treaty. There are repeated statements. I can tell you that I have had more phone calls and more messages from chiefs across this province who are saying that this is a devastatingly terrible bill, and it is clear that they are concerned that this is really intended to take rights away from Indigenous people.

In speaking to one of the grand chiefs just this morning, the grand chief reminded me about Bill 1 under the previous UCP Premier, which was designed to prevent people from protesting on public lands. He then reminded me that even though this government had brought in that bill, when there was a protest at the Coutts border crossing for many, many days and, in fact, there was significant illegal activity, including the accusation of illegal arms happening at that border crossing, the government did not use that Bill 1 in order to be able to stop the terrible activities happening at the Coutts border crossing, which were destroying the economy.

I need to get to the point on this. He said: we learned at that time that that bill was written only to take rights away from Indigenous people, that it was not being used against non-Indigenous people. The bill was there, but it was not being used at the time. He said: so now we are in this position where the Bill 1 being brought in by this Premier is again saying, “Oh, no; this is about one thing,” but in fact it is designed to subvert the treaty rights of Indigenous people in this province. They know that. They say: we have learned that from the experience of this government, and we are not going to allow them to proceed in this way. The things they’re concerned about have been spoken about by this government, so they know that they’re right.

They know that what this government is concerned about is that the federal government sometimes enacts laws around issues that may affect life here in Alberta. For example, they may enact laws that protect the environment. But this government doesn’t like it because they’re afraid that if you protect the environment, you might take something away from the oil and gas economy.

What the chiefs are telling me is: “Ah, so what we’re hearing, then, is that any time the federal government wants to protect our lands, our air, and our water, this government will say that it doesn’t count in Alberta, and our lands and our air and our water will not be protected by this government.” [interjection] I see that there is a request for an intervention.

4:00

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Member, for that. I just want to make it explicitly clear, and I’m hoping that you can shed some more light on this. Even though Indigenous communities are so focused on protecting our environment – the water, air, the land – as you pointed out, at the same time we can have economic development. Not only that, but at the same time I’m sure that you’re hearing from these chiefs that it’s essential that Indigenous people be treated with respect as we build that strong, resilient economy for all Albertans and that they must be included in that. Yes, it’s true, as you have been pointing out, the insights from the different chiefs that you have described already is that somehow in the past economic activity has actually left Indigenous communities out, not being able to benefit from the resources that they have a right to under treaty.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, just a kind reminder that interventions are also to come through the chair.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the intervention; thank you. I think that helps to highlight what the concerns are. The chiefs have said to me repeatedly: we are in favour of economic development; we just want to be part of it. But when they want to be part of it, they say: we approach it as a complex issue. That is, economic development must also protect the resources and the land on which that economic development is made so that we can pass on not only economic benefits to our children, but we can pass on the very land on which those economic benefits are derived. That is what the chiefs are saying. You need to be able to do both.

So if this government is creating an act that would allow them to say, “No, we’re only going to do one of two things; we’re only going to do the stuff that helps us to make money, but we’re not going to do stuff to help us protect the future of our province and the well-being of the future generations,” then the chiefs are not interested in participating. They want to be at the table, but they want to be at the table as full participants. They clearly feel that this government has found a way to undermine their rights in the future, and they’re very worried about it.



You can say what you want about me standing up in the House and talking about it, but I defy you to go and talk to the First Nations and tell them that they're wrong. They are very mad about it, all across this province. I have never seen a situation where at the AOTC all of the chiefs stood up and said: we are against this act. This has really united the First Nations in this province in a way that very little else has up until this time. As a result, this government is going to have very serious consequences moving forward. [interjection] I see that there is a request for intervention.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Member. I have much to say on this as well, but I just wanted to take a moment. Not unlike, to a different extent, the initiatives or negotiations that are happening between the provincial government and the federal government and our treaties – of course, we also have other levels of elected officials who are trying to work within this, specifically when we look at the idea of investing and economic stability. I have real concerns, somewhat laid out here in the legislation under resolutions, section 3. We see: “If, on a motion of a member of Executive Council, the Legislative Assembly approves a resolution that” – we see here under (ii) – “causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans.” That’s very concerning when we consider negotiations that often happen, whether we’re talking about LRT investments, whether we’re talking about investments into housing initiatives across the province. This legislation is potentially going to have consequences.

Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Member. I think that’s an excellent point, and it happens to address exactly one of the other things one of the First Nations individuals I spoke with just this morning was saying, that this government is saying: we’re only going to use this when we feel like our interests are somehow being maligned by the federal government. The particular phrase that this person brought forward to me was the fact that this government is saying that they will be defending public interest. What she said to me was: our experience is that whenever this government says “public interest,” they do not mean First Nation interest; they mean their interest, interest of their particular group. There is no appropriate definition of what is public interest here in this act that allows them to feel comfortable that their concerns and their interests will be protected and supported.

They certainly don’t think that this government has demonstrated in the past that they care about the treaty rights and the land rights of Indigenous people. In fact, at the press conference at the AOTC, the Alberta organization of treaty chiefs, Chief Tony Alexis said that, quote, this bill sets up the province to allow extraction at any rate, completely unprotected. That’s the fear. It’s not my fear; it’s not me that’s making this point. These are the statements of the chiefs. They’re saying that nothing in this bill gives them confidence that their concerns will be protected, certainly that the concerns of a small group of people around the UCP have particular interests that they’re wanting to protect, but nothing in this bill says they’re going to protect the rights of people who are First Nations treaty people in this province.

They cannot trust this government. That is the clear and specific concern that they are bringing forward, and they are saying that they cannot support this bill. They have not been consulted on this bill, they are very upset about this bill, and there has been no attempt since they came out 14 days ago against this bill – there’s been no attempt – to resolve this issue and to withdraw the bill until the rights of treaty people have been protected in this province.

How can they have faith? Their experience with this government from the original Bill 1 under the previous Premier was that the government really isn’t very much interested in the rights of

Indigenous people to protect their rights, to protest, to cause blockades. They know a bill was written that was not used against non-Indigenous people, so obviously it was simply written to be used only against Indigenous people. That’s what they’re telling me. That’s why I am standing up today and trying my best to convey the message given to me by the First Nations chiefs and many other members.

I met with elders this morning – there was a pipe ceremony this morning with elders from across the northern part of Alberta – and they all share the same thing. What they’re asking is exactly what we’re asking here in this reasoned amendment: stop this bill. Move this bill out of this Chamber, do the right work, protect the interest and the rights of treaty members of this province – we’re all treaty members; sorry – the First Nations treaty members in this province, and properly make sure that when you talk about defending the public interest here in Alberta, you actually are talking about First Nations people and not just sort of saying that, well, they’re Albertans too. They find that kind of statement very insulting. There was a specific reference made recently by one of the ministers along that line, and they were very insulted by it.

Don’t be saying: oh, yeah, we’re protecting all Albertans; oh, yeah, they’re Albertans, too. They are First Nations people with First Nations rights. They are distinct and significant in the history of Canada, and they need to be protected in a particular manner moving forward. Their own . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment RA1? I see the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to speak in support of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, and against the referral amendment. One of the main reasons that we are bringing forward this bill is that we are compelled, in fact, to protect the economic well-being of Alberta.

4:10

The first recital of the act says that Alberta possesses “a unique culture and shared identity within Canada.” Mr. Speaker, what is the culture and identity of Alberta? Alberta is a land of freedom and prosperity. That is our culture and our identity. Freedom and prosperity is something the NDP will never quite understand, but freedom and prosperity is our inheritance and our heritage. Alberta is the best.

What did the NDP do to contribute to this? Mr. Speaker, they did nothing. In fact, they did damage to Alberta by referring to us as the embarrassing cousin. There are two fundamental issues with referring to Alberta as an embarrassing cousin. One is that our prosperity and freedom should be nothing ever to be ashamed of. It is part of our excellence; it is why individuals and families come from all over the world to Alberta to work, to live their lives, and to raise their families.

The other thing is that the former Premier referred to us as a cousin. That is the problem: the NDP feel that we are a cousin in this partnership when, in fact, we are an equal partner. They do not understand the fundamental relationship that we have in this country. Mr. Speaker, what is currently the greatest threat to our culture and identity, our freedom and prosperity? The morally and fiscally bankrupt socialist NDP Axis government is certainly a strong candidate. The purpose of this bill is to protect our economic well-being. Freedom and prosperity is the priority of this government, but we have to understand and remember that the federal government is inextricably connected to this, our economic well-being. It is naive to pretend otherwise, and the NDP are very naive.

It is an unfortunate necessity to protect Alberta, our freedom and prosperity, which the morally and fiscally bankrupt, hostile, socialist NDP-Trudeau Axis government seeks to undermine and attack. But, Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP against the act? Is it because Trudeau, Canada's first NDP Prime Minister, is their bosom buddy? Their BFF? They are confused. They do not understand Alberta. Socialism is an enemy to self-reliance. Socialism does not create prosperity; it undermines it. Do we honestly think that socialism attracts investment? Is that what they're trying to tell us, that socialism attracts investment? No.

The NDP occupation is proof positive. Under the NDP occupation there were fewer private sector jobs, not more.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

#### Point of Order

#### Insulting Language

**Mr. Sabir:** I rise under 23(j). Referring to a democratically elected government of this province as an occupation: this word has been the subject of a point of order many times before. The Speaker of the House has warned this member multiple times to not use this word, but this member is deliberately using this word to create disorder in this House. I urge you, in light of previous caution provided by the Speaker, to rule this out of order to maintain order in this Chamber.

**The Acting Speaker:** The deputy House leader.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been listening attentively to my friend's comments here throughout the course of this debate, and he has continued to stay on topic. His comments are relevant. They are truly a matter of debate. My friend references an alleged caution but cites no source for that. This is a matter of debate, and I would ask that you find that it is not a point of order and that you allow him to continue with his on-point, relevant comments.

**The Acting Speaker:** Do you have something different to add?

**Mr. Stephan:** Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, there many different interpretations of the word "occupation." I know that many business owners and hard-working Albertans felt that they were ignored, that their rights and freedoms and prosperity, frankly, were being undermined by this very horrible government that was in power.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule. At this time, again, I want to step forward and raise a caution for members of the House. I believe we have had discussions around the phrase "occupation" used in this House prior, and there have been cautions issued. I'd like to once again issue that caution to all members, to choose your words wisely, and let's continue with healthy debate.

The Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Stephan:** Sure. Under the NDP dictates there were fewer private-sector jobs. There were. When they came into being in government, over the four-year period the population of Alberta grew, yet at the end of their four years, when Albertans kicked them out, Mr. Speaker, when they were kicked out, there were fewer private-sector jobs. They are the job killers. They are the job killers. When they stand and talk about the economy, they were absolute failures, and the record shows it.

Mr. Speaker, not only that, but they scared away investment. They chased away billions of dollars of investment. Who likes to invest in a socialist country, in a socialist province? They don't want to do that. They chased away investment, and their record shows it.

Now, what I can say is that under our government our private sector is exploding. We are bringing in jobs. We are bringing in billions of dollars in investment. We are leading the nation in economic growth. We have a huge multibillion-dollar surplus.

Under this prior awful – awful – government, socialist government, we had multibillion-dollar deficits. They were a horrible government. They did a horrible job. I went and knocked on the doors of Albertans in my constituency, and I can tell you that I saw oil and gas workers who were out of work because of them, because of their destructive NDP dictates, them making us less competitive.

Mr. Speaker, I was a tax lawyer before I had the privilege to serve in this institution.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order

#### Relevance

**Mr. Sabir:** This time it's 23(b), "speaks to matters other than the question under discussion." The question under discussion is that this bill will negatively impact investment decisions and it should not proceed in order to protect Alberta's well-being. The member has not said a word about this amendment and has gone on to say all kinds of things that are not relevant to this debate or should not even be said in this Assembly.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, this is once again clearly not a point of order. I don't know what my learned friend was listening to, but I heard the hon. Member for Red Deer-South speaking about investment, comparing and contrasting the two different governments and the success of the UCP government in attracting private enterprise, private investment to this province and how the members opposite failed horribly in doing so. That is a matter of debate. It is relevant to the topic at hand, and I would submit to you that this is not a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. You're making my first day in the chair lots of fun. Thank you.

I do want to say that I do not find this to be a point of order. It is a point of debate. However, I know that with regard to Bill 1 we have chatted about phrases like "staying in our own lanes," so I would encourage all members to make sure that they are staying in their lanes and debating the amendment that's at hand.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have to say, the truth is hard to take. I don't know if this is hardly a matter of debate. In any event, they talked about chasing away investment. They were horrible. Our government is doing an excellent job.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that we are succeeding not because of the federal government but in spite of it. You know, they are socialists. They are cousins to the NDP. They are part of the federal NDP socialist axis government. This act is an unfortunate necessity to protect Alberta, our freedom and prosperity, which the morally and fiscally bankrupt, hostile, socialist NDP axis government seeks to undermine and attack.

Business does not trust the NDP. The NDP does not know how to compete and excel in the real world. Socialism is a parasite. It is kryptonite to prosperity. Mr. Speaker, we must keep the NDP far away. I never did meet a business owner that thought the NDP did a good job.

The NDP need to put their straw man away and stop misrepresenting the act and then attacking the worst version of it manufactured of their misrepresentations, only existing in their imaginations. The NDP want to have us live in a universe of perpetual fear, and they want to force all of us to join them.

Why is the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act necessary? Is it because many of us are concerned we are sleepwalking towards disaster? Yes. Is it because Canada is acting like a hostile, one-trillion-plus fiscal train wreck attacking Alberta, threatening to drag us down with it? Yes. Mr. Speaker, if Alberta was not part of Canada and was invited to join this rigged partnership under the current terms, would we join? No. Are we compelled to be a host in a parasitic relationship? No.

Mr. Speaker, this is a dysfunctional partnership. That is the truth. The purpose of this act is that, by bringing accountability as a fundamental principle, we can take a dysfunctional partnership and make it an effective and competitive partnership. Alberta is the rainmaker partner. A partnership that undermines and attacks its rainmaker partner would never survive in the real world. There are also some partners that game this partnership and take from Alberta families and businesses for political gain. That is a recipe for corruption. The moral foundation of such a partnership is eroding. A partnership where work is displaced by plunder as a ruling principle will never survive. We cannot be slothful. We cannot be neglectful. We cannot sit in a thoughtless stupor, like the members opposite. That is what the NDP would say, not understanding, sticking their heads in the sand.

A fundamental principle of this act is . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### **Point of Order Insulting Language**

**Mr. Sabir:** Standing Order 23(j). The member continuously uses abusive language, garbage language, rubbish language that should be beneath this House. I think you provided the member with a caution, but he thinks it's funny to say things that are abusive, that will likely create disorder in this House. That's completely a waste of this House's time, not to listen to your caution. I urge you to rule these kinds of comments out of order so the member refrains from saying this again.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, once again not a point of order. My friend used some choice words, but let me use the synonyms for those words "thoughtless stupor": near unconsciousness or insensibility. What this means is that if my friend had used the word to call the members opposite insensible, there would be no point of order. If he said that they were near unconscious in their decision-making process, there would be no point of order. Those are the same exact words he used, albeit using different terms to refer to the members opposite. There is absolutely no point of order here. It is simply a matter of debate, and I would encourage my friends on the other side of this House to look at the thesaurus before raising points of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Something additional to add?

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that sometimes you're caught in a difficult position having to figure out which way to rule on particular issues. I would draw your attention to a ruling earlier this day by the Speaker during question period when the opposition was comparing the government to the dictator of Russia, Mr. Putin, a man who has arguably been the cause of thousands and thousands of deaths. So I would argue that if we're going to be making rulings about what is a point of order and where it lands, we would consider an earlier ruling of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule. This has been a long 15-minute speech, and I don't remember any time in recent history that I've seen us rise on three points of order in one speech. I do want to . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** Hey, did you forget about me?

**The Acting Speaker:** Oh, I forgot about the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I apologize. I will not let that happen again.

I do choose to rule this as a point of order at this point. I think we are starting to get off the rails. In the future I would encourage the hon. Member for Red Deer-South to maybe refer to his thesaurus in front of him and the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross and choose his words a bit little more wisely. I do find this a point of order, and I will ask the hon. member to continue with decorum.

Thank you.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Stephan:** Sure. I rise and apologize for using the words "thoughtless stupor."

Mr. Speaker, this act holds the federal government to account for laws and actions that intrude into provincial areas of jurisdiction or attack the interests of Alberta. Doesn't Ottawa seek to do indirectly what constitutionally it is not allowed to do directly such as with Alberta's constitutional authority over its oil and gas resources? Didn't Alberta's Court of Appeal describe Trudeau's carbon tax as a sneaky "constitutional Trojan horse"? Yes. Isn't Trudeau proposing a new carbon tax or cap and trade that singles out and disproportionately punishes Alberta? Yes. Wouldn't that inflict more economic chaos, chasing out additional billions in investment and Alberta jobs with it? Yes.

How have sternly worded letters served us? Isn't the purpose of this act to assert and defend constitutional parameters that Ottawa habitually ignores and attacks? Yes. Ottawa recently released a discussion paper seeking to limit or impose additional carbon taxes on oil and gas development. Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated incident. This is a pattern of hostile behaviour from Ottawa seeking to attack and take advantage of Alberta, holding us back. Under section 92A of the Constitution Act, Alberta has jurisdiction over its natural resources, not Ottawa. This act should be invoked to tell Ottawa to take their discussion paper and stuff it and leave Alberta and their constitutional jurisdiction alone. The unfortunate truth is that Ottawa has made itself . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, it is 4:30, and pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 1, 2022**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

### **Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

### **Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 5, 2022

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 5, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Brooklyn Elhard. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
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.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Page Biographies

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to proceeding to introductions today, I'd like to just briefly note that you will find a copy of the new page biographies for the 2022 fall sitting of the Fourth Session of the Legislature, which I will table at an appropriate time later today. As you read through it, you will notice that we have a record number of 18 new pages alongside nine returning pages. I would also like to mention that these biographies will be available online through OurHouse.

Hon. members, I know that it goes without saying, but I ask you to provide them with a warm welcome and that you will show this bright, young group the utmost patience as they learn the ropes of this important role. There will be a test on their names next week for each of you.

Thank you all, pages. Please, members, provide them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am pleased to introduce a familiar face around the building. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is former Member for Lacombe-Ponoka Rod Fox. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a school to introduce.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to the wonderful grade 6 class from Virginia Park school. They're joined by their

fabulous teacher Kirsten Elliott and their wonderful EA Abdul Mohamed. Please join me in welcoming them.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to also introduce a school group to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. It's école Rio Terrace. They've brought their teacher along, Andrea Bluteau, and I know that there are about three parents who have come along, and I just welcome them also.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce grade 6 students, teachers, and staff from St. Kateri Catholic school in Edmonton-Meadows. Please join me in welcoming them into the House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has an introduction.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House Mr. Ashok Gupta and Devindra Singh Tiwana, who are businessmen here in Edmonton and residents of the South West constituency here in Edmonton. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta grazing lease association, Mr. Kevin Meneice and Mr. Kyle Forbes, as well as members of the Western Stock Growers' Association, Graham Overguard, Bill Newton, and Callum Sears. Last but certainly not least, the wonderful Lindsay Murfin, who keeps all of them in line. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education. The hon. the Minister of Education, do you have an introduction?

**Member LaGrange:** We didn't get any today. Sorry.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. member – my list actually isn't up to date. The hon. Member for Camrose is rising.

### Affordability Plan

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our United Conservative government knows that affordability is a primary challenge facing Albertans right now and that families are counting on us to take decisive action to address rising costs of living. That is why we are not hesitating to deliver timely and meaningful inflation relief for Alberta families and businesses: relief for fuel, relief for utilities, relief for seniors and our most vulnerable. Our government is in a position to provide this relief to Alberta because of our balanced budget and strong fiscal position.

We recently delivered the second-quarter fiscal update, which showed that not only is our economy strong but that it has momentum. Despite global uncertainty our province is on track for a projected surplus of \$12.3 billion and repayment of \$13.3 billion. The restored strength of Alberta's economy is in stark contrast to the

disastrous economic policies we saw Rachel Notley and the NDP put in place. The NDP's ideological policies and tax hikes chased hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment out of our province. This also wreaked havoc on our budget.

Shockingly, the NDP is now attacking the inflation relief we are providing Albertans even though they have no alternative plan. We are focused, however, on keeping Alberta's economy strong and delivering timely relief to Albertans. We have already committed \$2.8 billion over three years to help Albertans with cost-of-living concerns and are committed to \$1.3 billion in new funding to help make life more affordable, but as we have said, there will be more help coming. Our commitment to fiscal discipline and economic growth is allowing us to pay down our debt, lower our burden, and save for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose will be well aware that the use of proper names under any circumstance would be inappropriate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising.

### **Industrial Heartland Investment and Alberta Sovereignty Act**

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September I had the pleasure of attending Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association conference. I heard presentations from several companies that talked about their plan to reduce emissions and achieve net zero in their operations as well as produce energy such as hydrogen that will help our province achieve its emission-reduction goals.

There are currently several large-scale projects being considered in the Industrial Heartland. Dow is proposing to build a net-zero facility that will produce 3.2 million metric tonnes of polyethylene and ethylene derivatives. Suncor and ATCO have partnered to build a hydrogen production facility capable of producing 300,000 tonnes of hydrogen annually. Inter Pipeline has proposed blue ammonia and blue methane facilities that will support the transportation of hydrogen.

These projects represent billions of dollars in investment and will create thousands of good-paying jobs; however, none of them have reached a final investment decision. This is a pivotal moment for the heartland and for Alberta's entire economy. The government, rather than embracing investor certainty and economic stability, have chosen to introduce their job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act, a piece of legislation that has been panned by venture capitalists, investors, the Calgary Chamber, the Canadian chamber, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. It is the exact opposite of what we need right now. It will create uncertainty and drive away investment. We need to scrap the sovereignty act so that we can attract investment into the Industrial Heartland, build a more resilient economy, create jobs now and for future generations.

**1:40**

I won't vote for the job-killing sovereignty act. I ask every member in this House to think about what voting for this bill could mean for workers, for future generations. I and my colleagues are proud to stand in this House each day in support of Alberta's rural economic future, in support of the Industrial Heartland, and in support of a future for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### **Paramedic Dallas Boyko**

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's member's statement is in honour of Dallas Lee Boyko, a long-time paramedic

who lived in my riding and died in the line of duty while working to save others. On Saturday, September 10, paramedics across Canada, Alberta as well as residents in my home of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain were deeply saddened and mourn the loss of such a tremendous life gone too soon.

Throughout her distinguished 25-year career Dallas treated thousands of patients with tremendous courage, compassion, and skill. Dallas mentored and trained hundreds of students and new staff and made a massive impact on the paramedic community across the province. In recognition of her tremendous dedication and service Dallas was awarded the 12-year provincial service medal in addition to countless commendations from patients, families, peers, and supervisors.

Paramedics are a selfless breed. I believe it takes a very special kind of person to not only do the job but to excel in such a vigorous and demanding career. Being a paramedic isn't like the TV shows. It isn't always fast-paced lights and sirens that we like to see. Sometimes there are car accidents, explosions, and heroics, but most of the time it's the complete opposite. It's twisted ankles, toothaches, fevers, and coughs. Sometimes it's literally just having a conversation with someone about their life while you take them to the hospital or making sure a child has their favourite teddy bear to comfort them on a dark day.

Paramedics have played a big role in our society. They are those individuals who sacrifice a lot in order to help residents in our communities. We cannot pay back the goodness and the services that paramedics offer to us. The only thing that we can give them is our full respect that they are modern-day heroes.

Dallas was one of those heroes, and her loss will be felt for a very long time. May she rest in peace. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

### **Financial Literacy Education**

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognized November as Financial Literacy Month to remind Albertans about the importance of personal finance and to highlight government programs that help keep money in their pockets. No one is too young to learn about saving, budgeting, spending, and investing in today's world. With rising interest rates and inflation due in large part to poor federal policy it has never been more important for us to ensure young people are learning financial literacy skills.

Junior Achievement of Southern Alberta does a tremendous job of teaching financial literacy skills to young Albertans. As a proud former Junior Achievement alumnus myself, as are several of my colleagues, I know first-hand how valuable financial literacy, career readiness, and entrepreneurship skills are for our students and how engaging JA programming is for young people. I have such gratitude to organizations like Junior Achievement. They have a legacy spanning 60 years of teaching young Albertans about budgeting, saving, and investments.

During Financial Literacy Month they provided over 10,000 youths in our province with financial literacy education. They expect to achieve the same for 75,000 Albertan youths within this school year. Mr. Speaker, that is 75,000 young minds that will grow up to become contributors to our province's economy, patrons in their community, and adults holding the tools necessary to become financially responsible.

I'm proud that we have committed funding to Junior Achievement and other organizations, and our government has also shown that we recognize the value of financial literacy lessons by implementing them into our K to 9 curriculum. Fiscal responsibility is not only something we talk about; we act on it. We are choosing to put budget surplus towards paying off provincial debt instead of continuing to



borrow and spend beyond our means. Thank you to this government for continuing to support financial literacy. The progress we make in empowering Albertans, including our students, women and girls, and our newcomers, will lead to financially prosperous lives.

### Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development: the Role of Innovation in Fueling an Accessible and Equitable World. That statement is this year's theme for International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Since '92, for 30 years, we've marked this day by talking about wonderful people we know, new innovative programs, and a few stories that make it to the newspaper or social media. What we continue to fail to do is to make real progress towards inclusion for all in all areas of life: child care, early learning, K to 12, postsecondary, employment, health care, built environment, communication, and more.

These last three and a half years have been a crash course on how to make it exponentially more difficult for inclusion to flourish in Alberta. The UCP is directly responsible for deindexing benefits of disabled, senior, and low-income Albertans. Sure, they reindexed benefits six months before an election, with a projected surplus of \$13 billion, but that does nothing to undo the damage of three years of growing poverty. This government has systematically ignored exploding wait lists for disability supports and affordable, accessible housing while patting themselves on the back for recent announcements after months of arrogantly claiming all was well.

Here's an excerpt from a letter from a disabled friend of mine.

I need decision-makers to hear about the pain they caused by deindexing benefits. Just indexing is not enough. We lost three years. How can you boast about making your books look better on the backs of disabled Albertans who can't afford to buy food? Health care keeps me alive. I can't fund raise extra dollars to pay for health care, and I certainly don't want to beg for money. The disability community has been left behind by the UCP. You're hurting us every day. Our families, our communities know of the hurt and are working hard to make change and have a Premier who hears us in 2023.

Change is coming, friends. Given the opportunity to form government, we will establish real-time goals and measure inclusion and access so that we can meaningfully celebrate the success on International Day of Persons with Disabilities in the future. We will get that done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a statement.

### Affordability Plan

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have proven time and time again that they are resilient. We can overcome any obstacle that is thrown our way, and we can stick together. We have seen this over the past couple of years: the 2014 oil price crash, four years of NDP tax hikes, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, Albertans have been tested once again. Dealing with record-high inflation, families are struggling to provide for their basic needs, and we are faced with deciding whether to fill up on gas or put food on the table. No parent should ever have to make those decisions. The rise of rent, groceries, and gas is taking a toll on Albertans. While Alberta is trying to mitigate the situation, Ottawa continues to ignore the rising cost of living and has even decided to triple the carbon tax.

Our government understands the struggles of Albertans. We have provided many initiatives to ensure that this life is more affordable for Albertans. Some of the major affordability measures we are enacting consist of providing \$600 over six months to parents for each child under 18 and seniors; \$600 over six months to AISH,

income support, and PDD recipients; suspension of the entire provincial fuel tax for at least six months; indexing of provincial tax brackets; and \$200 to pay home and electricity rebates. I am thrilled that the natural gas rebate program will continue to help Albertans, especially as we are heading into the colder winter months. The indexing of AISH, PDD, seniors' benefits, Alberta's child and family benefit, and income support program will begin as early as January, Mr. Speaker. Our government is also investing in Alberta's food banks and low-income transit passes.

We realize that affordability is a challenge many of us are currently facing, and our government is working hard to provide substantial relief for all Albertans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Taxation and Provincial Autonomy

**Mr. Barnes:** Albertans are optimistic about the direction our new Premier is taking when it comes to greater autonomy within Canada, just like Quebec has sought and received for years. Autonomy is a concept that has deep meaning throughout our history. It is an idea that focuses on maintaining a decentralized federation which respects the constitutional rights of provinces, thereby strengthening national unity by respecting regional diversity.

Ottawa has continuously taken more from Alberta than it has returned, leading to a deep feeling of alienation towards our federal government amongst Albertans. It's time we did something. Taxation has long been a flashpoint when it comes to federal-provincial relations as Ottawa collects most of our tax revenue and passes it out conditionally through several transfer programs like equalization. Ottawa's overreach and interference have harmed the ability of Albertans to provide for their families.

On the other hand, Quebec has a long history of effectively fighting for autonomy of its citizens. In fact, during the 2019 federal election campaign the Conservative Party of Canada agreed with a unanimous motion from the Quebec National Assembly for the implementation of a single tax return system administered by Quebec and all federal and provincial taxes collected by Quebec.

In fact, I served on the Fair Deal Panel, and thousands of Albertans expressed their desire to receive a more equitable, decentralized deal with Ottawa. Recently Alberta's Premier has said, "That means establishing a tax department so we can collect our own taxes and make it completely transparent how much we collect for our own provincial needs and how much we send to Ottawa." I now urge this government to strengthen provincial autonomy. Follow Quebec's lead in advocating for the creation of a single provincial tax collection agency for all the taxes that Albertans pay.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I know that every member of this House will always step up to protect our province. Today our disagreement is in how we do that. Now, last week the Premier claimed ignorance when we challenged her about the undemocratic powers buried in her job-killing sovereignty act. First she said that we were wrong. Then she claimed that we didn't read the bill. Then she called us fearmongers. Now she admits that there are problems while her caucus demands amendments. To the Premier. She's lost people's trust with this bumbling and stumbling, so now her bill is beyond saving. Why won't she just withdraw it?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first the Leader of the Opposition didn't even want to read the bill, voted against it on first reading. Then she asked her friend in Ottawa, Justin Trudeau, to quash the bill, and now she's said that she doesn't even want to propose any amendments. I don't think that the Leader of the Opposition is approaching this in good faith. My caucus is. My caucus identified some issues that they wanted to address – they wanted to seek some clarity – and that's the kind of leader I am. I want to make sure that we get this bill right, and I'm grateful that my caucus is going to propose amendments to do that.

**Ms Notley:** “The worst piece of legislation introduced in Alberta since the Social Credit bills of the 1930s”: that's Don Braid, the Premier's ex-colleague. Mr. Speaker, when Albertans pointed out this blatant power grab, the Premier claimed that they just didn't understand the bill, just like she did right there. Now she's kind of changing her tune. Here's the thing: she either got caught in her attempt to seize power and is now desperately scrambling to cover that up, or she literally didn't know what was in her bill and very possibly still doesn't. So which is it?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition may want to quote a journalist, but let me quote former Canadian Supreme Court Justice John Major saying that he doesn't find this bill particularly alarming. In fact, he says: what's so terrible about the province saying if you want to impose on us, you'd better be sure you're doing it constitutionally? Geoffrey Sigalek as well, University of British Columbia, centre for constitutional law, says that it's totally constitutional. I will take my advice from the constitutional scholars who are looking at this bill and saying that it is the right thing to do.

**Ms Notley:** Well, those particular scholars, Mr. Speaker, are very much in the minority. Meanwhile the Premier is ignoring the many voices worried about the impact on our economy. CAPP has concerns, the Calgary Chamber has concerns, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said that businesses are caught in the middle and uncertainty is now the order of the day. Meanwhile the Premier claims that she's getting quiet phone calls from CEOs who disagree. So here's the question, and it should be an easy one: can the Premier stand and name those CEOs, and if not, why not?

**Ms Smith:** I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that neither the head of the chamber nor the head of CAPP consulted their members because I have been getting dozens of phone calls all weekend. I will just say that, in point of fact, when you look at the business investment climate and the kind of uncertainty that was created – I remember the Leader of the Opposition talking down Northern Gateway, which cost Northern Gateway; talking down Keystone XL, which cost us Keystone XL; talking down the coal industry; \$4 billion is what it cost us on the early phase-out of coal. These are the kinds of things that the business community does not want to see again.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Clearly unable to name even one CEO.

### Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity

**Ms Notley:** Meanwhile the surge in pediatric patients arriving in ERs across the province is alarming. This weekend Albertans learned that respite care at the Rotary Flames House is being sacrificed to ensure care at the Alberta Children's hospital. This is a serious blow for some of Alberta's most medically fragile children and their families. This

staff shortage was not manufactured; it is because of decisions made by this UCP government. To the Premier. These children need our help, and they deserve action from your government. What are you doing to restore these services today?

**Ms Smith:** The crisis that we're seeing in health care right now is a crisis that's taking place across the province and across the country. We see in British Columbia as well that they've called a code orange alert. In Toronto they are also taking additional measures. We know that we need to have additional staff onboard. In fact, I'm going to give some credit to the UNA boss, Heather Smith – she's been working very collaboratively with Alberta Health Services – because we know the way the nurses' contract is written is that they have to sign off on any redeployment of staff. She's been excellent to work with, and I hope that we'll be able to continue doing that.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, in B.C. we heard for hours today from the chief medical officer of health trying to find ways to keep children safe. In Alberta we have a volunteer chief medical officer of health who is silent. Meanwhile Dr. Sam Wong says that the surge in pediatric care is having a severe impact on areas like in-patient and emergency care, and right now they're just trying to keep surgeries happening. To the Premier: what specifically is she going to do to prevent surgeries for children from being cancelled today?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we already know that the wait in emergency rooms is way too long. It's part of the reason why I appointed Dr. John Cowell to take over as official administrator, so that we could be making some of these decisions in a very rapid way. We also know that one of the issues we're facing across the country is the shortage of children's Tylenol, the shortage of children's ibuprofen, the shortage of other children's medication. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** I may have something more to say on that very soon. [interjections] Yeah, maybe as soon as tomorrow.

This is the thing that we need to do. We need to make sure that children are getting the medications that they need so that parents can take care of their kids at home.

**Ms Notley:** We're not talking about Tylenol; we're talking about palliative care for children.

Now, the Premier perhaps should have read about Amanda Weger, an Airdrie mother who had to drive into Calgary when her 23-month-old daughter needed emergency respiratory care. She arrived to a packed ER full of sick children, some in heated trailers. Mr. Speaker, this is a crisis, and it is real, and it is urgent. The silence from this Premier since we last raised this issue in the House has been deafening. We must have an emergency debate today. Will the Premier commit to ensuring that this debate proceeds?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition knows what's going on in the country, that we do have a shortage of children's medication. As a result, when children get high fevers, they're going to the hospitals, and it's happening all across the country. It's the reason why we've been working collaboratively with the federal government to try to address this need for urgent medications, so that people can get the care that they need in their home. We are also working with Dr. John Cowell, the chief administrator, to make sure that we are addressing the issue in the emergency rooms, and that includes children's services. I'm glad that the union is working with us on doing that.

## Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

(continued)

**Ms Ganley:** Today I stand for Alberta's economic future, for new investment and good-paying jobs. One of the major job-creation projects under our NDP government was the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, which to date has led to nearly 30,000 jobs. This game-changing project runs through British Columbia to tidewater. Imagine the scenario where B.C. put in their own sovereignty act: no more Trans Mountain expansion, no access to tidewater. How exactly does the Premier expect us to get our products to market if she cuts Alberta off from the rest of the country?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to work collaboratively with the federal government. I wish that they had worked with us on approving Northern Gateway, but the Leader of the Official Opposition opposed that. I wish that they had stood up for us when the Americans cancelled Keystone XL, but that was another project that the Leader of the Opposition opposed as well. The reason why business investment is leaving our province is because of decisions being made by the federal government that are supported by the NDP and the Liberal-NDP coalition that continues to chase investment out of our country. The reason why we need to put up a shield is so that we can attract that investment back.

**Ms Ganley:** The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Calgary Chamber of commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, venture capitalists: the list of groups and investors speaking out against the job-killing sovereignty act grows longer by the hour. Rather than addressing their concerns, the Premier decided to go on national television and call them liars. Can the Premier explain why she thinks it's a good strategy to insult the very Albertans and international investors who drive our economic growth?

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I was at such an exciting event this morning. I don't understand why the NDP keeps on talking down our economy and keeps on talking down our business community, because WestJet has just announced the expansion of their direct flights: Barcelona, Rome, Paris, London, Dublin. This is the thing that is going to not only give us access to the world, but they're looking forward to using that as an access for the international community for investment here. One of the biggest things that they've done is that they've now launched a direct flight to Tokyo. I talked to the consul general; he's really excited about ways in which we can have partnership to have more investment here.

**Ms Ganley:** Those aren't my words, Premier; they're the chamber of commerce's.

Long-time *Calgary Herald* columnist Don Braid wrote this morning that the sovereignty act might be "the worst piece of legislation" seen in this House since 1930. That was when the government of the day moved to imprison people who spoke out against them. This is generationally bad legislation, but this government wants us to trust them to use it judiciously. If this Premier wants to claim, contrary to the business community, that her act won't cost jobs, it is on her to prove it. Release the economic impact analysis today.

**Ms Smith:** Well, if we're just going to be trading quotes, let me give another quote. Keith Wilson said that he has reviewed Bill 1. "Bill 1 is moderate in scope and goals." You guys just quoted Don Braid, for heaven's sakes. Keith Wilson is at least a lawyer. "The truth is [Danielle Smith is] standing up to Ottawa's anti-Alberta

policies [and it] will encourage investment and more jobs in Alberta." The real issue here is Ottawa. I'm wondering when the Official Opposition is going to stand against Ottawa and start standing up for Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the call.

## Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I sat down with Treaty 8 chiefs and staff who are deeply concerned about the job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act. They asked me to relay their questions and concerns to the Premier directly. To the Premier. Grand Chief Noskey wants to know: since this act gives your government the power to circumvent the federal government, the courts, and, by extension, treaty rights when the government deems it in the, quote, public interest, what guarantee do First Nations have that she will not bowl over their inherent rights for what she sees as public interest, because it's clear that her definition of public interest does not include First Nations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Indigenous affairs minister has been fielding calls from chiefs who are concerned. The reason they're concerned: I think he's alleviated that. When you look at the bill, the bill asserts that everything we are going to do does not abrogate or derogate from anything, any rights, that is enumerated in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If you read section 25 of the Charter of Rights and ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The Premier has the right to answer the question just as you have the right to ask it.

The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** If you read section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it's very clear that Aboriginal and treaty rights, not even just existing treaty rights but future land claims, are fully protected under the law. This is not about abrogating anyone else's rights; it's about asserting Alberta's.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chief Rupert Meneen of Tallcree First Nation is well aware that this Premier is ignorant to the fact that First Nations are sovereign. From the extensive history of treaty signings with the British monarch to today, these treaties are essential, and they're why Canada is a country. First Nations are not a subset of the Alberta government or just another stakeholder but stewards of their own land. This means that the Premier needs to seek consent when developing resources on First Nations land or changing the environmental standards protecting their hunting and fishing rights. What will the Premier do when First Nations inevitably push back on her heavy-handed overreach?

**Ms Smith:** The hon. member is absolutely right. I mean, I don't think that there's going to be a single project that proceeds in this province anymore without an Indigenous partner. It's part of the reason why we have the Indigenous opportunities agency. It's part of the reason why specifically in the bill, in contemplating it, it said that it does not abrogate or take away from the Charter rights represented in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I know that we are going to have a partnership of economic reconciliation with our First Nations, and as soon as we assert that we have the right to

develop our resources, we're going to do that in partnership with our First Nations communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Grand Chief Arthur Noskey pointed out that the sovereignty act is the second UCP bill that directly attacks First Nations. First was the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, which was passed in retaliation to First Nations' protests fighting for their treaty rights but never once used on the Coutts blockade. To the Premier from Grand Chief Noskey: do you have enough resources to arrest everyone in Treaty 8 using the critical infrastructure act when they oppose the utilization of the sovereignty act?

**Ms Smith:** Well, once again, the sovereignty act is about affirming First Nations' rights, affirming Alberta's rights under the Constitution, and affirming the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If you look at the throne speech and you look at all of my statements that I have made on economic corridors, it begins with reaching out a . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Our approach begins with reaching out a hand to our partners in the First Nations communities. We know that all of our future development is going to take place in partnership with First Nations. I commit to doing that, and I'm looking forward to meeting with all of the chiefs to make that point.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington is next.

### Affordability Plan

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Calgary-Beddington families, seniors, and individuals on a fixed income are struggling due to inflation, but Justin Trudeau continues to double down on inflationary spending and his carbon tax increase rather than simply supporting everyday working Canadians. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what is the government of Alberta doing to help everyday Albertans afford their heat and gas and put food on the table?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we can't stop inflation, we can offer substantial relief thanks to our strong fiscal position. Our affordability action plan provides households up to \$900 in broad-based relief, including extended electricity rebates, protection from utility spikes this winter, 13.6 cents a litre off gas or diesel from January to June 2023, and additional targeted support, \$600 over six months, to families for each child, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans. Unlike the federal government and the members opposite, who support increasing costs on families, we are making life more affordable.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the affordability crisis has increased the cost of virtually all basic needs, including food, utilities, and more, and given that thousands of Albertans rely on the social benefits such as AISH and the seniors' benefit and given that Alberta's government announced this week that they will index these supports, increasing them by 6 per cent, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social

Services tell the House what this increase will do to help those who rely on these programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About seven years ago I had the opportunity of meeting with a mother in our community named Leah, who's the proud mother of Taisa, and seven years ago we sat down and talked about some of the challenges facing the disability community. Leah has sacrificed so much for her daughter, to be able to be there for her, and one of the challenges that she brought up was slowly watching things become more and more unaffordable as AISH payments were not keeping up with inflation. This announcement is going to have a great impact on not just Leah and Taisa but so many others in the community so that they can make sure that they can pay their bills, and that support is ongoing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that there are many Albertans struggling to afford today's inflated costs, especially those on fixed incomes, and given that our newly elected Premier directed that this payment be increased to address the affordability crisis, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services tell Albertans and the House about when vulnerable and low-income individuals will see this much-needed increase?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. I know that she's out hitting the doors, like I am, and just seeing story after story of constituents that are struggling with increases to costs and inflation. This is urgent, and that's why I'm pleased to report for folks on AISH and income support that they will see a bump before Christmas, December 22. For our seniors they're going to see a bump coming into January. This relief is coming quick, and in addition to that, they're going to be receiving the \$100 per month payment starting in January.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### 2:10 Alberta Sovereignty Act and Fiscal Policies

**Ms Phillips:** In the weeks since the UCP government introduced the sovereignty act, opposition has been swift and fierce from the business community. The Calgary Chamber of commerce, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers all say that it will create uncertainty and drive away investment. When presented with this fact, the Premier lashed out and insulted the Calgary Chamber and just now CAPP as well instead of listening to them about the risks of this flawed legislation. Why is this government attacking the business community and business leaders instead of listening to them and shelving this job-killing sovereignty act?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are always going to stand up and fight for Albertans. That's what we're here for, and that's what we're going to do. But I don't understand: last week the Leader of the Opposition applied for a job with Justin Trudeau. Now, I know that up to this time he's always been a friend of the boss of the NDP, which is Jagmeet Singh in Ottawa, but I didn't really realize that she was applying for a job with the Prime Minister. I think what she should do is think about this, stand up for Albertans, and quit

following through with the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party of Canada.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that it isn't just the sovereignty act that the business community is opposed to and that, in fact, a recent survey by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce found that their members are also opposed to a UCP plan to demolish our Canada pension plan retirement savings and given that the government's own analysis showed that withdrawing from CPP would lead to \$130 billion in unfunded liabilities – no wonder it is so deeply unpopular with Albertans of all backgrounds – why is this government pushing ahead with this risky scheme that will increase costs and, like the sovereignty act, is also opposed by the business community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're pushing ahead with is in fact doing the econometric work, the actuarial work so Albertans can make an informed decision on the opportunities and risks of an Alberta pension plan. The members opposite would have Albertans not make that choice, would have Albertans not privy to the information so they can make an informed view. An Alberta pension plan holds great promise not only for the business community but for Albertans in general. We will be pleased to provide the report.

**Ms Phillips:** Now, given that the chamber of commerce survey also showed that business is opposed to the UCP plan for an Alberta police force and this new tax and revenue agency that will add 5,000 public servants, grow the bureaucracy by 20 per cent, cost up to half a billion dollars, and result in all of us having to file our taxes twice – oh, goody; people will love that – will the UCP, anyone over there, commit to abandoning this ever-lengthening list of job-killing, red tape wrapping, unnecessary, embarrassing, antibusiness policies? Just commit to listening to business. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lethbridge-West is very animated today in the House. I assert this: why would we not investigate every opportunity to strengthen Alberta within the nation of Canada? That's what this investigation is about, understanding the opportunities and risks, benefits and costs of an Alberta revenue agency. We will do the work. We will inform Albertans. We will engage Albertans. Albertans ought to know.

### Grocery Prices

**Ms Renaud:** Albertans are struggling to keep up with the cost of groceries. CPI data shows that grocery increased 10 per cent from last year, and it's only getting worse. According to the food price guide 2022 groceries will increase almost an additional \$1,000 for a family of four. With Alberta being the second-worst province for wage growth, more and more Albertans are being forced to use their savings, credit cards they can't afford, or predatory lenders just to buy food. To the Premier. Later today I'm tabling a motion that will help us make an Alberta-based solution for grocery prices. Simple question: will you support this motion?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that families are being hit hard by inflation and especially the increase of the cost of groceries. The average family of four will pay approximately \$15,000 in groceries over the next year. That's why we'll be

providing \$100 per month per child under 18 to families to help off-set the increase in the cost of groceries and other costs facing Albertans due to high inflation.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that Food Price Report showed that Albertans are facing the worst price increases in the country and given that Alberta's grocery sector is arguably the least competitive in all of Canada, with only two large corporate grocers and the smallest per capita number of independent grocers, will the Premier support our call for a study into how to increase competition in the grocery industry in Alberta? This is something real we can do. We can help lower costs for Alberta families today. Will the Premier do this? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member is quite aware, at least she should be, the Competition Bureau announced in October that they're currently investigating that. In fact, they're accepting submissions up until December 16. I would encourage the hon. member to use her time valuably in the Legislative Assembly and focus on things that are important to Albertans, like affordability. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Renaud:** Perhaps the minister should focus on the question, and that is that people can't afford food.

Given that the increased cost of food hurts those living in poverty the most and given that increases are pricing out many essential and nutritious items like pasta, up 45 per cent; margarine, up 40 per cent; rice, up 14 per cent; soup, 18 per cent – they're pricing it so that vulnerable Albertans are just missing meals. They can't afford food. Given that the large grocers are reporting massive earnings increases, including Loblaws, that is reporting \$556 million in earnings and a 29 per cent increase from last year, Premier, will you support the motion?

**Mr. Jones:** We know that vulnerable Albertans and those on lower and often fixed incomes are being hit particularly hard by inflation and the increased cost of living. That's why we moved quickly to announce the indexing of core support programs that vulnerable Albertans rely on and the Alberta seniors' benefit. We also included all vulnerable Albertans and the vast majority of seniors on targeted inflation relief payments, which will provide \$600 over the next six months to help off-set the increased costs due to inflation.

### Tax Policies

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, in 2018 United Conservative Party members passed a policy to restore a flat rate to provincial income taxes. Prior to this, from 2001 to 2015, our 10 per cent provincial flat tax provided a fair method of taxing income while, in turn, maintaining Alberta's position as the most free and prosperous province. To the Premier: do you agree that it's your government's duty to reflect democratically expressed wishes of UCP members to restore the Alberta advantage and continue to grow economic opportunities for all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that low taxes attract Canadians to the province of Alberta. I'm pleased to report that right now Alberta is leading the nation on net interprovincial

migration. That's a good sign for the province, a good sign for our economy. Tax review and tax reform should be ongoing. When the members opposite took office and led the government in 2015, they raised taxes on corporations and individuals, sent billions of dollars of investment packing along with thousands of Albertans.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that the Alberta government's annual oil and gas royalties are now projected at \$28 billion and given that historically Alberta's flat tax increased our province's competitiveness and domestic investment and given that the flat tax also attracted hundreds of thousands of people through international and interprovincial migration and given that Albertans are looking to restore our status as the freest and most prosperous place to live, again to the Premier: when are you going to recognize that Albertans own the revenue from oil and gas resources and need more financial freedom and financial opportunity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government does recognize that Albertans own the resource; that's reflected in our policy to suspend the fuel tax when energy prices rise. Our revenues as a province are not compromised. Albertans can benefit from an owned resource, but it's important to periodically review the appropriateness and efficiency of our revenue structure. I would suggest that time is coming near. Income taxes are a detriment, are a disincentive to productivity. They should be as low as possible.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that implementing a flat tax results in less legal tax avoidance and better tax planning outcomes for Alberta families and given that UCP members as far back as 2018 have asked for a flat tax to be implemented to make Alberta the freest and most prosperous place in Canada and now given the Fraser Institute reports that Alberta has dropped from first to 47th place on the North American economic freedom index since the removal of our flat tax, again to the Premier: is there actually a plan to reduce taxes and give Albertans more financial freedom?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I appreciate the questioning, the assertion of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and the importance of keeping taxes as low as possible. Again, on the record I'm in favour of a review of our revenue structure to ensure that it's most efficient, most appropriate. That time is coming very soon.

I want to tell the House a story. When the members opposite, the NDP, took office, they jacked up corporate income tax rates and collected less. Mr. Speaker, we dropped those corporate rates by one-third, and we're collecting billions more per year. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the firefighters who battled the 2016 Horse River wildfire in Fort McMurray are true Alberta heroes. Day after day they worked in Fort McMurray to protect homes and infrastructure, in many cases without the necessary protective equipment or access to showers. They did this work from evacuation to re-entry. Now these same heroes are fighting to receive coverage for injuries they sustained, including recent cancer diagnosis. Will the minister responsible for WCB please tell this Assembly if they support ensuring these heroes get the compensation they deserve?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a leader in the country on presumptive care under WCB. The NDP don't seem to understand how presumptive coverage currently works in Alberta. The firefighters that worked for us and continue to work for us to save Fort McMurray and other places on a day-to-day basis already qualify for presumptive coverage on job-related cancers and presumptive coverage on mental health. How it works is that it's a fast track. When we find the evidence that backs it up, we cover it, and that's what we're here for, to make sure that Albertans and Alberta firefighters and EMS have the coverage they need.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that I don't think the minister understands how latency period works, given that I don't think the minister is aware that there is a Leduc firefighter currently going through the appeal process because he fought in Fort McMurray, has cancer, and is now not able to get the coverage he needs and given that earlier I was proud to stand with the Leader of the Official Opposition at the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association to commit to increasing presumptive cancer coverage and removing the latency period for firefighters who fought in the Horse River fires, does the minister support the commitment made by the Leader of the Official Opposition today?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it's just like the NDP to promise things that have already been done and been done by this government. I'm proud of the work this government has done, but in this particular case if there's an issue, I would be happy to hear from the member in relation to that and sit down with her and talk about that, because clearly this is an issue that has to be based on evidence. It has to be based on what's best for the firefighters, for the emergency service personnel, and for the people of Alberta.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's incumbent on this minister to listen, Alberta does not have the most forward-thinking presumptive coverage anymore. It used to under the NDP; it doesn't under the UCP. Given university studies on 1,200 firefighters have shown chronic issues and given that without changes to presumptive coverage, removing those latency periods, firefighters not only will have to fight cancer; they will have to fight for health, will the minister of jobs join the NDP in committing to providing peace of mind to the Fort McMurray firefighters and all of the firefighters across Alberta who fought in that wildfire and help them now?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the member was listening, but if she has a particular case that she wants to talk to me about, a number of cases that she wants to talk about, I'm more than happy to. My office door is always open. But there is a balance. As we find more evidence that suggests that cancers are caused by this fire or other fires or other happenings on the job, we will cover those. It's evidence based, and it must be evidence based because that's in the best interest of firefighters and emergency personnel. It's also in the best interest of Albertans.

### Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Member Loyola:** The new Premier has stated that she is, quote, open to revisiting construction of the Springbank dam. That dam is the solution to preventing another catastrophic flood in Calgary, when the last one caused \$5 billion in damages, killed five people, and resulted in the evacuation of 80,000 residents. It's absurd to suggest that such a complex project should go back to square one. To the Premier's new adjutant, the backbencher who is now Deputy Premier and Minister of Infrastructure: has the boss been briefed yet, and is she still in favour of revisiting the Springbank project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the solution that we need for flood protection in Calgary is on the Bow River. I think that the ministers and the government did a good job of getting to the finish line, finally, on the Springbank dam. It might not have been my first option, but it's now at a point where it's too far gone to retract. I think the bigger issue now is: how do we make sure that we get greater flood protection on the Bow so that we can not only do water management and irrigation but also hydroelectric power and new recreation opportunities? That's what I'll be looking at.

**Member Loyola:** Given that it's impossible to know where this government stands – they say one thing one day, something else the next – and given that the Premier went on at length about how the Springbank dam was a missed opportunity and the wrong project to protect Calgary because she talked to someone on a radio show and given that flood protection is critical for the economic security of Calgary and downstream communities, can the Deputy Premier, the Premier's most trusted adviser, please explain exactly what his boss thinks is wrong with the Springbank project and why Calgary doesn't deserve flood protection right now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a little rich coming from the NDP, saying that it's impossible to know what this government is doing with Springbank. Construction is already under way. They're working on it right now. I'd encourage the member to actually go down to Calgary to see it with his own eyes. This is a very important project for the city of Calgary. We're committed to making sure that flood mitigation for the city of Calgary is in place so we will never see the repeat of a 2013 flood incident like we did around Calgary.

**Member Loyola:** Thanks for demonstrating you're not listening.

Given that the Springbank dam is a huge and complex project already under construction and given that this project was subject to both provincial and federal reviews over eight years, through three governments and given that this project was deemed essential and in the public interest, to the Premier's most essential ally, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Infrastructure: has he explained to his boss why she was wrong and why the project is essential to protect Calgary?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** I'll slow it down, Mr. Speaker. I will assure the member that I was listening to his question, but it's just a little absurd. There are about 3,700 acres near Calgary that are for the Springbank dam. All the money is committed to the Springbank dam. We are committed to building it. We are building it currently, right now. The fact that the member is again doing the classic NDP fear and smear to say that something isn't happening when it actually is, I would say: go there and see it with your own eyes.

### **Crime Rate in Northeast Calgary**

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, according to the data gathered by the city of Calgary, my constituents in Calgary-Falconridge have been suffering from a high crime rate when compared to the rest of the city. This problem extends throughout the rest of northeast Calgary as well. To the minister: what are the main factors that contribute to this high level of crime, and what steps are your department taking to ensure public safety at and around Calgary northeast?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of public safety.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for that question. You know, there are a number of contributing factors, of course, that people face when it comes to crime. I can tell you that substance use disorder is certainly one of those. Unfortunately, when you have an addiction, it makes people do things that they don't normally do. That's why this government has taken unprecedented action in helping people with substance use disorders. That includes the 8,000 spaces, and that includes no fees for people in order to get the help that they need. This government is taking action, and we're proud of the work that we're doing.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Minister. Given the high levels of crime that have impact on my constituents, it is clear that more people are being pushed towards committing criminal activity for a variety of reasons. For example, gun violence in Calgary is on the rise. In the first four months of 2020 alone there were 54 shootings in the city, and 26 happened in Calgary northeast. Can the minister explain why these kinds of criminal acts of gun violence are increasing in Calgary northeast?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to statistics from, actually, the Calgary Police Service, thefts, break and enters, and assaults are consistently the top three crimes committed, and this is a trend that is consistent actually in northeast Calgary. You know, we're going to continue to work with our law enforcement community. We're going to partner with them. We're going to ensure that communities are protected. We're going to make sure that they have the resources that they need. And we're diligently working to protect Albertans when it comes to public safety.

Thank you.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you to the minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the factors that are behind this increase in crime and given the nature of the crimes that are being committed more and more and given that the negative economic conditions when combined with increased crimes make the lives of my constituents more difficult, to the same minister: what strategy is in place to ensure public safety and lower crime rates in northeast Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to that member for that question. You know, we've made significant steps to improve public safety. I can tell you that there's been a \$15 million increase over five years to ALERT to address organized crime, serious crimes, including gang violence, drug trafficking, child exploitation. We, of course, had the additional 8,000 addiction treatment spaces, which is a step forward to addressing people with substance use disorders, and also \$20 million over four years to expand drug treatment courts. These are just some of the steps that we're taking to help reduce crime within the city of Calgary.

Thank you.

### Women's Issues

**Member Irwin:** A lot has happened lately in this province, and it's sure hard to follow all the wild things this UCP government has done. In fact, it's easy to forget, but the women of this province won't forget. They won't forget that it was only three months ago that the UCP awarded a prize to an explicitly racist and sexist essay. They won't forget that it's women who've been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and that it's women-dominated professions, like nursing and teaching, that have been attacked by the UCP time and time again. So to the Premier: why do you feel that the women of Alberta don't deserve a voice? Why was one of your first moves to eliminate the status of women ministry? Asking for 2 million or so Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. This government is committed to support women in this province. We're proud. Women in this province excel everywhere, including economic recovery. Despite that we don't have an associate minister for that, my ministry has the full mandate for that. On top of that, we have a leader in our caucus, the Hon. Fir, that is also the parliamentary secretary for status of women. We have a team working on this.

**Member Irwin:** Wow. Given that Alberta women were intrigued, to say the least, that it was this man who holds the position, the Minister of Culture, who represented all of us women at the meeting of status of women ministers in Nova Scotia last month and given that the priorities discussed at the meeting included addressing violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ-plus people, a COVID-19 recovery plan, and women's leadership, can the minister outline the next steps his government will be taking to address these key issues related to women in Alberta? Please be very specific.

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to be the minister in charge of status of women attending the national conference. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The member asked a question, which I could hear, and I'm hoping to be able to hear the answer.

The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very proud to attend the national conference for the status of women. As one of the few male ministers let me tell you this. We have arrived to a best practices recognition that nowadays not only do we need women to help women; we need boys and men to defend women in our province. I was a very proud participant in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** Given that historically one of the key roles of a status of women ministry is to ensure that sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination of all forms is addressed and that action plans are put into place and we as legislators have a role to call this out even when it's related to other politicians and given that Calgary city councillor Sean Chu has engaged in deeply troubling behaviour on multiple fronts and there is authority under the act to remove him from office, will the Minister of Culture today demand the removal of Sean Chu? And if he won't, will anyone over there stand up and do the right thing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I do want to say that violence of all kinds, especially violence against women and most especially sexual violence against a minor, is both unacceptable and against the law. These are exceptionally serious allegations. What I can tell this House is that the mayor has made a formal request to review this case, which, because of its nature, has been directed to the ministries of Justice and public safety. They will review the 1997 Calgary Police Commission's complaint file review to determine whether any further action should be taken.

### Coutts Border Crossing Protester Conspiracy Charges

**Mr. Sabir:** Southern Alberta was held hostage earlier this year by an illegal blockade that cost our economy millions and disrupted Albertans' lives. The Member for Taber-Warner even went to that illegal blockade. For months these blockaders trained and stockpiled weapons and ammunition to fulfill an evil plot to murder members of law enforcement. Will the Premier join me today in publicly condemning that evil plot and thanking the RCMP for their work in ending it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I will just say this, that any sort of illegal blockade is not accepted. It is something that should not and will not be tolerated. I can tell you that this government is committed to working with our local law enforcement officers to make sure that we keep the public safe.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this group had two pipe bombs, 36,000 rounds of ammunition, gas masks, and firearms for their plot to murder the members of the RCMP and given that these plotters made horrible claims and statements about how they believed that the members of the police should die, with one of the plotters being described as a hitman, will the Premier join me in condemning that illegal blockade and its violent nature?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure as the member knows, I mean, this is a matter that is currently before the courts right now in the Lethbridge area. I can tell you that we've been in contact with folks in the RCMP and the local municipalities in the Lethbridge area to make sure that they have the necessary resources and supports for our law enforcement community to make sure that justice is being served throughout the courts.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that there have been groups advocating for the amnesty and forgiveness of those charged with violating public health orders during the pandemic, with the Premier being one of them, and given that the serious nature of the crime of those arrested, with explosives and firearms, plotting the murder of members of law enforcement, means they should not be included in any discussion of any amnesty, will the Premier join me today in condemning these plotters, those who supported their plans, and say unequivocally that they should face the full consequences of their actions?

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite should take yes for an answer. We do not support criminal behaviour. I can tell you that those individuals have been charged. That is currently



going through the court process, and we will allow the courts to take place. This is a matter before the courts.

Thank you.

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

### Health Care System

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to the Minister of Health on recently ratifying a four-year agreement with Alberta doctors. This will bring about improved comprehensive care, greater efficiency of the health care system, reduction in surgical wait times, and increased access to timely emergency medical services, among many other benefits to Albertans. To the Minister of Health. Please tell the House what other initiatives you will be implementing over the coming months to ensure a more sustainable, efficient, and stable public health care system right here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I am extremely proud of the Alberta Medical Association agreement that was reached, and it was reached with an overwhelming percentage of support on this agreement. This agreement provides doctors with stable and predictable funding while recognizing their dedicated service to Albertans. This agreement does help stabilize the health care system and will assist us to focus on other areas of concern, like attracting and retaining more doctors right here in Alberta. I'm looking forward to more announcements on how we will accomplish this in the coming weeks.

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our government is dedicated to improving access to health care and increased efficiency and given that our government appointed an administrator to AHS to ensure this happens as swiftly as possible, can the Minister of Health please tell this House how this administrator is already improving the efficiency and stability of our health care system?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again to the hon. member for the question, Mr. Speaker. In November the Premier and I appointed a full-time administrator, Dr. John Cowell, replacing a part-time board, and asked him to focus on key issues facing Alberta Health Services. As the official administrator Dr. Cowell's efficient, effective, and decisive leadership will be focused on improving EMS response times, decreasing emergency room wait times, reducing surgical wait times, and developing long-term reforms through consultation with front-line workers and other key stakeholders to drive decision-making. I'll be looking forward to providing the results of that in the coming weeks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you. Given that demand for health care services in Alberta continues to grow and given that the creation of more IV therapy rooms would help provide better and more timely services for Albertans, can the Minister of Health please update the House on the status of the \$1.5 million IV therapy room investment in the Strathcona community hospital, and what is the estimated timeline of construction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite. His continued focus on representing his constituents is greatly appreciated. The current designated space in the Strathcona community hospital administered nearly 10,000 treatments in 2021 alone, so I'm happy to report to this House that the construction of a new dedicated space is set for early 2023, with an estimated completion date near the end of next year. The Strathcona Community Hospital Foundation is currently undergoing a campaign to raise \$250,000 to support this project. My understanding is that they're well on their way, and I look forward to it being open next year.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the Routine.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our committee chair and as deputy chair of the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee I'm honoured to table the committee's final report recommending the appointment of Kevin Brezinski as both the Ombudsman and the Public Interest Commissioner for a five-year term commencing on December 30 of this year.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 12, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly (a) concur in the report of the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee, tabled on December 5, 2022, Sessional Paper 17/2022, and (b) recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Kevin Brezinski be appointed as Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing on December 30, 2022.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, do you have another motion to table?

**Mr. Schow:** Indeed, I do, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 13, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a notice of motion.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time under Standing Order 42 I intend to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly (a) acknowledge the adverse impact on families with children receiving pediatric respite health care services at the Rotary Flames House by pausing care in an attempt to meet the rising unmet patient needs at Alberta Children's hospital and (b) urge the government to immediately table an action plan that will in an expeditious

manner ensure that these pediatric respite health care services are fully resumed at the Rotary Flames House.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

#### Bill 3

#### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, which proposes to amend three different pieces of legislation under Justice and Service Alberta to abolish adverse possession.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

#### Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022, for first reading this afternoon.

First and foremost, I want to sincerely thank Alberta's physicians and all health care providers for the tremendous and tireless work that they're doing, particularly through the pandemic over the last two and a half years. Alberta's health care system is under unprecedented pressure, and I acknowledge the stress that physicians have been facing. I am confident that our new agreement with the Alberta Medical Association will stabilize the health system, target areas of concern, and support Albertans' health care needs. Part of this new agreement is the government's commitment to repeal section 40.2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. This section of the act allows the government to terminate compensation-related agreements. If it passes, Bill 4 will repeal the government's ability to terminate its agreement with the Alberta Medical Association.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 4. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to table the requisite number of copies of the playbill from the very first running of a play at the Roxy Theatre, which has reopened. Thank goodness we were able to fund that project when we were in government. One of the things from the playbill that I think is of particular interest to members of this House is that Ian Jackson, who is usually the photographer who stands in that corner on important legislative days, is the production designer for the play. It's a gorgeous play. You should all take a chance to see it. There are six days left in the run.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an article written by Don Braid. The title of the article is Dictatorial, Unworkable Sovereignty Act May Be Worst Legislation in Alberta History. I think it's summarized well by its conclusion: "This bill is a complete mess that makes Alberta look ridiculous. It seriously

erodes Albertans' own democratic rights with little prospect of doing any good."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document from the *Globe and Mail* entitled Sovereignty Act Is a Silly Political Dare, Written in Crayon. The article goes on to wonder if the amendments will make the bill simply "bizarre and unconstitutional [rather than] bizarre, unconstitutional and outrageously undemocratic."

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Do you have a tabling?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Upon returning home last weekend, I found in my mail a letter from the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association with concerns over food shortages caused from fertilizer emissions reductions. The Trudeau government has committed Canada to reduce its fertilizer emissions by 30 per cent. "Agriculture is the cornerstone of food security in Canada. And arbitrary reductions in emissions will come at the cost of reduced output of food and higher prices," which "could lead to extreme unintended consequences": not my words but words from the Western Canadian Wheat Growers. I would encourage all members to read and enjoy.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I do have six copies of the page biographies for the fall sitting 2022, the Fourth Session of the 30th Legislature.

Thank you.

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, at the appropriate time the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rose on a Standing Order 42. He has up to five minutes to speak to the motion.

#### 2:50 Children's Hospice and Palliative Care in Calgary

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to SO 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion that is urgent and pressing and which I read under Notices of Motions. I'd like to acknowledge that pursuant to SO 42 I have provided the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies, and I provided your office notice of my intention to move this motion as well as notified the government.

Mr. Speaker, it's our duty as representatives in this Assembly to address the urgent crisis in children's health care, which is now even worse because of the children's hospice, the Rotary Flames House, needing to pause some of its essential services. I can think of nothing more urgent or of no greater emergency that the province is facing at this moment compared to the state of children's health care. News broke about the Rotary Flames House on Friday, and I have been hearing from families about the impact of this since then. The hospice provides palliative care services for children with life-limiting illnesses. They also provide grief and bereavement support for parents and siblings. Rotary Flames House is an important place for families who are facing such difficult circumstances, and it's absolutely tragic that staff and services are being diverted as we near the holidays.

We should not be in a place where staff and resources are being pulled away from a children's hospice. This should be the most urgent matter not only of the Premier and the Health minister but of every single member in this Chamber. What are we doing here if we are not even providing children of this province with stable health care? The past president of the Canadian Medical Association, Katharine Smart, has said: this state of children's care shows the entirety of our health care system is on a knife's edge.

**The Speaker:** My apologies, Member. If we can just grab the copies – quickly pass them to the pages – they'll distribute. My apologies for the interruption.

**Mr. Shepherd:** No trouble, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Edward Les has been with the Alberta Children's hospital as an emergency physician since 2004 and says that he has never seen the situation this bad.

Last week the UCP refused to debate my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's emergency motion to address children's health following a shortage of pediatric medication and the building of a trailer to extend the size of the Alberta Children's hospital's waiting room. We were joined by a mother whose child has needed to spend significant amounts of time at the Edmonton Stollery due to needing two heart transplants, and she said that she has heard how playrooms are being used as patient rooms, elective surgeries are being cancelled, kids needing cardiac care are waiting for transfer, and teens needing ICU care are most likely going to adult care. I wondered then why the UCP did not see the urgency of this issue, and I was, frankly, angered when I heard about this pausing of services at the Rotary Flames House. Nothing is more important than children's health.

Yet the UCP are far more focused on an economically destructive sovereignty act or, as the Minister of Finance outlined today, spending time, dollars, and resources on forcing Albertans to accept policies they don't even want. I hope the UCP spent some time over the weekend thinking about what Albertans actually want and learning more about the children's health crisis and maybe speaking to some of these families who are impacted by it.

Columnist Don Braid wrote that the sovereignty act is a complete mess that makes Alberta look ridiculous. It seriously erodes Albertans' own democratic rights with little prospect of doing any good.

The Premier and her cabinet should ditch [that act] and turn their full attention to the things that really need it – the children's health [care] crisis, for one.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with Mr. Braid more. I hope all of the members of this Chamber will agree with me on the need for this problem to be addressed and for this government to provide a clear plan of specific action on how service at the children's hospice and the Rotary Flames House will be fully resumed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 42 allots up to five minutes for a member of Executive Council to respond to the request. It seems to me that the Minister of Health is rising.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this important issue. As I indicated last week, our government recognizes that there are challenges in our health care system, and we recognize there are challenges in our pediatric health care system. This is a challenge that is not unique to Alberta. As noted earlier today, you know, there are similar challenges being faced at SickKids hospitals across the entire country. The SickKids in Toronto recently ramped down surgery by 40 per cent. SickKids and others are redeploying staff internally, just like what we're doing in the Alberta Children's hospital in

Calgary. The CHEO in Hamilton has called nurses from the Red Cross, and the BC Children's hospital in Vancouver recently called a code orange, a disaster alert, to allow measures like reassigning staff as needed.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking action. It's a challenging time as we're going through the flu season. We have COVID, we have RSV, and that is why AHS made the difficult decision to be able to temporarily pause the Rotary Flames House respite care in Calgary to reassign some of those nurses and other staff to take care of very sick kids who are being admitted through emergency at the Alberta Children's hospital. Just to be clear, all other services at RFH are continuing, including the end-of-life care, bereavement support, and also the assist program. AHS is taking these steps for the same reasons as other children's hospitals across Canada, all struggling to cope.

But, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and, as I indicated last week, we are implementing that plan. Now, that plan includes improving access across the entire system. We are spending a record \$22 billion on our Health budget this year, the highest level ever. COVID response and surgeries are on top of that, and we're adding another \$1.2 billion over the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, we are rebuilding our health care workforce. AHS is hiring people and expanding their workforce: 1,800 more RNs than before COVID, 300 more paramedics. We also have over a hundred more nurse practitioners working in Alberta today, and quite frankly we also have 400 more physicians when we look from December 31, 2019, to September 30 of this year.

We have new collective agreements with competitive pay for all the major staff groups. As I spoke about earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have a new AMA agreement, which actually provides stability, partnership, and innovation to attract and retain doctors. We have more internationally trained nurses and doctors working to get their licences and come into the province. We're investing for the long term, over \$30 million announced in May to add 2,600 seats in training programs for nurses, paramedics, and other allied health professionals.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are taking action. We're also adding capacity across the system from EMS to emergency to continuing care to improve the flow. We recently appointed an official administrator to focus specifically on the issues of access times in emergency departments, including in terms of the children's hospital. As an example of this, most recently at the Alberta Children's hospital we have added additional capacity for treatment. They've opened a new fast-track area for patients with less serious conditions, and they're working with staff in other areas on care times and to get the rest of the patients, to be able to build capacity through the entire system. The heated trailer at Alberta Children's hospital emergency department is a proactive step, and it will allow for a safe, warm place for patients who don't require immediate care to wait.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing all of this. We are taking action, and we will continue to take more action. I look forward to announcing more of what we're doing in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Speaker, at this time we do not need an emergency debate. We are focused on this issue. We've put the resources behind to solve this issue, and we will continue to work on this to be able to provide Albertans with the care they need when they need it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent to set aside the daily business of the Assembly to proceed immediately to the moved motion, in this case by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre. It being a request for unanimous consent, I will ask only one question. Is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent? If so, indicate now.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

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

##### Bill 201

#### Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding that very disappointing decision by the government members to downplay the significance of the crisis being felt here in Alberta and to negate the opportunity for all members to have a wide-ranging discussion about the nature of that emergency, I am pleased to be able to rise to speak at second reading to Bill 201, Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, as it is, of course, quite timely in relation to the crisis that we were just discussing. I will say that it can be a crisis even if there are things going on in other provinces, strangely. It doesn't negate the level of crisis and emergency being experienced by the parents of young children here in Alberta, particularly when there is so much silence and lack of guidance coming from this government in both the public health and education sectors.

Anyway, there is a crisis across the province, and Bill 201 is designed – I'm very proud that it is our first bill as an opposition caucus – to address, to start the work of addressing this crisis and to establish standards so that Albertans can have clear expectations of their health care system and can have a line of sight to what is or isn't happening and to hold their elected representatives accountable. It requires the government to meet these standards and is guided by the principle of Albertans having a fundamental right to access public health care. Delivery standards, as described in the bill, would be established by the Health Quality Council of Alberta as a result of consultation with patients, health care providers, postsecondary institutions, Indigenous communities, and others.

3:00

To make my point on why this bill is needed and why I was motivated to write it, I just want to speak a little bit about the current state of health care, and I thank the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for trying so valiantly to give all members of this House the opportunity to engage in that conversation. When it comes to primary care, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of Albertans do not have access to a family doctor or any primary care provider right now. Those who do have a doctor still find it too difficult to even access that doctor; they phone, and it still takes months in order to get an appointment. In fact, Angus Reid recently did polling that said that 30 per cent of Albertans who have a doctor still struggle with getting access to that doctor.

These problems in primary care are significantly worse now because of this UCP government's combative approach with doctors. Now, I know the UCP are trying to give themselves and the government is trying to give itself a pat on the back for the fact that they finally introduced a piece of legislation that theoretically will keep them from ever tearing up a master agreement with doctors again. But, of course, that's as easy as passing a new piece of legislation after the election, just like what happened last time, when they promised to respect everybody, respect public health care, and then one of the first things they did was that they passed legislation that allowed them to arbitrarily rip up the deal with doctors.

To be clear, you know, in case they aren't already aware, this particular bill is not restoring a whole bunch of trust amongst physicians. Nonetheless, the fact that that happened, that we have that very, very toxic history with the physicians in the province of Alberta, as generated by this government's behaviour towards them over the last three and a half years, has taken a challenge with accessing primary care and amped it up and elevated it considerably across the province, and Alberta families are paying the price.

Bill 201 names primary care as a place where the health delivery standards need to be named, identified, and then tracked. Public data on primary care right now is very limited in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and it is clear that there needs to be a plan in primary care to address the harm of the UCP's war on doctors. For instance, Ontario's Health Quality council reports the percentage of patients who are attached to a primary care provider, and they also report the percentage of people who can get a day-of or next-day appointment with said primary care provider. This kind of reporting and accountability, that is being proposed by the Alberta Official Opposition NDP's first bill of this session, takes good ideas from other jurisdictions and puts them into place on behalf of the people of Alberta who are so desperately looking for improvements to their health care.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'd also like to talk about another area that the bill would cover and address in terms of ensuring improvements. It would also ensure that we have greater reporting around standards and the meeting of standards within emergency departments and emergency care. Now, obviously, getting timely access to emergency care in and of itself is critically important for all Albertans. Even if you're not one of those people rushing off to the ER, I don't think there's a person in this room who doesn't know somebody who has had to rush to the ER at one point or another, and you are deeply grateful that that ER was there and the service was there when they needed it. But even and above that, the ER is kind of the canary in the coal mine. We are at this desperate state of affairs with respect to our emergency room health care provision, and it demonstrates other challenges that exist in this system as led by the UCP.

Now, I've already, of course, identified the challenge with respect to access to primary care, but we also have challenges with respect to mental health care, and really we do not have any kind of substantive efforts on the part of this government to expand public access. Rather, mental health care continues to reside primarily in the privately funded field, and as a result, most Albertans cannot access it when and where they need it. That's why our caucus has a proposal to remedy that problem.

It also shows where public preventative health is falling short. That's another thing that comes up in our ERs when we fail to get the job done. As I mentioned in question period today, Madam Speaker, we just saw, you know, the chief medical officer of health and her assistant or specialist in pediatric care speaking to the media for about an hour or more this morning, talking about the value of getting pediatric vaccines and also talking about the value of masking in certain areas, not mandating in any way, shape, or form but just giving good, solid public education. Meanwhile, what do we have here in Alberta? We have a voluntary chief medical officer of health, and we have a vaccine-hostile Premier, and we also, apparently, have the highest COVID infections in the country. This all comes together. Where do we see that manifesting itself? In the crisis in our emergency rooms right now.

Those are just some of the examples of where, in our ERs, you can see when other parts of the system are starting to fall apart. It shows up within the emergency room, and that's why we need to

bring into effect this bill, which would clarify not only the standards that need to be reported but also the accountability of the government for addressing and reducing wait times and increasing the ability of our health system to meet those standards.

What we know right now, as we've already talked about, is that the Alberta Children's hospital has had to add a temporary trailer to the hospital to extend the size of the waiting room. The minister talked about that as a good thing; I would argue that it's probably not. We know that staff from the Rotary Flames House, a pediatric hospice, had to be redeployed to the Alberta Children's hospital. You know, we know that respite patients have had to be discharged, which we know is deeply heartbreaking and destabilizing for families and very, very medically fragile children.

We know that emergency rooms all across the province are experiencing longer wait times. Many Albertans are waiting over 20 hours to get into the ER, sometimes lying on the floor while they do so. These pressures also mean that care sometimes has to take place in the hallway, in the ambulance bay, or in the parking lot. On April 25 we saw 14 ambulances waiting outside the hospital in Red Deer to off-load patients. Parking lot medicine is not acceptable, and this must be a call to action from this government. Madam Speaker, I remember raising these issues 18 months ago, and at that point the answer of the then Health minister was to tell us there was no problem. We cannot be in a situation where the depth and breadth of the emergency is exploding onto the front pages of our media before the government feels remotely compelled to do anything about it. It is clear that emergency rooms are not working and that the government needs to provide Albertans with a clear set of directions and actions on how they are going to react to this in the long term.

Albertans continue to reach out to me and my colleagues in the NDP about the state of emergency rooms each day. They want to see action. Health care workers in emergency departments are doing all they can right now, and my heart and my gratitude go out to them, but they actually need a government that will work with them so that they have the resources necessary to get the job done.

Now, emergency medical services is another area where we are looking for more detailed reporting in terms of the health care delivery standards that Albertans can rely on. I know all members of this Chamber know the current strain on EMS. This is another area where some data is tracked and reported, and it shows that the length in response times has increased, but there are actually also other crucial pieces of information which are not reported publicly as a standard way of doing business. The only reason we know about them and the only reason they are part of the public conversation on this is because it's been FOIPed by members of the opposition or journalists. That's not the way we should be managing these things. These include instances of red alerts, where no ambulances are available to respond to a call. Red alerts have increased by 10 times in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton from January 2019 to January of 2022. Ten times, Madam Speaker. No wonder the UCP wanted to keep that data away from the public, but that doesn't help Albertans, keeping it secret. Sooner or later we talk amongst ourselves, and we know our government needs to do better.

### 3:10

Instances of urgent disconnect, where call volumes are so high that the dispatcher cannot stay on the line, have also increased significantly from 2019 to 2022. In July 2019 they had 88 urgent disconnects, while in July 2021, Madam Speaker, 696; that is almost a 10-fold increase. This means that when someone has dialed 911 and is explaining an emergency, the call is just cut off with no explanation.

This means that we're seeing ambulances also spending more time out of their communities and being drawn into Edmonton and Calgary. I know that there are many MLAs in this room who are not necessarily members of our caucus but who are proud representatives of rural Alberta, and they must be hearing from their own citizens about the frustrations that this practice causes. Why aren't we having a more open and democratic conversation about that?

Surgeries. Pressures on the health system have led to significant delays in surgeries, and there, too, we need better reporting and better through lines of accountability. I know the UCP came up with their Alberta surgical initiative, which is, you know, their plan to increase the number of private surgical locations. At this point I think they're at about a 50 per cent increase. But the fact of the matter is that what we're really seeing from that online data is that more and more surgeries are not happening in the appropriate time frames. For instance, the percentage of cancer surgeries being done in target time frames has dropped by 10 per cent since the Alberta surgical initiative was formed, and through a FOIP we've learned that the UCP are missing surgery targets within the public system by 37,000 surgeries in one given year. Why did we have to FOIP that, Madam Speaker?

The delay is not inevitable, but at a time when you have a crisis in front-line health care providers and human resources, creating a whole second system and then pulling people out of one system to put them into another system is the exact opposite of effective. There is a straight line from the delay in essential surgeries to the lagging and private procurement practices of this government. They're expanding the private system while their mismanagement of health care is causing the public system to not be used to its full capacity. That's why Bill 201 also sets out principles of public health care, to guide both the setting of delivery standards as well as the funding of them.

Now, I've discussed how primary care, emergency rooms, emergency medical services, and surgeries could be impacted by this piece of legislation. These are places in the health system that the UCP have claimed are important to address, so I really hope they'll consider supporting this bill. Obviously, the bill is written – I have read it, just so you know. It is in fact written to ensure that additional areas can be tracked and can be added by the Health Quality Council based on consultations that they do under the authority given to them in this bill.

Now, expecting more can be done and better things can be done in our health care system: it's not adequate to just ask health care workers to do more with less. Both patients and the health care workforce should have a clear understanding of what expectations of the health system are and have confidence that the government is held accountable for providing them with the resources to do the job.

This bill would not only track the standards, but it would track the delivery of the standards and there would be a through line of accountability with respect to the appropriate amount of resources. This bill would also give the Health Quality Council of Alberta back a lot of the authority that this government took away from it when they were first elected. I think that that is valuable because I was here when the HQCA was first established, and I think that getting advice from independent, science-based experts is helpful, particularly in the area of health care.

As I conclude, I want to shift attention to the purposes and principles that are written out in this act. Section 2 lays out the principles of all Albertans having consistent, reliable, and timely access to high-quality public health care. They should have delivery standards that are independent, that are transparent, and hold the government to account to meet them. Albertans' lives and quality of life should not be unnecessarily put at risk due to a lack of

transparency, Madam Speaker. I do hope that all members in this House agree with these principles.

Section 6, as I said, specifically talks about ensuring that there are adequate resources. This is important, Madam Speaker, because when one looks at the health care budget under this UCP government and one pulls out the extra, discretionary, unpredictable – no one ever knows if it's coming or if it's not coming – money that came around COVID, the actual planned resources to our health care system, taking into account population and inflation, are about \$1.6 billion less than where they were in the 2018-2019 budget. So it's hardly surprising that we are finding that people are struggling to get the health care service that they need, and this is the kind of thing that the government, no matter which government, whether it's the UCP government, an NDP government, or some other party that's yet to be created, we should all be held accountable for those standards.

Voting in favour of this bill will show that the UCP is willing to be held accountable on health care. Voting against the bill shows that they are not willing to be held accountable to independently established standards and the responsibility for putting them in place that flows from it. Let me just say as well that voting to delay it or somehow defer their obligation to make a decision on it: well, that just shows that we're too close to an election and no one wants to be a hundred per cent clear on where they stand on these principles.

Nonetheless, I ask all members of this House to think about their communities. As of this morning there are partial and full hospital closures in communities including High Level, Fort Vermilion, Manning, Peace River, Grimshaw, Fairview, Spirit River, Beaverlodge, Grande Prairie, McLennan, Slave Lake, Boyle, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, Whitecourt, Barrhead, Westlock, St. Paul, Two Hills, Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, Daysland, Hardisty, Tofield, Wainwright, Consort, Sundre, Three Hills, Drumheller, Hanna, and Bassano. I sincerely hope that members who represent these communities reflect on where their priorities lie. The UCP is prioritizing a different piece of legislation with the job-killing sovereignty act. I would argue that this is not what Albertans want them to be spending their time on. They want them to be spending their time on the kinds of objectives that are outlined in this bill.

Finally, given the Premier's specific history of very recently writing and speaking in tremendous detail about her desire to privately fund massive elements of what is currently publicly funded in our health care system, I would argue that it behooves all members of the UCP to stand up and vote in favour of our bill, because right now the record is that which has been articulated by this caucus's current leader. Let me tell you that it is a record which disturbs and concerns hundreds of thousands of Albertans and which does not reflect the values that Albertans hold when it comes to the delivery of adequate, high-quality, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join in on the debate? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, who has tabled their plan to address health care in the form of this private member's bill. I thank you for your work on this. This is an important topic, and we need to discuss it.

The hon. member is quite right. Our health care system is facing real challenges, as it is in other provinces. Health care is under strain here, in the rest of the provinces in Canada, as it is around the world, due to the global health crisis over the past two and a half years. Unlike what is suggested by the opposition, that this is the result of policies of this government, in fact, Madam Speaker, that is not the

case. We see this across the country; we see this around the world. It's a result of the strains put on the system by the pandemic, some of that direct, that we've seen in terms of the use of resources over the last couple of years and continues to use resources in our system, and some is indirect in terms of the toll that it's taken on our health care professionals. I want to thank them for all that work. But to suggest that this is somehow the result of the policies taken by this government is absurd in the extreme. This is something that is affecting the entire First World and across the entire country, strains on emergency departments and EMS.

3:20

Madam Speaker, we are moving forward. We have put in place a plan, and we're executing on that plan. We're spending a record \$22 billion this year and increasing it by another \$600 million each year for the next two years. The government of Alberta is forecast to spend \$2 billion more this year than in 2018 according to the latest national data from CIHI, and that's net of COVID response funds, which represent another \$400 million plus that's going to be spent this year. This year's budget also includes a \$64 million increase for emergency medical services and a 6 per cent increase for continuing care, which is essential to increasing our capacity in our health care system overall. We're adding capacity across the entire health care system. That includes putting 19 new ambulances on the streets in Edmonton and Calgary as well as funding 1,500 new continuing care spaces and a million more hours of home care, to take just a few highlights of what we announced in Budget 2022.

In order to keep on adding capacity, we're building up our health care workforce, Madam Speaker. We have 1,800 more RNs and 300 more paramedics than in 2020, before COVID, and with this year's budget increase AHS is adding more than 1,000 front-line staff. We supported AHS in signing new collective agreements this year with all major groups and health care staff, including RNs, LPNs, paramedics, and other allied health professionals. Those agreements include competitive pay and benefits, and they're the foundation we need to build on, as we move forward, to enhance recruitment and retention. Of course, as mentioned earlier today, we've reached an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association.

We're sending a message that Alberta is the place to work in health care. It's still a great career in spite of the strains on the system, which has faced challenges over the past two and a half years and is still facing them now, and Alberta is the best place to build your health care career. Young people are judging that for themselves, and quite frankly, Madam Speaker, it's true. I was very pleased to read recently that the nursing program at U of A saw a 20 per cent increase in applications this past fall. Alberta historically has been the best place in Canada to work in health care, and we're working hard to keep it that way. Earlier this year our government announced over \$30 million to add new seats in our postsecondary training programs for nurses and other health professionals, and we're planning further increases, including more seats in our medical schools, that I look forward to announcing in the coming weeks.

We promised Albertans a stronger publicly funded health system, with better access to care. We stand by that promise, and we're making progress on delivering on it.

I just want to take a quick look at cancer care. We're doing more cancer care surgery than before the pandemic and giving patients better access than they had before. It's not as good as we want, but it's heading in the right direction. We're also moving forward with research and new treatments. AHS recently launched a new screening program for lung cancer using CT scans. It means more CTs, but we can do it because our overall CT volume is actually 20 per cent higher than it was in 2018-19, before the pandemic. Earlier

this year I was also very proud to enjoy the announcement of the stunning results we've seen with the CAR T-cell therapy. Of course, we're looking to take another huge step forward in terms of opening the Calgary cancer centre.

We're also making progress in diagnostic imaging, with more CT scans and MRIs than ever before, and in surgery, with more surgeries than before the pandemic and a shorter wait time for cataract surgery than any time since 2015. Madam Speaker, that is a direct result of leveraging chartered surgical facilities to be able to deliver the service.

But the reality is that our health care system remains under significant strain, and that's why I appointed an official administrator in AHS, to replace the part-time board with a full-time leader focused on driving improvements in access with the ability to move faster than we normally could. All of these are examples of action we're taking to address the challenges in the system.

Now I'd like to turn to Bill 201. Addressing the issues in the system takes money and planning and hard work, so I think the question is: how does this bill advance the work on these issues in any of these respects? In terms of money, I've already commented on our budget. Now, the opposition bill suggests that health care providers should be, quote, unquote, adequately funded to deliver services, but it doesn't say what that means. It doesn't actually suggest a dollar of additional funding beyond what we're providing. In fact, the bill acknowledges that health care funding is, quote, unquote, limited and finite, which seems to contradict the entire suggestion in the bill that the funding must be sufficient to meet access standards.

In terms of planning, the bill proposes a new set of access standards and public reporting of actual performance against those standards, but, Madam Speaker, we already have extensive and detailed standards for access for everything from time to see a doctor in emergency to the time to receive different surgeries to when an ambulance should be dispatched and when it should arrive. I appreciate the desire to report performance and measure it and assure Albertans that there are evidence-based standards that we need to meet. They exist, and we already report on them. In that respect it's not clear to me how the bill would advance this work.

The issue is not standards; the issue facing Alberta and every other province in Canada is the hard work that's supporting the system to cope with the strain of the pandemic and move forward. Again, we made Albertans a promise: a stronger publicly funded health system. More specifically, we promised Albertans that every Albertan who needed scheduled surgery would receive it within a clinically appropriate wait time. We don't need to define what that means; it's already out there. We already have evidence-based targets, and we're working towards them. What we need is a plan to get there. Bill 201 doesn't provide the plan, but that's what's important. We already have a plan, and we're acting on it.

The Alberta surgical initiative, as mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition, is part of that plan. The opposition bill seems to suggest, actually, as to the comments that she just made, that – you know what? – we are not going to fund chartered surgical facilities. Madam Speaker, that would eliminate a significant portion, approximately 20 per cent, of the surgeries we're doing right now. We've already had success with cataract surgeries in terms of being able to catch up in this regard, to get the wait times down in those surgeries, and we're doing more. If this is what this bill actually proposes, actually eliminating chartered surgical facilities, there's no way we can support it, besides which it is the wrong approach because the reality is that we can make a difference using chartered surgical facilities. It is public health care, it's publicly funded, and it's publicly administrated.

We need to keep doing the hard work to support our health system, Madam Speaker, and meet the challenges we faced, but I'm afraid I don't see, on this initial review of Bill 201, that it will actually improve substantially on that type of work. It talks about metrics, it talks about principles, but it doesn't actually talk about the plan, and that is actually what we need to be able to move forward on this basis. We have a plan, and we're working on it.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, at this time I wish to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 8(8) the Legislative Assembly defer further consideration of Bill 201, Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, at second reading until December 21, 2022, or until the first day for consideration of private members' business after that date.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, having heard that motion – it is not debatable – we will vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Schulz
Ellis	Lovely	Singh
Fir	McIver	Smith, Mark
Glubish	Milliken	Toews
Hanson	Nally	Toor
Horner	Neudorf	Turton
Hunter	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Jean	Rutherford	Wilson
LaGrange	Savage	

Against the motion:

Dach	Gray	Notley
Deol	Irwin	Renaud
Ganley	Nielsen	Shepherd

Totals: For – 32 Against – 9

[Motion carried]

## Bill 202

### Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to move second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 202. It is the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

Madam Speaker, charity is the greatest amongst all virtues – I believe that – and it's the watchword of every Albertan and the watermark of our province since our conception. Charity is not just charity as a noun, as a place you give money; it is an act. It is something you do. Acts of charity are incredibly important to us and our society.

We, happily, have come to a spot now where we have institutionalized this, importantly, institutionalized it in these big, important charities that we know in our lives day to day, in our

faith communities, in the United Way, in the Cancer Foundation, in the Kidney Foundation, in the Calgary and Edmonton chambers of voluntary organizations, and, underneath those and amongst those, thousands upon thousands of others, that are registered charities with the Canada Revenue Agency.

That brings up the second part of the institutionalization. It's an institution for us to be able as a government and as a society say: we're going to incentivize this; we're going to do a paired giving, effectively, where we match the gift or more sometimes when it comes to charitable donations, because we know how important that is. We know how important the act of charity is itself on the soul and the virtue of that acting it out. But, importantly, in government, the lens through which we see it, without functioning charities we'd be at a couple of billion dollars less in services in this province. That's tough to put into numbers, but we all know those stories, Madam Speaker. Every single one of us on both sides of the aisle, no matter who we are, whether you're a giver or not, has received from a charity. You absolutely have or your family has. I encourage every member, as you rise to speak to this bill, to think of those stories and tell this Chamber and tell Albertans on the record those stories and ways that charities have affected your lives, have affected your family, have saved a life, perhaps, in your neighbourhood, in your community, and where you come from.

Madam Speaker, what I'm proposing to do in this private member's bill is not spend money but cut money. It's to cut taxes from Albertans, but we do it in a unique way. The way that it currently works with our set-up for nonrefundable charitable tax receipts is that the province and the federal government together will give a certain percentage amount of your dollar donation that you can get refunded if you're owing taxes at the end of the year according to how much you donated. Currently in Alberta that's 10 per cent of your first \$200 that at the end of the year gets refunded to you, and the federal government has it at 15 per cent. That makes it a combined 25 per cent.

The proposal of what the substance of what this bill is doing is effectively taking that Alberta portion and moving it from 10 up to 60 per cent, so a combined 75 per cent refund if you're owing taxes at the end of the year for your first \$200. The reason that that number was chosen is because if you look at other tax incentives for nonrefundable tax receipts that the province has on offer, the only other one that I know of that's comparable in any way would be the political tax refund for donating to political bodies, nominations, parties such as the ones that many of us represent here in the Chamber, all sorts of different activities politically. That refund is a 75 per cent refund for your first \$200.

I think, Madam Speaker, it's at least as fair to say that we should have as much interest in a successful, thriving charitable sector as we do in a thriving political sector in our society. It's good for us to be supporting people getting engaged in politics, making sure that this Chamber can continue to have very motivated members of all sorts of political beliefs advocating for it. The good news is that this issue, I believe, is nonpartisan. This issue is not something where it matters what side of the aisle you're on. Like I said before, every one of us has a charity that's touched our heart, that has saved a family member's life, that has made a difference and talked someone down from a ledge or provided support when they were in their most vulnerable, dire moments. Happily, we can support at least those first \$200 and incentivize them to the same degree that we do our politics.

If we look at the current state of the charitable sector across Canada, we can see that there's a decline in donations. Well, it's a little more complicated than that, Madam Speaker. There is a decline in Alberta, for example, over the last 10 years, from 2009 to 2019, in the number of households that are registering charitable

donations when they do their taxes. That decline is approximately 22 per cent; 22.1 per cent of households fewer now, at least in 2019, than in 2009 are registering charitable donations. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that the total dollar amount to charities has gone down. In fact, we've seen two things go up over these two years. The average dollar amount of donations has gone up over that same period of time, keeping many charities, not all of the organizations but many of the charitable organizations, close to whole. Also, we've seen the average age go up.

I was speaking to a relatively large charitable organization out of Calgary, the Calgary Cancer Foundation, and their average donor, I believe, is somewhere in their 70s as far as age. Now, this change has not come overnight. This change of the average age of donor and the total dollar amount and the drop in the number of households registering donations has not just happened over the last two years of the pandemic. Yes, the pandemic has made this more acute – that is without question – and charities can tell you it's been reflected in the way that they're trying to fund raise now, but it's been generational.

**3:50**

It's generational from before, where there was a generation that would give as an act of duty, responsibility immediately, and they'd been trained into it. I was not a part of that generation. Happily, since I started making my own income, talking to my parents and seeing what they did, it's something that has become part of a regular yearly activity with me and my wife and our household, to make sure that we're picking our charities and donating to those institutions we think are most important. But there are fewer and fewer of those who are my age, millennials, that are doing it. It's even less common in younger generations as they get into what used to be normal donating demographics, when you get into your early 20s and start having income that's appreciable after your education, when you're in the workforce. So we see this continuing on.

What happens to us as a society if those donations do dry up? What happens if that 22 per cent drop over a decade of number of households that are registering donations – what happens when that increases to 30, 40 per cent? What happens when the 78-year-old average age of donation for some of these charities is now 88 or 98? It becomes more and more difficult for them to continue to do the work that they do, and the consequences there cannot be clear enough, Madam Speaker.

I'm not just talking about dollars and cents. What these charities do is offer services that government doesn't – and if we did, we wouldn't do it as well, and that's not a contentious statement. All of these charities: many of them are supported by government as well, but they heavily, heavily rely on donations as part of their operational budget. That's a good thing. We should continue to support them, and anything we can do to do that would be great.

As a government we have a public interest. The common good is seeing charities thrive. It's so essential to our common life as Albertans to have these charities, the big names of the Stollery hospital, of course, and the Children's hospital but also the food bank that I visited in Peace River. I know that every one of us has been donating to it and visiting and talking about it, especially in the midst of this affordability crunch.

These charities offer services that otherwise Albertans wouldn't have, and those services are often dire. Those services are acts of charity and love. It's a different thing to actually go out and deliver the service than it is just to talk about it, to have government deliver it, to have somebody with the passion, like I met this weekend at the Peace River Salvation Army food bank; they care so deeply about those families. There are now 230 Christmas hampers, that has gone up at about 35 per cent from last year, that they deliver. It's so important to see those charities continue.



So to make that happen not just after COVID, which was difficult for families of all sorts, but particularly right now, this key moment where we see the affordability crunch happening – where average families have a variable-rate mortgage going up year over year, let's say a couple hundred dollars on their house; they have a couple of kids in that house, so they have grocery bills at \$300 or \$400 above what it was year over year; they have all sorts of difficulties when it comes to insurance prices going up; utility cost itself going up plus the distribution transmission taxing us, effectively, to a spot where we're paying more for the transmission than for the actual utility itself; all of this continuing on, add on top of it a carbon tax. Inflation is causing real harm.

That's why sound fiscal management really matters. That's why making life more affordable in practical ways really matters to Albertans, matters in what we do in this Chamber. The tax cut that's been proposed in this bill would be a real relief for families. The sooner we can get it passed, the better. There's a sense of urgency in this, Madam Speaker, that we get it as soon as absolutely possible so that these households, many of whom are donating or want to donate, know that they're going to get \$150 back per individual, maybe \$300 for a household, come tax season rather than just the \$50 each. That's a meaningful difference.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill. I would say in general that we're supportive of the bill. What it essentially does is that it changes a section of the tax code to make A 60 per cent. A is currently "the specified percentage for the year," which, as near as I can tell, remains at 10 per cent, as it was set in section 4 of the tax act in 2001. So it is a significant increase, obviously, on that point. Based on some analysis found on Twitter – so take that with a grain of salt – by Trevor Tombe, who is very good at this sort of thing, it would appear that, you know, a sort of rough estimate, assuming this doesn't impact behaviour directly: the cost of this would be about \$20 million. That's what we're looking at.

There are a lot of charities, and there are certainly a lot in my riding that I deal with regularly who do incredibly good work. I definitely agree with that. One of the concerns I have with what the member said when he was moving this bill was his talk about the need to increase the charitable tax donation to increase people donating because, you know, these charities provide services that wouldn't otherwise be available. I don't disagree on that point – they are services that wouldn't otherwise be available – but what I would like to point out is that some of the services that aren't available are not available because of decisions that that member and his colleagues made.

For instance, many of the people involved in the increased utilization of food banks are people who are on AISH. Now, this government has – well, they've suggested that they're going to reindex AISH; they haven't actually done it yet despite having supported it when we did it originally. But that will still leave people \$3,000 farther behind than they were at a time of rapidly increasing inflation.

I don't disagree with the policy in this bill. What I don't love about it is – we should support charities. We absolutely should. I don't think what we're doing in the bill is bad. What I don't love is the number of people who are having to go out and seek that charity who would otherwise have been entitled to government benefits. I guess I feel that people should be entitled to eat without having to rely on charity for that. I think that, you know, government has a role to play. I think that benefits like AISH and the Alberta seniors' benefit and the income support benefits – like, for instance, in the course of our

government we cut child poverty in half by changing the way the child tax benefit worked. Now, admittedly, that was work that was done at both the federal and provincial levels simultaneously, but that's a big change. I believe that children should be entitled to eat, and I don't think that that should necessarily be reliant on donations being made to a charity in order for that to happen.

I guess what I'm saying about this act is: yes, and? I'm saying that we are supportive of this act, but when we talk about the incredibly important work that charities do and have done for a long time, we do need to recognize that the member who is proposing the bill and his colleagues are, in part, responsible for the increased draw on those charities and responsible for the fact that people need to rely on that.

I would ask the members that while they contemplate the important changes being made in this bill, they also contemplate the importance of supporting Albertans generally. They are the government. They don't have to do this by indirect means; they can do it directly.

**Mr. Williams:** I'm not the government.

**Ms Ganley:** They are government private members, some of them. That is correct.

This could also be done directly. I think overall I would say the \$20 million, at a time when we see this much revenue coming into government, is not that big a shift. I think I'm sort of supportive of the intent of this bill. I think we'll probably support it. I do hope that it comes with some other measures that are specifically aimed at alleviating some of the underlying problems therein.

4:00

I think other than that, that's pretty much all I have to say about it, just that I think this can be a question of: yes, and. I think it can be a question of saying: yes, this support for charities is incredibly important, but also let us consider the impact that disproportionate inflation while wages, particularly in this province, are stagnating is having on Albertans. Let us consider the impact that deindexing tax brackets or deindexing AISH, seniors' benefits, child tax benefits, those sorts of benefits, had on Albertans, and let us also solve those problems.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other members that wish to join the debate? The hon. Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to Bill 202. I do want to say thanks to the Member for Peace River for bringing this forward. When I think back to when I first got involved in politics in 2008, I remember that I did campaign on this very thing. I remember thinking at the time and hearing the leader of the party at the time talk about this disparity between donating to a charity that may feed the hungry, take care of the homeless and the disparity between donating to organizations like that compared to donating to a politician. You know, the first \$200: you get 75 per cent back when donating to a politician, and of course when it comes to other charities, it's far less than that.

Again, this actually takes me back a long ways when it comes to really believing that this is a good thing. It's a good thing for Alberta, and I think this is one of the things that can make Alberta a better place. In fact, in the leadership race I did talk about this on numerous occasions as I travelled across Alberta. Again, it's great to see this opportunity come forward where the Member for Peace River has brought this forward for us here today. I appreciate that.

There are so many people in need, and there are many people that want to help out. This bill will give an opportunity for those to come together. When we look at how much difference this could make, there are a lot of people that might be willing to just give \$25. Well,

with this bill they could give \$100, and they'd get \$75 back. It'll be a \$25 net donation out of their pocket, but they'll help \$100 worth when it comes to the amount of difference it'll make to the people that they're donating to.

I think we have all received something or we know somebody that's received something. I know my family has. I often talk here about my grandson Ezra, who has cerebral palsy. His family for the first six months of his life was in a hospital, staying at Ronald McDonald House, another good charity that helped out. There was an organization close to home called Lila's Angels that helped the travel back and forth for the family, travelling from home to the hospital in Edmonton for those six months. I believe it was the Rainbow Society that gave him a wish, too.

When we look at the good work that these organizations do, I think it's incumbent on us to be able to help out where we can and help people donate and be able to have some money come back in the tax benefit for that. I know locally we have a group of people that put on a local golf tournament to raise money for different organizations. They do a hockey tournament in the wintertime. These are all good organizations that are doing their best to help the people of Alberta and help the people in need.

I think we have to realize, too, that a lot of these charities are very efficient with the work that they do for the people of Alberta. They leverage volunteer work so that they can get a lot done, and a lot of times these organizations are right in the community that they're trying to help or if not right in the community, they know the community that they serve very well.

I think taking this opportunity to give the people that donate to these organizations a good tax benefit, that's equal to what political donations are, is good for us, good for Alberta, and it will make a difference in the long run. We know this will be a net negative to the Alberta budget, but I think it will be a net positive to Albertans as we go forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I always appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House, speak to various pieces of legislation that are brought forward, especially when it comes to private members' business. As we know, private members don't get a whole lot of legislative calendar time to be able to bring their topics forward, so I'm always excited when we get a chance to talk about those. It seems, you know, that some members get even less time, especially if they seem to be sitting in the opposition caucus. I would have loved to provide some comments a little bit earlier around Bill 201, but that has sadly been pushed to the bottom of the list.

At least I get the opportunity to talk this afternoon about Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) – I just wanted to highlight that, and I'll come back around for that – Amendment Act, 2022. We're proposing a change here to kind of up the claim amount for the first \$200 for somebody making a charitable donation. You know, quite frankly, I actually would have loved to have seen this change a lot sooner than this, but, hey, at least we're here. We get the opportunity now to talk about this.

I'm certainly supportive of moving this legislation forward. I think this is a good job, but I will have to highlight just a couple of things. I mean, we've certainly seen over the course of the 30th Legislature changes that the UCP government has made that do make life much more difficult for people, and they are then having to rely on all of these charities to be able to make ends meet. I mean, we've seen things like personal income taxes being raised. Insurance costs have definitely gone up for people. Utility costs are

another big-ticket item now on people's drain of their bank account. You know, fees to go to parks, things like that.

For a long time we saw members swearing up and down that no deindexing was occurring for people on AISH, yet of course now we're hearing that that's going to be changed. Well, if that's going to be changed, then that meant that it actually happened, which brings a whole other conversation that we won't be having today because we need to talk about private members' business and Bill 202 here specifically.

But when you have these kinds of pressures on people, forcing them to go to the charities for that, that means there are a lot of pressures put on these charities to try to help. We have unfortunately seen changes which have made things more difficult for charities to be able to provide those services. Quite honestly, it kind of feels like, you know, we're trying to put that even further on the backs of Albertans.

We've certainly seen a decline in charitable donations from Albertans. Perhaps, you know, I'm a little biased here. I think Albertans are some of the most giving of all Canadians in the country, but when you just simply don't have it to give, you might have to rethink some of those steps so that they're able to. Again, while I'm certainly in favour of more significant tax relief with those donations, perhaps we shouldn't have put all of these cost pressures on Albertans so they could have continued to donate in the ways that they used to. It's not because they didn't want to. I know that for a fact.

**4:10**

I think when we have an opportunity to – and I think that the member previous spoke to this. Maybe, you know, creating a little balance, or when we've seen donations go to political parties, maybe balancing that out a little bit: I'm certainly not against that kind of change. As I said, I would've loved to have seen that a little bit sooner, but at least we are here.

I did want to come back because I made a little highlight around the title of the bill, which made mention to other gifts. One of the things I'm curious about is, say, for instance, you know, a parent wanting to donate to their child's soccer club. I'm wondering if this might be captured under Bill 202, or is the government going to start to possibly, I think the famous line is, pick winners and losers out of this? I would be interested to know if something like that might be captured under Bill 202.

I wouldn't mind hearing from the Finance minister, actually, on this bill a little bit. As we all know, private members can't make money bills. They can suggest changes. Ultimately, there is probably a cost to the province. My understanding is that it's probably in the \$20 million range maybe, which, again, I have absolutely no issues with, especially since the government deems it necessary to do things like, well, I don't know, fund a war room that goes out and chases cartoon characters at the cost of \$30 million per year – so, you know, I think the money is there – or, I don't know, betting a billion dollars plus on an election south of the border. There's money that we could have provided to Albertans so they weren't necessarily having to put the pressures on the charities that they are.

My hope is that this incentive, you know, might work, but again, no matter how big the incentive is, if you just physically don't have the money to take out of your pocket and be able to give to that charity, that incentive just kind of sits there. So I'm hoping that this might be a little bit of a motivator for the government to act in some of the other areas in term of reversing some of these pressures that we've seen forcing people to go to charities. I would certainly be in favour of things such as that.

I know the government loves to go on at length about things like the gas tax on vehicles' fuel, which is all fine and dandy. Again,

I'm not necessarily against that, but if you've had to park your car because your insurance is too high, that doesn't do anything.

**Mr. Nally:** The carbon tax.

**Mr. Nielsen:** But it's still the same thing, Minister. When you can't drive your car because you can't afford your insurance, how are you going to take advantage of that? It doesn't matter about a carbon tax. You're not driving your vehicle, so you're not even getting the opportunity to take advantage of that. Again, we're talking about cost pressures here.

Again, you know, I don't want to sound like I'm against Bill 202 because I'm not. I'm fully ready to support it here in second reading. I want to see it go on, hopefully, maybe even quickly. I would love to see government and government-side caucus members maybe give that same consideration to Bill 201 because, again, I love talking about private members' business. We don't get enough of an opportunity to be able to do that. I mean – you know what they say – sometimes members will go their entire careers in this Legislature without being able to bring forth a private member's bill.

Certainly, the changes that I'm seeing here I'm not against. I would like to see those reciprocal changes, which I think will enhance this bill so that people can take advantage of it and maybe even reduce some of those pressures that are on the charities so that they can serve the clients that they need in as many ways that they possibly can.

I know there are a lot of people that want to also add their comments to this bill, so I won't take up too much time. I'll certainly be participating later on as the debate goes, but as of right at this moment I'm very much in favour of Bill 202 through second reading, and I hope we pass it fairly soon.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good timing.

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate being recognized here today to speak to this bill. I want to thank the hon. Member for Peace River for bringing forward this bill. I think it's a very well-thought-out bill. It's always difficult to be able to find good private members' bills, and I think this meets that litmus test.

One of the things that I wanted to talk about, Madam Speaker – and the reason why I'm in favour of this is because of a principle that I have, which is that decision-making closer to the problem versus farther away from it will net a good result versus having a decision being made so far away. We see that happen on a regular basis where decisions that are being made in Ottawa affect Alberta in an adverse way because they're so far away from, you know, the trenches where things are actually happening. The same thing happens even here when decisions are made so far away. I'm always in favour of local decision-making.

The same principle can be applied here for this bill because when we talk about trying to be able to fix some of our societal problems that we have, I really believe that those people who are dealing in the trenches with these problems have really 20/20 vision. They can see what the problems are a lot better than, say, a bureaucrat in Edmonton or in Ottawa.

You know, I was very impressed with an organization, the Mustard Seed. A couple of our members actually have their father, that started that organization. I was impressed with that organization because the president or CEO of that organization actually came from the streets. He knew what the problem was. He's got an amazing story, Madam Speaker, and it's awe inspiring when you think about what he was able to do in building up the Mustard Seed in Calgary and surrounding area. That's an example

of when you actually strengthen those charitable organizations that are in the trenches and give them that ability to lift people. That's when you really see success.

Really, what we should be in this room doing is looking for those greatest successes that we can have. I think that by giving people the ability to give to their charitable decision – giving more money back to them so they can give more to the charitable organizations of their choice is a good thing. It's only going to be able to help our society and build our society.

So that principle, the principle of allowing local decision-making to happen, allowing charities to be able to fix the problems: I think that's really where the success of this bill comes in. I think that the Member for Peace River has really got onto something here, that we can empower the people and the organizations within our society here, the compassionate people, that have the best interests and are so close to the issues in the province that they can know how to be able to actually inject small amounts of money to be able to have great effect and great outcomes. That's really, in my opinion, what this bill is going to do, and this is why I'm in favour of this bill.

Madam Speaker, again I thank the member for his thoughtful private member's bill that he's brought forward, and I hope that all people, all members of this Chamber will support Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for St. Albert.

4:20

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. First of all, let me just premise my brief comments by saying that I certainly do support any move that encourages donations like this. I think it's a good idea. I think, you know, a couple of people have said that it's probably long overdue, and I would agree with that, so I am ready to support this.

But I also want to clarify a couple of other comments. Certainly, not-for-profits, nonprofits, registered charities, societies: there are all different levels. They do terrific work. They do all kinds of work. They do – I'm thinking about the community that I represent – everything from, of course, food banks, so dealing with food insecurity, to affordable, accessible housing that they're trying to create. There's Stop Abuse in Families, so there are organizations that offer free counselling for people that are experiencing domestic violence. There are all kinds of charities.

There's one in particular that I want to make reference to, and it's the seniors association in St. Albert that's actually, really struggling for donations. I've heard members talking about: over the pandemic, you know, charities have felt a loss, and that loss has been of their regular donation levels. That certainly is true, and as a result they're having to cut services.

Now, for those of you that maybe know St. Albert, it's just outside of Edmonton, but people have to commute, so if you're reliant on public transportation, you're kind of out of luck. There is a commuter bus, and there is a bus, sort of a handibus, for people with disabilities and seniors, low-income folks that goes to a few stops in Edmonton, but other than that it's pretty tough. This organization, this seniors' group, is able to do that. They have drivers. They have volunteer drivers. They fund raise to reimburse for gas, for mileage, all of those things. And these are for really important appointments. You can imagine that seniors having to go to the Cross regularly for treatment or having to go to whatever other specialist they might have or even just to see friends: that's important. This is a real-time example of the loss of revenue in terms of fundraising.

But I really want to underline what my colleague said a little bit earlier: one thing that we cannot forget when we're talking about nonprofit societies and registered charities in Alberta is that what we've seen, a progression over, I would say – I don't know – the last 20 years even, is that there has been an erosion of the public service, an erosion of the ability of government to deliver very, very important services. Those have been privatized, and those have turned into charities, many of them. As a result, these charities more and more are being required to fund raise to meet their needs, their programming needs.

Maybe there are people in here that don't know that the vast majority of disability supports for children and for people that are over 18 are delivered by nonprofits and by registered charities. Now, what has happened over the last little while is that they have systematically had their funding reduced. Systematically had their funding reduced. Every year that things are increased to capture growth, that's a reduction, and it requires these charities to fund raise more and more.

Let me give you an example of the one charity that I did work at. Some of the fundraising goals were very, very simple. They were about, "Let's fund raise to offer rent supplement," because people couldn't afford rent, because a hundred per cent of the people that we supported there were AISH recipients. Of course, when you live on AISH, you don't have a lot of money. Organizations are fund raising to cover things like rent and utilities, common costs, auditor fees, insurance, all of these things, all of these really, really functional things.

Of course, I support a bill that's going to encourage donors, that's going to give donors a tax break, encouraging them to donate more. Of course, I support that. What I don't support is this government's systematic chipping away of supports that people require to survive. It is the role of government to meet those needs, and I'm talking specifically in this case about disability supports. This government systematically cut AISH, and I can tell you that probably close to a hundred per cent of the people that receive PDD supports are also on AISH, so they're making do with a lot less money over the last three years that they have. It's charities that work with them that have had to step up to provide assistance. Charities have stepped up to provide assistance: buying bus passes, supplementing groceries, helping with rent, all of those things.

While I do support this bill, Madam Speaker, it is really important to understand that while we can express thanks and appreciation and gratitude for the incredible nonprofit sector in Alberta, we have to recognize the incredible amount of pressure that we have continued to add to them when we don't fund essential services properly. Every time that we do that – we chip away, we don't recognize the growth, we don't fund the growth – we are adding more pressure to the nonprofit sector. Government members can stand up all they like and say: you know, we support nonprofits; they're essential. Yeah, I agree with that. They are essential. They are very, very important. This bill, hopefully, will make a big difference and will help. But the biggest problem, Madam Speaker, is that this government has failed to do its job, and that is to properly support all of the services, all of the programming that this nonprofit sector is involved in.

Now, let me just say one more thing about food banks because that seems to be the popular example that people are using today. Are food banks essential right now? Absolutely, a hundred per cent. They are so important right now. Even in the community of St. Albert, which is typically, you know, a little bit more well off than some other communities, they are struggling. They're breaking records. They can't keep up with demand. The pressure is huge. Now, yes, this government did stand up and announce I think it was \$20 million, but let's be clear: it was \$5 million a year. Let's be clear: there are six months till an election. Let's also be clear:

there's a matching component to that. So what sounded like a big, fancy announcement – "Oh, yeah, we're going to immediately support food banks" – well, is a little less than it sounded. What this government needs to do is recognize that food banks are in crisis and step up with the money right now that they need to function. It's a lot more than \$5 million, and they don't have the time to raise the money to match it. They need to be funded immediately.

I'm going to take my seat. I support this bill because I think it's important right now. Actually, I think it's always been important, but it's also important for us to recognize that it's not always the job of nonprofits and charities to do the work that this government, all of us were elected to do.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to support Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. I'm excited. This is an outstanding idea, and I'd like to give credit to my colleague for this great idea. It's also great to see the members opposite supporting this positive initiative, you know, and perhaps we can unite together to ensure speedy passage of something towards Christmas as well that will encourage and support Albertans that give to the many great charitable organizations. While we don't agree on everything, it's great to see that perhaps we can agree on something that is so positive in our community.

One of the reasons I'm really excited about this bill is that charitable support, I believe, is part of Alberta's culture and identity. I think it's something that we excel at. There's actually – I remember reading a StatsCan report in 2020 that reported that Alberta had the highest average donation in Canada. Out of all the provinces and territories in the country, in Alberta we reported the highest average donation. I think that speaks to the many great families and individuals in Alberta that we all have the honour to serve in this Legislature.

One of the things that Alberta has is that we actually have the most competitive tax support for Albertans currently when they donate over \$200 to registered charities, and combined with the federal rate Albertans who donate over \$200 actually get back, in terms of tax shelter, 50 cents on the dollar. When you think about that, that's a really powerful incentive and support that this government – and, you know, credit goes to previous Legislatures. I believe it was Premier Stelmach that actually, under his government, brought in the enhanced charitable tax credit for charitable donations to 21 per cent in Alberta. By far Alberta is the leader. It is the best jurisdiction in Canada supporting charitable support for over \$200.

But for donations up to \$200 perhaps there are Albertans that want to give but, perhaps based on their circumstances – perhaps they have lower income – are less able or less in a position to give as much as they would like to give.

For these lower income Albertans, the current Alberta donation credit is 10 per cent. Combined with the federal rate, the donation credit is about 25 per cent, so it's actually about half of the rate.

**4:30**

That 25 per cent credit rate puts us in the middle. You know, we're kind of the middle. We're average, right? But, Madam Speaker, being average is not the Alberta way. Alberta is a meritocracy, and we are the best. This bill makes us the best. Bill 202 seeks to make us be the best, supporting Albertans, especially, in my perspective, those who perhaps have lower income, less able to give as much. It makes us the best in supporting them. This amendment increases the Alberta credit

from 10 per cent to 60 per cent, and combined with the federal rate, this will bring the charitable donation rate up to 75 per cent.

When you think about that, isn't that a wonderful thing, that if an individual of modest means says, "You know, I'd like to donate to a charity that I feel strongly about" and they donate \$200 to that charity, with this proposed bill they can get tax shelter that actually will return to them 75 cents on the dollar, 150 cents on the dollar reduced from Alberta taxes? I think that is a beautiful, wonderful thing.

The great thing about this rate selection, to me, is that the bill achieves parity with the provincial donation tax credit that we provide in Alberta. Currently, as we know, when an individual donates to the UCP Party or to the NDP Party, on the first \$200 of their donation they receive \$150 back, or 75 cents on the dollar. I think it's a wonderful, symbolic thing that we would elevate – while it's important for us to participate in our political institutions and in the political process by donating to political causes, there is much more to that. Being in Alberta, there are many great charitable organizations whose work is just as important, and some would argue more important. It's important to incent and encourage those Albertans by elevating the tax shelter that they get on charitable donations to 70 per cent.

Madam Speaker, just in closing, because I don't want to take too much time, this policy is to support charitable organizations. During these challenging times and indeed in the past couple of years our charitable organizations – many did great work. Many of these individuals who serve in charitable organizations serve out of love. There are many great charitable organizations where most of their workforce is volunteers who really are serving because they have a strong inward belief in the good work that the organization is doing and they want to love and serve their neighbours.

Just in closing, I really support Bill 202. I think it aligns well with the Alberta culture of excellence, being the best, a culture where Albertans are the most generous in the entire country in supporting our wonderful charitable organizations. I would encourage all members of this Legislature to join together in a common-good cause and support the speedy acceleration and process of this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to rise to speak to the private member's bill this afternoon. I, too, will be voting in favour of this measure, but rather than a "Yes, and," I'll give it a "Yes, but," because I know that while charities will certainly be appreciating the extra dollars that will flow to them as a result of this – and I expect the uptake from Albertans will probably be to the maximum, which will impact the treasury to the tune of about 20 more million dollars as a result of this increase in the amount of the tax break on the first \$200 that are donated to charity – what it invites is a question as to the direction and movement towards a reliance on charity for things that governments typically have been expected to undertake themselves. I think other speakers have said the same thing that I'll repeat now, that it invites charities to fill gaps that are not being properly filled by government.

[Mr. Smith in the chair]

One example that I think is a prime example of that gap, that is now widely assumed to be something that is a part of the hardware of our charitable network, is food banks. Food banks not very long ago, Mr. Speaker, did not exist. In fact, the incidence of food banks, I think, is something that came up in the 1980s, and previous to that, of course, it was expected that government supports would allow

individuals to purchase food from that government support that would satisfy their family's needs. Yet now, of course, it's food bank reliance that our society and others world-wide are looking to to fill that need, and it really shouldn't be something that the government is relieved of, its responsibility to provide essential public services to its citizens.

I know that this bill purports to allow Albertans to express themselves, even at this time of year or whenever, to support the charities of their choice to a larger degree than they otherwise might have by having the incentive increased. However, I'm concerned about the direction, I guess, of the bill, where it looks to perhaps replace the government's responsibility to support its citizens, and that's something I really hope is not the intent of the underlying legislation.

Now, one thing that many people don't realize – and I think, Mr. Speaker, you as a former teacher will – is that the schools throughout the province, generally speaking, are actually identified as being charitable organizations. One can make a donation to a school and receive a tax receipt for it. I'm not certain if this type of a donation to a school will be covered by the act in its entirety. I'm not sure if the member contemplated Bill 202 covering those charitable donations, but in the title of the bill, where it states "Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act," I'm wondering if those other gifts would include gifts to schools throughout the province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know, in attending many of the parent-teacher council meetings, of course, that one of the major things that they do is attempt to raise money by various means, whether it be chocolate sales or a rummage sale of some kind or any type of thing to raise money. Of course, they are also able to solicit donations and issue tax receipts. So I'm wondering if indeed the member had this in mind when Bill 202 was being drafted, because it may be something that schools might benefit from if the public was more widely aware of the option to donate to schools. But I also in the same breath want to caution that we don't end up using this as sort of a voucher system for school funding by having individuals donate to their particular school in a more affluent neighbourhood to a larger degree than other parents might be able to do in less affluent neighbourhoods.

I know that in the scheme of things, Madam Speaker, this is a bill with good intent, and I intend to support it, but I certainly do not want to see the government being relieved of its responsibility to provide essential public services to populations in need.

With that, I'll end my remarks and listen for further comment from others.

4:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Peace River to close.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate every member's contribution and the ability for us to be able to be debating what is, I think, an important piece of private member's legislation that is impactful for average Albertans. Again, I encourage and I'm happy so far to hear the stories of all the different ways that charities have affected our lives as members and all the ways, if passing this bill were to come to fruition, that charities could continue with more sustainability, with more support from government.

I heard many of the concerns from the opposition, and I can tell you the intent is simply for – the only way for a private member to support charities in terms of the dollar amount is through increasing the nonrefundable tax credit, so that's why I've taken this route. Obviously,

there's nothing beyond a very sincere hope to see charities thrive in Alberta.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will close debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:41 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Long	Savage
Dach	Madu	Schow
Deol	McIver	Schulz
Fir	Milliken	Shepherd
Glubish	Nally	Singh
Gray	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Stephan
Hanson	Nielsen	Toews
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Hunter	Pitt	Turton
Irwin	Renaud	van Dijken
Issik	Rutherford	Williams
Jean		

Totals: For – 37 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a second time]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has the call.

#### Investigation of Grocery Prices

501. Ms Renaud moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to

- (a) immediately investigate the recent increases in grocery prices and lack of competition in the grocery market in Alberta and report its findings to the Assembly no later than January 15, 2023; and
- (b) amend the Consumer Protection Act to clarify that the practice of price gouging is unfair and as such is subject to investigation by Service Alberta's consumer investigations unit.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and move Motion Other than Government Motion 501. As you know, Albertans are struggling. They're facing an affordability crisis not seen in 40 years, so I'm proud to stand here in support of making life more affordable for Alberta families. They've seen prices skyrocket on everything from gas prices, utilities, and housing, but nothing hits them on a more daily basis than just how expensive things have gotten at the grocery store.

October's consumer price index data was released, showing Canada's inflation rate at 6.8 per cent, a staggering number that will continue to hammer household budgets. Food prices have shot well above that, to 10.1 per cent, compared to a year ago. The numbers are even worse when looking at price increases on essential items; for example, margarine is up 40.4 per cent from last year, dry pasta has increased by 27.2 per cent, fresh fruit is up 8.9 per cent, fresh

vegetables are up 11 per cent, and coffee and tea has increased by 13.1 per cent.

5:00

While grocery prices continue to rise, everyone is still dealing with other inflationary pressures. The UCP is adding to inflation by forcing Albertans to pay more in income taxes, property taxes, utility fees, school fees, tuition, interest on student debt, and park fees.

On top of skyrocketing prices, wages in Alberta haven't kept pace with inflation. According to Statistics Canada data Alberta workers had the second-slowest wage growth in Canada. Because of the slow wage growth Albertans are now forced to use their savings or rely on credit cards just to afford groceries. We also know that the increased cost of food hurts those closest to poverty the most. Every dollar increase pushes more and more Albertans into food insecurity.

The consumer debt index showed that in April half of Albertans were just \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills at the end of the month, the highest level in the country. This is something everyone in this place should be alarmed about. That means that hundreds of thousands of Albertans won't afford a balanced diet or are worrying about running out of food before they have money to buy more. Some are going hungry, missing meals. Some may not eat for a few days, and certainly many have forgone important medications.

In fact, in a new Canada-wide survey released today, the majority of respondents said that they're using coupons or hunting for sales to cope with increasing food costs. Nearly 20 per cent were also reducing meal size or skipping meals altogether in order to save money. Now, keep in mind, there are people living in poverty that don't have access to vehicles to be able to drive around to get the best prices. In fact, they live in places where these things that I'm telling you about that have gone up aren't even available to them.

I've been hearing from food banks that are seeing an alarming increase in usage, and Alberta is seeing a 34 per cent increase in food bank usage year over year. Nearly 58,000 kids relied on the food bank in March 2022, and we know the issue is getting worse. Albertans living on income support, like AISH, are facing a crisis, a true crisis. They already were using the food bank to supplement; now they're dependent on it. They're also limited to visit numbers. Ever since the UCP deindexed income support, AISH recipients have watched the real dollar value fall month over month. That means that nutrient-rich food, like eggs, meat, dairy, is being replaced by low-cost, highly-produced items just so that they can fill their stomachs.

While Albertans struggle, large corporate grocers are reporting massive revenues. Loblaws reported in Q3 earnings of \$556 million, up 29 per cent from last year. Over the last three quarters Loblaws has spent over \$1 billion in stock buybacks to boost its own stock price and benefit stakeholders.

That's why I urge everyone in this House to support this motion, and I expect this House to take motion. The motion will urge the government to do two things. First, it will call on the government to investigate grocery store prices and see how the lack of competition in Alberta is inflating those prices and propose recommendations on increasing competitiveness in Alberta if needed. This will work alongside the Competition Bureau of Canada's study but provide local, Alberta-specific solutions. Alberta arguably has the least competitive grocery sector, with the lowest share of independent grocery retailers, and only two of the three large corporate grocers, who control the highest concentration of retailers in any province.

Second, we are calling for clarification within the Consumer Protection Act so Albertans can report grocers who appear to be price gouging. During COVID-19 the government expanded what

can be investigated for price gouging through the state of emergency. It's not clearly defined that concerned Albertans can contact the consumer investigations unit to investigate possible grocer price gouging without a state of emergency. Skyrocketing prices due to inflation – Albertans deserve to be certain that they aren't being taken advantage of and the price that they're paying is fair, not simply padding the profits of already profitable grocers. That's why I'm asking this House to support this motion.

Earlier today, during question period, Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister of service Alberta essentially say: you know we can't do that; doesn't the member know that's not something we can do? Well, I would suggest that if this government thinks they can change the Constitution of Canada with a bill, they can investigate price gouging. They can investigate the skyrocketing prices of groceries.

We know it's a crisis, a crisis that has been caused by a number of things. We know that. I'm not saying that it's all the fault of the government. There are a number of contributing factors. What I am saying is that our role here is to protect Albertans – to protect Albertans – and one of the most basic things Albertans need is nutritious food. So let's use every tool that we have in this place before putting up our hands and giving up. Let's use every tool in this place to ensure that every Albertan is getting fair value for their money and that there is no price gouging. And once we can reassure all Albertans that's the case, we will have done our job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 501 is for debate. I see the hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has risen.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for St. Albert for confirming what we've long suspected, that the NDP is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The reason I say that is that I sat here listening intently, waiting for some empirical evidence, some research – even a well-thought-out argument would have sufficed – but instead we did not get that. It became abundantly clear that that entire caucus gets all of their information from Twitter and Facebook.

Mr. Speaker, I did something that the Member for St. Albert should have done. I did some research. Now, I will be tabling this with the Chamber, but it's a white paper by the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers. The average grocery retail margins are 2 per cent. I'm not suggesting that they don't have higher margin areas such as pharmaceutical, health, and beauty, because they do, but the food in the grocery store has razor-thin margins, to the point that the average grocer in this country has 2 per cent margins.

Now, Dalhousie University – and I'll be tabling this as well, Mr. Speaker – actually did a study to determine if grocery stores were price gouging. And you know what? They confirmed that there were a lot of reasons for the higher prices that we're seeing on shelves, and one of them was not gouging on behalf of the grocers. I'll be tabling that as well.

Now, I have to say that this motion – and please let me say that I am empathetic, as we all are on this side of the House, with any Albertan that is struggling with the higher cost of everything due to the inflation, to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, but I encourage the Member for St. Albert to use the time wisely. This particular motion: quite frankly, it's as ridiculous as it is redundant. Let me tell you why.

The first piece of the motion is to encourage the investigation of the recent increases in grocery prices and lack of competition in the grocery market. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's already happening. The Member for St. Albert should be aware that the Competition Bureau is doing that work now. In fact, they're accepting submissions up until December 16, and I would encourage the Member for St.

Albert, if she has an example of price gouging, to include that submission with the Competition Bureau. But redoing that work that is already going on is redundant, and we certainly don't support that on this side of the House.

Now, the second piece of that motion was to amend the Consumer Protection Act to clarify that the practice of price gouging is unfair. Well, Mr. Speaker, it already does that, and I will refer the Member for St. Albert to part 2, division 1, section 6(2)(d). It clearly shows that exactly what the Member for St. Albert is asking for is articulated in the act, and I would refer the member to read that accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy has recovered strongly, but we know that many Albertans are still struggling to heat their homes and feed their families. We know that many Albertans are concerned about the rising cost of groceries and many other goods and services due to increased costs and rising inflation. In fact, Canada's Food Price Report 2023, which I'll be tabling with the House, predicts that Canadian families will spend up to an average \$1,065 more on food next year than this year. But we also know that this is not an Alberta-specific problem. In fact, the inflation crisis is affecting all Canadians, no matter what province they live in.

This is a national problem that was created by the disastrous economic policies of the Liberal-NDP alliance in Ottawa. Since 2015 the federal government has brought in a number of fiscal policies that have contributed to high inflation and have resulted in higher borrowing costs for households. This is exactly why our government has been standing up to Ottawa since 2019, because only our government has the best interests of all Albertans in everything that we do.

5:10

If the NDP were really concerned with the high cost of groceries and continually rising inflation, they would call on their friends in Ottawa and they'd demand that they cancel the carbon tax. But do you know what we get from the NDP, Mr. Speaker? Crickets. When it comes to the carbon tax and their overlords in Ottawa, they say nothing. Instead, the NDP will support the more than tripling of the carbon tax between now and 2030, which will continue to add fuel to the inflation crisis, adding unnecessary costs to families heating their homes and driving to work.

Our government understands that the price of goods is reflective of national and international supply chains, which are part of a complex system that impacts all Canadians. The Member for St. Albert has proposed an unsophisticated solution to a very complex problem, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the grocery industry is one of the lowest margin sectors in the entire country. This industry is now facing a range of unusual inflationary forces, everything from extreme flooding in B.C. to drought in parts of western Canada. We're seeing COVID-19 supply chains, labour disruptions that are impacting the port, and let's not forget the geopolitical events in Europe, particularly the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, Ukraine is the world's largest producer of sunflower oil. They are the fourth-largest exporter of corn. Of course it's going to have an impact on what people are paying on the shelf. Let's not blame the retailers. Many of these grocery stores are good community citizens which give back to the communities they serve.

It's unfortunate that the Member for St. Albert doesn't actually live in St. Albert because if she did, she would know that these local grocers live in the communities, Mr. Speaker. Their children play hockey in the local arenas. They get their coffee from the local Tim Hortons. They contribute to the food banks, and they donate to children's charities. Let me just say that these local grocers deserve better than to be vilified by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I say this motion is ridiculous and redundant. You know, two years ago these grocery workers were

essential workers that we relied on to get food on the shelves during COVID-19, and now they have the audacity to vilify these same people. Shame on them. Shame on the Member for St. Albert.

The Competition Bureau is one of Canada's most prominent watchdog groups, with a proven track record of investigating anticompetitive practices that serve to push up prices for consumers, including things like deceptive marketing, price-fixing, and even outright fraud. The bureau is examining how governments could act to combat grocery price increases by way of greater competition in this industry and expects to publish the results of the study in a public report, which will include recommendations to government authorities as appropriate.

I would also like to point out that the Competition Bureau will look at this complex issue over an eight-month period, Mr. Speaker, whereas the opposition motion is calling for a report back in as little as less than a month's time. That's clearly not enough time to look at this complex issue. We look forward to the completion of the Competition Bureau's review and taking appropriate action as required.

As you see, Mr. Speaker, this NDP motion is about nothing more than window dressing and scoring cheap political points. I say to the NDP and to the Member for St. Albert: shame on you for wasting valuable legislative time in the middle of an affordability crisis. While the NDP continue to waste this House's valuable time, Albertans can count on our government to deliver affordability measures for all Albertans. [interjections] Listen, they're lighting their hair on fire right now. They're so upset by the truth. They can't handle what they're hearing right now. Well, you know what? I would encourage the members: put your cellphones down. Stop looking at your shoes and look up here because this is a serious matter that is on Albertans' minds. Albertans deserve better than to have our legislators waste their time like this.

We know that Alberta cannot solve this inflation crisis on our own, but due to our strong fiscal position and balanced budget we can offer substantial relief to Albertans, and that's exactly what we plan on doing, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our government has taken a number of affordability measures totalling \$2.4 billion. That's how we're going to have Albertans' backs, by stepping up with \$2.4 billion worth of supports, not with ridiculous, redundant motions.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion, and the reason I will be supporting this motion is that I'm not against these activities. We're doing them now. It's redundant. We don't need to put the motion forward. It's a waste of legislative time. But I am not against doing these activities. As I said, we're doing them right now, and for that reason I will be supporting the motion.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can't say loud and clear enough that the Member for St. Albert is wasting legislative time on redundant motions when we should be focusing on the real work at hand, which is having Albertans' backs during an affordability crisis. My message to the NDP and to the Member for St. Albert is to do better, to be better.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the House to speak on Motion Other than Government Motion 501, to speak in support of this motion and also to, you know, share the feedback and concern from my own constituents in the riding. Albertans are struggling with inflation and the affordability crisis.

First of all, I just wanted to congratulate my colleague the Member for St. Albert for bringing this motion to the House and providing the members an opportunity to address this very issue that the majority of Albertans are struggling with and expecting

better from their elected representatives in the House. It was surprising to actually hear from the minister of affordability this afternoon when answering a question during the question period to his own caucus member and stating that, you know, addressing inflation and addressing the affordability issue is not actually the responsibility of any government. It is further saddening and sad, discouraging and shameful to hear what I just heard, actually, from the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. That was a totally unreasonable and irresponsible speech I have ever heard during this very situation, the historic crisis that Albertans have been facing.

I'm just – I don't know. I'm trying to put together what I should call – I don't know where the minister actually lives. The minister said that my hon. colleague doesn't live in her own riding and doesn't know about issues in the riding. I wonder where the minister lives. Does he really live in this province? If he does, does he just go back to his constituents, or does he only have opportunity to speak with the corporate managers or the corporate owners?

I would just like to speak, for the sake of the record, about two corporations in this province. Loblaw's have reported quarter 3 earnings of \$556 million, over half a billion dollars. That is up 29 per cent from the last year, the same time from the last year. Similarly, the other company, Empire, reported earnings of \$187 million in their last reporting quarter. The number of people, Albertans, relying on the food banks in this province is unprecedentedly high, and 58,000 kids, only kids, are depending on the food banks these days to survive, in order to just, you know, get fed, not really having the food of their choice but just being able to survive and get fed. They are relying on food banks.

5:20

I was on a radio talk show last month. The stories people are sharing: the people who have been the donors for the food banks in the past many years ended up actually relying on the food banks for their survival. For the very first time in Alberta history they're calling out.

I'm not sure how many of the government caucus members actually have the opportunity or the responsibility as ordinary citizens, Albertans, of going home and helping their families with regular jobs, going to shop for groceries and help their family purchase food from the local stores. From the speech I was hearing from the minister, it doesn't seem like it. If he would win as a responsible family member, whatever – I don't know his family circumstances. It is not very hard to find out what is going on: the prices that you were paying, like, six months ago and the prices you are paying now and the prices you were paying last year and the prices you paid six months ago versus the prices you are paying now.

The consumer price index we discuss here is not even really affecting all Albertans equally because the average increase in the numbers of inflation we're discussing is usually averaged. Like, in some cases inflation has jumped the prices of the items and quality over 200 per cent, particularly with vegetables. The Member for Calgary-Falconridge – I don't know if he's aware. I know of his constituents going to stores and posting on Facebook the price gouging: a \$2 piece of cauliflower jumping to \$10.99. I've seen that sitting in Edmonton looking at that post.

There has been – I don't know – a lack of sensitivity in where the minister was coming from. It was very sad to see what kind of – and, you know, you can easily even figure it out, why, coming back to the House, the government put forward the very first bill as the sovereignty act, not anything else. They debated six months, during their leadership debate, all the issues related to the health crisis, education. Affordability was number top. One of their leadership contenders campaigned on indexing a lot of benefits they had



deindexed during these three and a half years, but all of a sudden, when they came back to the House, it seems like their agenda has been changed. There have been their constituents or stakeholders, and I'm surprised to understand: where do they live?

I've been on the radio stations. I've been meeting with stakeholders. Definitely, the profit margin of local businesses, local grocery stores, or the independent grocery-store owners has been going down as the rate of their rents, utility bills, and other inflation factors, their costs, have increased, and that has eroded their profits big time. But the bigger corporations, corporations like Loblaw's, corporations like Empire, have a capacity to manipulate the market. They don't. They don't have the same capacity.

In my concluding remarks – I won't take very long. I know many of my colleagues want to be on the record, want to speak in favour of this motion because this is very important, and this is very important to my constituents. Many Albertans actually are struggling with this historic crisis of inflation. Every member of the House should support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Motion Other than Government Motion 501: are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-City Centre.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, you know, Alberta's government is committed to making sure that when grocery shopping, Albertans receive fair and ethical treatment. Affordability is the primary challenge facing most on a daily basis, and too often soaring costs are forcing people into difficult decisions to make ends meet. Far too many people are now having to choose what daily essentials they can live without: people on fixed incomes such as families, seniors, Albertans with disabilities, and those out of work. These Albertans tend to be squeezed hardest and endure the lion's share of the hardship.

That's why we're supporting food banks with \$20 million in new funding over the next few years. This is the first time the government has funded food banks. That's why we launched our \$600 million electricity rebate program, that's why we reinstated indexing of financial benefits for Albertans with disabilities, seniors, and those out of work, and that's why we're making targeted payments for families for each child under 18, seniors 65 and up, and vulnerable Albertans with household incomes below \$180,000. We're serious about our commitment to deliver immediate cost-of-living inflation relief that will help people manage this economic storm, serious to the tune of \$2.4 billion.

Unfortunately, it would seem the opposition takes things less seriously given the grandstanding nature of this motion. I hope we can all agree that the root causes of global inflation extend far beyond the borders of our province, and while we will do everything we can to temper its effects, we are fresh out of magic wands to wave to make inflation disappear. However, Mr. Speaker, performing magic sounds a lot like what my colleague across the aisle is suggesting, that we investigate for barely more than a month and then – poof – we'll have all the answers and make prices come down, and it'll be the same everywhere.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a global problem, a serious global and national problem, not simply an Alberta problem with an Alberta solution. The grocery sector is concentrated in all parts of the country. Canadians generally buy their groceries from retail chains operated by one of three companies. The prices reflect national and international supply chains, comprising part of a complex system encompassing all Canadians.

The Competition Bureau of Canada already has an active study under way, and I think this is well known by most in this Chamber.

They're looking into the competitive dynamics of the industry and developing recommendations for governments to promote competition. It would be naive to think an Alberta-focused review would have value for a national, interconnected problem. The Competition Bureau is one of Canada's most prominent consumer watchdog groups. It's got a proven track record of investigating anticompetitive practices that push up prices. The bureau is spending eight months looking into this complex issue. Not a month but eight months.

It's flattering that the opposition thinks we might do the same in little more than a month, which is their called-for timeline, flattering and actually ridiculous. The bureau expects to publish its results in a public report which will include recommendations to government authorities. We are fully prepared to consider and potentially act on the bureau's findings, and we look forward to the release of the report.

The federal standing committee on agriculture is also now undertaking a similar study, yet the opposition thinks a third review is needed. Clearly, this is another example of the opposition playing political games with their federal counterparts. The federal NDP demanded Parliament investigate grocery prices earlier this year.

Conversely, we are taking serious and sincere approaches to making sure that Albertans have food on their tables, a roof over their heads, and money in their pockets. We refuse to play political reindeer games that are a waste of the trust invested in us by Alberta voters.

5:30

As to price gouging, that's covered by Alberta's Consumer Protection Act, and I think most in this Chamber know that. It's defined as individual businesses charging grossly excessive prices on individual grocery items. The consumer investigations unit is responsible for following up on consumer-reported claims. Anyone who suspects unfair practices, including pricing without explanation on grocery items that grossly exceeds the price of similar items, should contact the report a rip-off line.

Given that the Competition Bureau's market study is under way, the proposal to amend the Consumer Protection Act is wildly premature. The bureau's recommendations will likely include changes around consumer protections for all governments.

It's also worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition had four years to amend the definition of price gouging in the act and failed to do so. That suggests to me that their priorities are elsewhere and today's motion is little more than a political show.

Mr. Speaker, our government has the backs of Albertans at the grocery store, at the pumps, and when they are paying their utility bills. They are counting on their government, and they rightly expect us to address the challenges they are facing with our full attention and action.

This motion will do nothing that isn't already being done and done much more thoughtfully on a much larger scale. I hope that members of this House recognize how unnecessary this motion is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is next.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. It's entertaining to hear members of this government stand and rail about wasting valuable legislative time. The number of times we have seen these members bring forward frivolous motions in this House to debate and yell and scream, to create political hay, both during the time they were in opposition and during the time that they are in government, using government

motions to do so, is countless. This is clearly the pot calling the kettle black.

Political games, Mr. Speaker? This government just introduced one of the worst written pieces of legislation, with incredibly far-reaching powers for cabinet, simply for the sole purpose of playing political games to generate an endless series of motions in the spring session, to rail against Ottawa and campaign against Justin Trudeau.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no grounds to make accusations to anyone else. This is a government that has proven it is entirely unserious in dealing with the real priorities of Albertans, as we just saw today, as they shut down debate on a bill proposed for a positive change in health care, more accountability and clear service standards to support Albertans. They voted against the emergency motion to debate children's health, a crisis in this province, and they voted to be able to close debate on their embarrassment of a sovereignty act.

Speaking of magic wands, Mr. Speaker, as noted by the member there that was just speaking, that's rich coming from a party sitting with a Premier who has repeatedly spread misinformation and conspiracy theories about COVID-19, about COVID vaccines.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called. The hon. the chief government whip.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use 23(b)(i), speaks to a question other than what is under discussion. We are on Motion 501. I'm sure the member has plenty to say on affordability, maybe about grocery prices. There has been lots of debate so far. He seems to be wildly off topic.

**Ms Gray:** Simply to say, Mr. Speaker, that I don't believe this is a point of order. I believe we are maybe a minute and a half into the member's response, and he has been responding directly to arguments that we've heard in this Chamber during Motion 501. I look forward to your ruling.

**The Speaker:** More like two minutes, but it is noted.

I hesitate to rule on relevance at this point in time in the member's remarks. That said, I'm sure he's tying it to the motion that's before the Assembly.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will conclude my beginning remarks by noting that this Premier has also repeatedly offered incredibly simplistic and counterfactual claims about the crisis in our health care system and ridiculously embarrassing attempts at solutions. This government has no grounds to stand and complain about the opposition bringing this motion forward today, a motion that I'm happy to speak to now.

Now, we have heard some vigorous defence of grocery chains, large grocery corporations from the minister, the Member for Morinville-St. Albert. Interesting. Now, we do know, Mr. Speaker, factually what has happened with large grocery chains in Alberta in the not-so-distant past. Indeed, for at least 14 years large grocery chains, including Loblaws, Metro, Walmart, and Sobeys, all participated in an industry-wide arrangement to slowly and artificially jack up the price of bread, gouging customers billions of dollars. Now, the minister would be outraged to hear me say that and hear me accuse local grocers of gouging Albertans. That is not what I am doing. I am speaking of the large grocery chains, for

which indeed local owners may be franchisees, but those local owners, to the best of my understanding, are not setting the prices; they are taking the prices from their head office.

So let's be clear. We know on the record, factually, that large grocery chains in Canada conspired together to gouge consumers on the price of bread, again, costing billions of dollars. Indeed, that led to a class-action suit on behalf of Canadian consumers who bought packaged bread, and that class-action was against them, and indeed that was found in favour of them and that indeed led to the distribution of \$25 gift cards to many Canadians. So it's not out of the pale, Mr. Speaker, for these corporations to take advantage. That is the record. That is the historical record, and noting that and noting that it could indeed to some extent be the case now is not necessarily any impugment of the character of any individual grocery store owner.

Now, indeed, here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre, Mr. Speaker, we don't really have local grocery stores. Indeed, we've had a real paucity of grocery stores. It has been a challenge for our constituency for some time. I will say that I attended the opening of a Loblaws City Market at the Ice District just a few weeks ago. I was there because I was happy to see it, because the fact is that folks in Edmonton's downtown have been without a grocery store in the central part of our city for quite some time.

Now, the challenge, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that the kinds of grocery stores that we tend to get in the downtown and urban areas, or indeed even if they are the same in other places, often will have higher prices. If I go to a City Market here in Edmonton-City Centre, I may actually be able to find cheaper prices at another City Market in another part of the city or at a Superstore, which is the same chain but a different variation of, and that is because they know, to some extent, that they have a captive audience, as it were.

Folks are going to pay for convenience in being able to go to that grocery store here in their community, which is okay for individuals like myself, you know, who earn a good income. Indeed, sure, it is more convenient for me at times to go and pick up a few groceries at the City Market down the street from my house in the Brewery district than it is to drive further to the Superstore on Kingsway Avenue, but that is not necessarily true for folks who have less mobility, Mr. Speaker, that being seniors, that being many of the individuals who have a disability who also live here in Edmonton-City Centre and also have had considerably less income during some very difficult years because of decisions by this government.

Now, I've heard the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services heckle several times about the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. Now, the fact is that those constituents of mine who are on reduced income get a rebate on that carbon tax. They have not gotten a rebate and they are not getting made up all of the dollars that were taken away from them because this government chose to deindex AISH or income support or seniors' benefits. They won't get a single dollar of that back while this government spent hundreds of millions on their embarrassment of an energy war room and other government priorities that were, frankly, political games, political grandstanding. This government did that on their backs. So when we stand up today and talk about the price of groceries, it's in part because it really matters for these folks who lost income because of the decisions of this government.

5:40

This government wants to pat itself on the back about affordability. It talks about the utility rebate, which they do not offer to a significant number of my constituents who live in apartments and condos. Now, they said they intend to perhaps fix that with their new affordability bill. I'm certainly looking forward to that being the case. Their gas tax, Mr. Speaker, does not benefit the seniors, the students, the others,

many folks who have a disability in my constituency who do not drive. Again, I recognize that they are moving forward with providing an extra \$100 a month for each of those individuals – now, of course, not for students or for a number of other people who might work at a low-income job, at minimum wage. They are excluded from this because, frankly, this government doesn't see their votes being particularly valuable coming up in next May.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we will continue to stand up for affordability for Albertans on all fronts, we will continue to stand up for government support for individuals who need it, and we will continue to stand up for justice economically, in social areas, in all things that affect Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. Member for St. Albert to close debate.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and close debate on Motion 501. Just a couple of things. Obviously, the minister for Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction is a little angry. Sadly, he accused me of wasting time, so what I would like to say is that there are many constituents of mine that have written to me, that have called, that have talked to me about grocery prices, not to mention that as a critic I deal with hundreds of people all the time, every week, that are letting me know that things aren't just bad or difficult; they're horrible. They're in crisis. So it is a problem.

You know, this was not an attempt to vilify grocers or anybody that worked for grocers. It's not an attempt at all. What it is is an attempt to do everything in our power – I understand that there's some federal work going on, but this is about here at home in Alberta. It's about doing everything that we can to ensure that Albertans are paying fair prices for groceries.

Now, certainly, the member was angry. He went on and on about, you know: we don't know anything. Yes, we understand that there are outside influences on the prices. We understand that climate change will continue to be a massive, massive problem. We understand that climate change will continue and will continue to impact all things groceries. We understand that. We understand that the war has certainly created a lot of cost pressures. We understand those things. We're not ridiculous. We read the news. I mean, we understand just like the member does. So to stand up and just mostly try to insult is a little bit disrespectful.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that this particular motion, which, oddly enough, it sounds like they're going to support, is not an attempt to say that the federal work is unimportant or won't do anything; it's an attempt, once more, to identify and understand the uniqueness of Alberta and the unique challenges that we're faced

with here in Alberta, not to just rely on the feds and on Ottawa. You know, it seems to me this government is pretty happy when they're saying those very things. Now, suddenly, it's the opposite: oh, just let the feds do it. I'm saying we need a plan here in Alberta. I'm also saying that it's kind of weird that they think that they can amend the Constitution of our country with a bill, yet they're unwilling to look at: are there tools, maybe that they're unaware of, or things we can amend to actually do the work properly here at home?

For all of these reasons – we have a crisis right now. People can't afford their food. They can't. So people that were struggling are in crisis now. Let's all support this motion and do everything we can to ensure Albertans are getting a fair price for very basic essentials like food. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:44 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Milliken	Savage
Deol	Nally	Shepherd
Glubish	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Gray	Nielsen	Toor
Irwin	Renaud	Turton

6:00

Against the motion:

Amery	Loewen	Schow
Fir	Madu	Singh
Horner	McIver	Stephan
Hunter	Nicolaides	Toews
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Jean	Rutherford	Williams

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 18
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

**The Speaker:** I almost got called in to play there.

Hon. members, the time is now 6 o'clock, and the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 5, 2022

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
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Deputy Premier

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(UC)  
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Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
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Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
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Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 5, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

Mr. Bilous moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill is negatively impacting investment decisions and the Alberta economy and should not proceed in order to protect the economic well-being of Albertans.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment December 1: Mr. Stephan speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has four minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Hon. members, amendment RA1. Are there others? The Leader of the Opposition has risen.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak, I believe, in favour of the motion as part of our overall position that we are very much opposed to Bill 1, as I believe members of the government have since become aware of.

I think I have a fair amount of time to talk about this tonight. We'll see how long it takes. Let's start with what it was, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier claimed was driving the introduction of this bill. I think that if you go far enough back, it's probably the case that you can actually find some areas of common interest between the government and the Official Opposition. In particular, the Premier identified the fact that there are occasions where the federal government oversteps its jurisdiction or, in other cases, even acting within its jurisdiction does things that many people in the province of Alberta disagree with. I think that we can all agree that that does sometimes happen.

Now, I'm not going to go through a long analysis or critique of the so-called history that the Premier reviewed when she first spoke to Bill 1, mostly because it was a particularly revisionist version of history and one that I know she has sort of unwound on her talk show over many years but not one, I think, that is particularly connected to what actually happened, at least not in most cases.

However, in some cases there is definitely commonality. The Premier often talks right now about two issues, which I think do definitely stand to serve to be a source of friction in some cases between some Albertans and/or the provincial government and the federal government. One relates to the conversation that is going on right now about the proposed emissions cap in the oil and gas sector, and the other relates to, I think, some long-standing concerns that both the current government and the previous government, that being the one that I led, had with what at the time was called Bill C-69, which is the federal government's environment protection act. I think it is fair to say that there is some common concern shared there.

I would, however, also argue that the behaviour of this UCP government since they've been elected doesn't actually align with

the behaviour you would expect to see from a government that was truly pursuing solutions. Rather, it is behaviour that you expect to see from a government that is using an external target of anger as a means of distracting from the many, many, many things that they are failing to get right and to fix and to work on in their own backyard. That is the pattern that we have seen. An example for that, actually, I would argue, could be applied to the conversation that we are currently having about the proposed or the draft emissions cap.

Now, there was an emissions cap that our government had proposed with the climate leadership plan, which was considerably higher than the one that is currently being put forward by the federal government. Now, it is actually true that if the provincial government had maintained provincial jurisdiction in the matter that is a shared jurisdiction around environmental protection and the way in which efforts to reduce emissions impacted the oil and gas sector, if they had maintained a sense of ownership and responsibility with respect to those issues, the odds are very good that the conversations and the collaboration between the government and industry and ultimately, through that, in relation to the federal government would have resulted in a resolution that met common objectives on both sides of the argument, both ensuring that the outcomes were reasonable for the oil and gas industry and were actually achievable in a way that did not negate production and didn't negate the jobs of hard-working Albertans and at the same time pushed the oil and gas sector to truly invest aggressively in those kinds of innovations that would bring about the kind of important emissions reductions that all of us in Alberta as well as across Canada and across the world need to see.

We could have gotten there, and through that we would also have eliminated the uncertainty that currently exists and is percolating around right now on this topic. But, you see, we're not at that point, Mr. Speaker, and we're not at that point because this government decided instead to engage in a whole series of statutory and regulatory and communications-based temper tantrums not to achieve an outcome but, rather, to speak to and maintain support amongst a certain base within Alberta. Their audience was always Alberta voters; it was never the people who we should have been working with in order to achieve an outcome that would give greater certainty and better outcomes for industry as well as our environment. So they didn't do the job, and they abandoned the space.

I agree that we are now in a position where we have a federal government offering up a draft emissions cap which is problematic for the industry and problematic for Albertans, but what I will say – and I will speak more about how this act does absolutely nothing to address that issue, but at the same time I will also say that there were better tools at the disposal of this UCP government to address this problem, and they did not do it. As a result, we are instead working with a bill that is purported to achieve one objective but, in fact, is exceptionally distant from that objective.

Now, the other one that the members talk about, of course, is, you know, responding to the elements of the environmental legislation that were amended as a result of Bill C-69, and on that there were common positions again between the UCP government and our government. Indeed, we did detailed submissions to the federal government and to the Senate about why that bill should not go ahead, and ultimately, I believe, this UCP government adopted our submissions once they were elected. Now, obviously, that was not successful and the matter has gone to court, and we will see where that ultimately lands once the Supreme Court of Canada has a chance to adjudicate on that matter, and likely we'll get some version of an answer next fall.

But this act does not in any way, shape, or form appear to provide any tools to Albertans or those people impacted by that piece of federal legislation. So, once again, it is completely disconnected from the purported objective, and once again I would argue that the purported objective is almost entirely political and it is really designed to stoke anger and then therefore sort of a backhanded kind of support for a flailing UCP government. That's entirely what it's for and nothing more.

That being sort of the setting for why or how we got to it and why people bothered to bring this act in, you know, what do people think about it at its sort of outset, almost even before it was – what about the principle of this act? What do most people think about it? Well, we just got a poll a few days ago that suggests that 53 per cent of Albertans do object to the statement that this act is an important tool for standing up for Albertans' interests, and only 32 per cent of Albertans agree with the statement that this act is an important tool for supporting Albertans' interests. So, clearly, this government is not actually focused on representing the desires or the wants of Albertans. That's not what's going on here.

7:40

We also, of course, heard a lot about this act from members of the government caucus in the course of their leadership contest. At that time, you know – I guess leadership contests invite people to use their inside voice and/or their slightly more accountable and transparent voice. Let's just do a little walk down memory lane in terms of what members of the UCP now cabinet or in some cases backbenches had to say about the concept of a sovereignty act.

The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development said that the sovereignty act is nothing more than, quote, virtue signalling, a fiscal fairy tale, end quote, that doesn't make any sense and won't work.

The Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism said that the sovereignty act will create “an unconstitutional delusion that will lead the United Conservative Party and Alberta down a dangerous path.”

The minister in charge of Municipal Affairs called it the Anarchy Act, quote, a false dream that will turn into a nightmare. End quote.

The Minister of Finance said that the sovereignty act would take us backwards because it would create chaos, and he also shared a graphic that called the legislation a, quote, ticking time bomb. End quote.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre called it, quote, very problematic and went on to say that it would break the law, spook the markets, and would be impossible to deliver on.

Finally, the current environment minister said that the act “would create instability and chaos. It is already doing that. I had international investors concerned about their assets in Alberta asking . . . what was going on with [it].”

That was the conversation that preceded the introduction of the act. Just to be clear, you know, in terms of the members of the Legislature who ran to lead the government caucus, it did turn out that I believe it was 48 point something per cent of the government party's membership ultimately voted for every other single candidate than the person who ultimately won.

It's one thing to win a leadership with 52 per cent on the first ballot or the second ballot, but to have to go till you're the last one on the ballot to scrape through 52 per cent: I'm telling you that that says to me that about 48 per cent of even the members of the government party were not in favour of the concept of the sovereignty act. That didn't work out very well for folks. It's a bit of a mess, and how has it been since then?

Well, of course, the act was introduced, Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday. It was introduced last Tuesday, and debate on it began last

Wednesday. Interestingly, by Wednesday, not even 24 hours after it was actually introduced, immediately following the reading of the throne speech, the government caucus was rushing out to provide, quote, unquote, clarification. Well, that ought to make the folks over there feel super confident about how well this puppy was thought through. What I will tell you is that it certainly did not make investors or Albertans feel confident about it.

Obviously, that day and the subsequent day members of the opposition raised several concerns about the act. The first thing that we raised was, of course, the fact that the act included this concept, this provision, that is often referred to as the Henry VIII clause, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Speaker as a fellow political nerd fully knows the history of the Henry VIII provision and why we call it that. In broad terms, it relates back to a time in parliamentary history in the U.K. where the sovereign, frustrated that the democratic House was limiting his ability to do whatever he wanted, came up with a new and creative way to take for himself the ability to make laws and undo laws off the floor of the democratic House. It was a thing that created great conflict in the history of England, and ultimately I think it took close to a century before eventually the House of Lords and the courts determined that this simply could not go on because it was such an incredible affront to the principles of democracy and an unprecedented overreach in terms of power that was being grasped at by the unelected sovereign.

Anyhoo, fast-forward several hundred years, and here we are in Edmonton, Alberta, looking at the brand new Premier's number one, Bill 1 – woo-hoo – and that is where she decided to kick off her tenure. Interesting choice. But what was even more interesting about that choice, Mr. Speaker, and what followed was the profound level of either, on one hand, confusion or, on the other hand, disturbingly thoughtful efforts to lead this Assembly to believe a state of facts which did not align with the language of the act that she was introducing.

In fact, I asked her today. One of two things just happened there. Either she was intentionally trying to slide that Henry VIII clause right past members of this Assembly without us knowing – “Nothing to see here. Don't worry. I'm just going to make assurances one or two times, tell you that you don't know what you're reading. It's not in the act. You know that black-and-white stuff? Black and white are awkward colours. Just ignore them. Blur your vision. Read into it what it is that I meant. Trust me. Do not read the actual words that appear in the legislation.” That's what she said. Was she saying that because she wanted us to not notice that she was doing an unprecedented, undemocratic power grab and undemocratic overreach? Was that it?

Or – and here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. I've been sort of sitting around watching and thinking about this – and I'm only speculating – but I actually believe it was the second thing. I think she literally didn't read her signature bill, flagship bill. I literally think somebody in her office briefed her on it, and she literally didn't read it. She didn't understand what she was introducing, yet she was perfectly comfortable to come into this Legislature and also go out and speak to the media and make confident, arrogant assertions that we didn't understand what the letters . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. McIver:** The person speaking just made allegations against another member, not against a party but against an individual

member, under 23(h), “makes allegations against another Member”; (i), “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member”; and (j), “uses abusive or insulting language.” I know the hon. member is having a good time revising history, forgetting about the fact that she had a minister walk in here with a five-page bill and come in a couple of days later with an eight-page amendment. But I would just be happy if you would just direct the member to stop making unavowed accusations against another member of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it’s not a point of order. The hon. member was just going through how a person won the leadership, what they wanted the bill to look like, what they tried to do initially. Now they’re agreeing to change that bill. That’s all part of the public record and a matter of debate. I think that earlier the government even clarified that they will be making changes, so we are just talking about things that are on the public record, and all these things like that are public debate.

7:50

**The Speaker:** I’m prepared to rule if there are no other comments to be added.

What I would say is that while I’m not going to find this a point of order, I would say that the member is being as creative as possible to imply that the Premier was doing something that you’re not allowed to do in this House. She knows that you can’t do indirectly what you can’t do directly. I would just provide some caution there as well as on the use of what some people might consider direct personal attacks in terms of saying statements like “she arrogantly” or otherwise. It certainly sounds directed at the Premier and not through the Speaker. There are a few areas of caution that I’m sure the Leader of the Opposition will heed and proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just allow me, then, to clarify. And my apologies. I certainly meant only to recount the history when I asked the Premier why it was that this type of clause appeared in the act. The Premier stood up and told me that it did not appear in the act and then accused me of not having read the act. Some people might have characterized that as arrogant. We’ll leave that to people outside of this building.

I will simply say that what we have since seen is that having heard the Premier on multiple fronts outside of this building accuse me of not having read the act and accusing me of fearmongering, I now see that the Premier is acknowledging that all the things that we identified about the act – not all the things but the things about the King Henry VIII clause – were, in fact, correct and that she is now looking at considering amendments with respect to that.

Mr. Speaker, while I don’t want to be in any way specifically insulting to an individual member, what I will say is that this whole saga, from last Tuesday to today, has engendered a considerable amount of concern amongst a range of opinion leaders and stakeholders across this province as well as across the country about the overall competence of the people upon whom members of the government caucus are relying in order to draft their bills, secure the intentions they claim to be achieving, and to explain to those members what exactly it is that is appearing in the legislation that they introduced in this House last Tuesday.

That in and of itself, that flip-flop, that failure to acknowledge the provision, Mr. Speaker, in and of itself, separate entirely from the substance itself, is the kind of thing that generates uncertainty

and concern. I believe people mentioned it today in the House on two or three different occasions. We had one national columnist in a national newspaper suggest that the bill had been written in crayon. That does not engender confidence, not amongst Albertans, not amongst investors, not amongst people across the country.

So that’s how we got here. The first thing that we have talked about, sort of the overarching thing that we have talked about when we talk about this bill, is that as much as we share some of the concerns that allegedly originally drove the introduction of this bill, concerns about where certain federal acts may undermine or hurt economic growth and job security for many Albertans – unfortunately, the cure is worse than the illness in this case because what’s happening now is that we have a bill that is creating massive economic uncertainty across the country, internationally, and certainly across the province.

Now, the first ground for that uncertainty, of course, exists by way of the history that I just outlined, the fact that there was such a clear inability of members opposite to describe what it was that they were asking the people of this province to give them the authority to do by way of this legislation, the fact that they seemed unaware of what appeared in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. When you have folks talking about rewriting federal laws arbitrarily in our province relative to the rest of the country, you definitely want to know that you have confidence that those folks know what they’re doing, and that certainly is not what we’ve heard thus far.

Now, since then we’ve heard from numerous opinion leaders that suggest that this piece of legislation is driving an unacceptable amount of economic uncertainty across the province and outside. We’ve heard from the Calgary Chamber of commerce, we’ve heard from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we’ve heard from CAPP, we’ve heard from the mayor of Calgary, we’ve heard from venture capitalists, and, very importantly, we have heard from chiefs from Treaty 6 and Treaty 8, who are saying unequivocally that this legislation jeopardizes their fundamental, foundational rights.

Anybody in this House who has been following the long and winding road of getting major economic projects of any type built and concluded in this country understands that the failure to begin every effort and initiative by speaking with and gaining consent from Indigenous leadership and respecting treaty rights has to understand that that is a recipe for profound economic uncertainty. Yet once again with Bill 1, the Premier’s first bill, what does she do? She manages to somehow generate full-throated opposition from leadership in both Treaty 6 and Treaty 8, and that is wrong in principle, just because, obviously, of the principle that we should all be respecting treaty rights, and it also adds to this concern that I’m identifying around economic uncertainty.

Now, we also, of course, get uncertainty arising from the questionable nature of the legality of this piece of legislation. Now I’m moving off the King Henry VIII clause, and I’m moving on to the rest of the act. I want to talk just a bit about how much uncertainty is spawned by the fact that there are so many opinions out there with respect to whether it is legal or constitutional.

We’ve heard that there are a number of constitutional scholars who have primarily identified that they believe at first glance that this is going to run into trouble in the courts. Now, there are a couple of exceptions to that rule. The Premier herself has identified them. Former Supreme Court Justice Jack Major, in a very sort of two-paragraph interview with CBC, said: oh, you know, I don’t know; it might not be too bad. Of course, another constitutional scholar, from UBC, suggested: oh, well, maybe it’ll be okay. Then, of course, the lawyer for the convoy protesters thinks it’s absolutely constitutional, so there you go there. That’s certainly a source you want to be dining out on.

But there are a number of other constitutional scholars who object to those assertions, and I think we’re going to see more and

more detailed analyses of exactly why that is. I'm not saying that what I'm about to outline is absolutely accurate, Mr. Speaker; it's just one of several opinions that I've heard from well-known constitutional scholars.

I want to just sort of walk you through one of the concerns that has been relayed to me by a constitutional scholar. Essentially, he argues that this whole concept of inviting the Legislature to make a determination of constitutionality is in and of itself a breach of section 96 of the Constitution. Section 96 is the clause which has had a tremendous amount of common-law consideration by the courts and essentially sets out that the responsibility is divided between the federal government and the provincial government and that the job of determining which is which rests with the courts. That's what's in section 96, and by calling upon this Legislature to suddenly say, "No, we're not going to wait for the courts; we are going to make a decision in place of the courts," we are in effect running into some constitutional problems.

**8:00**

Now, obviously, a government implicitly makes the determination that their own legislation is constitutional. But for one level of government to offer up opinion about another level of government's constitutionality: that's where, I am told, we run into problems, and that's where we start to run into questions around the rule of law. "Well, how does that happen?" you ask. I know you're asking. You're fully engaged in this conversation; I can tell. How does that happen? Well, the rule of law essentially says that all people are equal under the law – individuals are equal under the law; governments are equal under the law; organizations are equal under the law – and what that means is that if one organization impinges upon the legal rights of another organization, that second organization or person or level of government must go to the courts in order to have it resolved. That is, in effect, the rule of law.

Let's put it another way. If you have two business owners and one business owner breaches a legal contract, the person whose legal contract has been breached has to go to court to get a remedy. That's called the rule of law, Mr. Speaker. Now, vigilante law is the opposite of the rule of law. What happens there is that one person says: oh, you breached my contract; I'm going to come to your house and take your car, and if you don't like that I took your car, you can take me to court. That's vigilante law. That is in opposition to the rule of law, and that is essentially what this legislation may well be purporting to do on behalf of the government of Alberta. This is a view of this legislation that has been described to me by a couple of different constitutional scholars.

**Mr. McIver:** Journalists.

**Ms Notley:** Constitutional scholars.

The problem here is that not only are – so we've got this potential constitutional problem, Mr. Speaker. But not only do we have that; we also have the uncertainty that arises from directing agencies to ignore federal laws. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have this idea that this act allows the provincial government to direct a whole series of organizations to just ignore federal laws so that we'd be in a situation where federal laws apply in the other nine provinces, in the other three territories but not in Alberta. Well, nothing says certainty to a potential international investor than that kind of ridiculousness. Nothing. Nothing. We have laws that apply elsewhere, but maybe they don't apply here. Well, who don't they apply to? Well, it's only a really small group. Is it? Well, not really,

because the legislation is written in such a vague way that it may well be that if you actually just give an organization a grant, the provincial government now has the authority to direct that organization to ignore the law. So the question then becomes, you know: who is it that this government will be directing to ignore federal law?

Go back to the emissions cap and C-69. As I said before, we agree; both of these are problems for Alberta industry and for many people in our province who are looking for a strong economy and for strong job growth. But what I'm trying to figure out is exactly: how do we get to the point where this piece of legislation has any impact on either of those two issues? The bodies that are subject to those two issues – let's say Suncor, for example, hypothetically – are not provincial agencies under the act. I don't know. Unless there's some real nefarious stuff going on in the background in terms of people's intentions – I don't know – how is it that they are impacted by this? I don't see it. I'm trying to see how you actually get to a place where this act does anything with respect to the problems that it is claiming to fix. Or is it because Suncor got a royalty credit? Are they now somebody that the government can direct to ignore federal laws? Is that what the act means? I don't know. It's very, very hard to tell. That kind of uncertainty is very, very worrisome.

You know, we just had an announcement – and I think the members opposite were very happy to see that announcement – about a joint project that was introduced or going ahead in the Industrial Heartland. It was a transformative project that was focused on net zero and hydrogen development, very exciting, \$1.3 billion with Air Products and the Industrial Heartland; \$300 million of that came from the federal government, more than double what the provincial government put in.

So my question is: if I'm Air Products or if I'm another international investor looking to set up shop in the Industrial Heartland, looking to get a joint subsidy from the federal government and the provincial government to attract me to come to the Industrial Heartland, to invest billions of dollars, to grow the economy, to hire thousands of Albertans, am I going to do that now with the Sovereign Alberta in a United Whatever Act in play, that we may or may not think is legal or not legal, which may or may not be constitutional, which may or may not run afoul of treaty rights, which may or may not direct that very investor to break federal laws with one of the partners they're hoping to get support from? I don't know. To me, that is the recipe for why this so foundationally undermines economic certainty here in this province. [interjection] Sorry.

**Mr. Jones:** Just to intervene if you'd allow it.

**Ms Notley:** Oh, I see.

**Mr. Williams:** Welcome to the Chamber. It's a thing we've been doing here.

**Mr. McIver:** She's new here.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** I'm good. I'm good.

Anyhoo, the other thing: when we talk about how we're not sure about who this applies to and how it would apply, we've heard the Premier talk a lot about the gross injustice of the federal government trying to give Albertans hundreds of millions and over a billion and in some cases multiple billions of dollars to support child care. Now, I'm sure members opposite, you know, will recall that, in my view, properly funded, accessible, high-quality,

affordable child care is probably the singularly most effective economic stimulus any government could ever do anywhere. Now suddenly we have the Premier suggesting that the federal child care agreement is a horrific intrusion into Alberta jurisdiction. Oh, my Lord, it's awful. The sky is falling. The pearls are clutching. It's awful, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, this may be a place where it will be necessary for the government to use this new act to show the federal government who's boss. Well, what that likely says to me is that we're going to see some delay in rolling out a critically important program that helps regular Alberta families deal with out-of-control affordability costs as well as ensuring that investors see Alberta as a place where they can bring their investment dollars and also their employees because they have a high quality of life and they can get affordable child care. Now suddenly that is at risk according to the Premier's own description of why it is that we need this act. Now, I don't exactly see how it's going to work. Again, we all over here remain very unsure about how this act is actually supposed to work, but since the Premier herself has talked about child care, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that it's very concerning.

**8:10**

Bottom line is: who does this act apply to? The answer is not clear. The lack of clarity creates uncertainty. Uncertainty freezes investment dollars. Freezing investment dollars slows economic recovery. Therefore, this act and its wide-ranging scope of uncertainty is the exact opposite of what Albertans and the Alberta economy need right now.

Now, let's just talk about this act from the perspective of some of our friends in other parts of the country. It has shocked me, Mr. Speaker, the tunnel vision with which the conversation around this act has occurred throughout the leadership contest that we saw with the members opposite and when they were debating with each other as well as the ultimate successful candidate, the now Premier, when she was talking about it. There seemed to be this complete failure to understand that we are one of 10 provinces and three territories and, presumably, if we succeed in doing this thing with this act, presumably other provinces will do it, too.

We are a landlocked province. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from personal experience that there were times when, if somebody had suggested to the government directly west of us that this was a legitimate tool in their tool box, they may well have used it, and we would not be 10 months away from the TMX pipeline, the first pipeline to tidewater in over 40 years from Alberta, being completed.

Indeed, there was a time, Mr. Speaker, where the then minister of environment for the B.C. government actually started publicly talking about actively refusing to give permits for TMX as it was going forward. I specifically remember getting on the phone with a few of the people on that side of the border and walking them through the unconstitutionality of that action, that they literally could not do that, that if they wanted to resist the TMX pipeline being built once the federal government had gone through all the processes that it needed to go through by way of its jurisdictional authority, then the only way they could do that by respecting the rule of law was to go to the courts and ask if they were able to do that.

I remember there being a rather heated three-week period where we were backing and forthing with them and sending them our legal opinions and telling them over and over and over again that they had overstepped and that this was not actually a tool in the so-called tool box. Thankfully, they ultimately got the same legal advice that we had been sending over there, you know, and having all our flurried, sometimes rather heated conversations over, and instead they determined that they would take the matter to the courts, which

they did. The court said: "Yeah. Alberta is right. You cannot refuse to issue permits. This has been done lawfully, and the pipeline will go ahead."

If they'd had their version of this act, we would not be 11 months away from having that pipeline built. We would probably be 36 to 48 months away from having that pipeline built, and the investment that was needed and attracted by seeing the successful determination of that pipeline being built would not be with us right now.

It shocks me that nobody over there seems to understand the consequences of doing this and creating the uncertainty not only here but encouraging other provinces to do the same if we don't have consensus about how to do big projects that cross borders. Yet not a word over there. Not a word. Nobody seems to remember that conversation. Nobody seems to remember that debate. It is so incredibly poorly thought out.

I'm getting close to wrapping up, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure folks over there will be very pleased. I just want to summarize. The bottom line is this: this is a bill that is – well, I won't quote all the extremely critical things that have been said by so many of the scholars who have described it. Members opposite: their own former Premier called it catastrophically stupid, and that's kind of a good short version. It is probably unconstitutional. It is, without question, deeply unclear, and it has already marinated in five or six days of very clearly demonstrated incompetence.

All three of those features, Mr. Speaker, undermine the confidence of investors: the confidence of investors in Calgary, the confidence of investors in Toronto, the confidence of investors in New York, the confidence of investors in London. It makes us look ridiculous, and it also undermines our ability to kick-start that economic growth which so many Albertans are counting on. It doesn't help business; it hurts business. We've already reviewed the fact that most Albertans do not believe this is a necessary or advisable tool to use to defend Albertans' interests, so Albertans are not behind it.

And, Mr. Speaker, the one thing that I haven't had a chance to fully talk about too much yet but I will touch on very briefly: all the time that we spend talking about this ridiculous act is time that we do not spend talking about the real crises that are facing Albertans. Last week we tried to have an emergency debate about the crisis in children's health care. Today, after hearing over the weekend about a children's hospice that took care of palliative patients and took care of exceptionally medically fragile children and gave respite to their exhausted parents, how the staff working there were redirected to deal with the crisis that is occurring in our hospitals, the Minister of Health got up and said: oh, it's not so bad; it's just as bad everywhere else. Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, it's not just as bad everywhere else.

Also, on top of it, he then went on to say that we're not going to talk about it, and also we're not going to talk about your bill, your Bill 1, that, rather than engaging in all this economic chicanery, would actually engage us all in a thoughtful conversation about how to come together to make our health care system better for people not only in downtown Calgary and downtown Edmonton but also people in northern Alberta and southern Alberta, in Lethbridge, in Medicine Hat, in the Bow Valley, in Red Deer, in communities all between. That's what we should be talking about, Mr. Speaker. That is what our bill would have allowed us to do.

Instead, members opposite decided to use their majority, in a way I've never seen before, to completely undermine the rights of private members who are not part of the government caucus and to avoid speaking about that issue. That is relevant to this bill because we are spending so much time talking about this bill, which is an attack on our economy, and we are not spending our time talking about the things that Albertans are desperate to hear us focus on.

We have a volunteer chief medical officer of health. We have school boards being told that they can't keep their kids safe. We have teachers who are overwhelmed by class sizes and illnesses. We have affordability crises that are hurting Alberta families and a complete failure to engage in any long-term solutions with respect to those. We have very serious concerns, Mr. Speaker. Also, we have an economy that is in desperate need of thoughtful efforts to diversify and to innovate and to grow long-term, sustainable, resilient jobs.

8:20

Instead, what are we doing? We're ignoring the health care crisis. We're ignoring the crisis in education. We're ignoring the number of kids that are getting sick right now. We're ignoring the affordability crisis. We are ignoring our obligation to grow the economy. Instead, what we are doing – what is it? Fifteen thousand jobs lost last month, I think? Yeah. Instead, what are we doing? We are spending all our time fighting about a poorly written, incompetently written, unconstitutional, unclear, economy-upending piece of legislation that has been characterized by many as the worst piece of legislation introduced in this House in 90 years, Mr. Speaker.

For that reason, there is no way that we can support this bill. I would urge members opposite – urge them – to take it back to the drawing board, to restore a semblance of good governance, to listen to Indigenous leaders, who so desperately want their treaty rights to be respected, to listen to business folks who want the chaos to stop, and instead to focus on the issues that Albertans really care about, Mr. Speaker. The time is long past for that to be the work that this government does instead of spending time with this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** On amendment RA1, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning would like to join in the debate.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise and speak to the referral amendment, that this bill not be read a second time as it negatively impacts investment decisions and Alberta's economy "and should not proceed in order to protect the economic well-being of Albertans."

Now, we've had many discussions over the last few days in regard to what we're hearing on this side of the House about this piece of legislation. It's only been a couple of days, yet we've seen investor after investor, business owners, whether it be big business, small business, international investors, coming forward and saying that this bill is creating such uncertainty in the future of Alberta and the future of our economy that they're concerned about being able to bring investment into the province. You know, I find it very interesting when I look at some of the commentary that's come forward from people that, as the Premier had said in one of her questions, are not typical allies of the NDP, yet they agree with what we're saying because ultimately it is just common sense.

[Mr. Orr in the chair]

To continue to have this debate, to continue to try to encourage the government to recognize that a mistake was made – and it's good to come back and say: "You know what? We made a mistake. We should throw this bill out, and we should really focus on what matters to Albertans." It would be a step probably in the right direction for this government. But over the last I would say three and a half years – and it doesn't matter if you have a new leader or an old leader; the behaviour hasn't changed – the government continues to push forward on their agenda, ignoring the issues that really matter to the very people of this province.

We've been talking about, on this side of the House, the affordability crisis, talking about the concerns around health care, asking the government to support Albertans when it comes to trying to pay their bills for a year and a half. I have videos – my staff lovingly just posted throwbacks for me this week – of me asking at budget last year, flagging the fact that we were seeing an inflationary crisis happening, seeing the fact that natural gas prices were going up, that gas was going up, looking at the fact that electricity costs were going up, yet this government did nothing.

So an opportunity presents itself: new leader, new session; let's introduce new pieces of legislation. What does the government do? Introduces a piece of legislation that creates economic uncertainty and completely ignores the issues that Albertans are talking about. How do I pay my bills? How do I have a good-paying job? Is the economy stable? And who's taking care of my children at the local hospital? None of that is in here.

In fact, we even heard today – and I'm going to quote this, Mr. Speaker – from a former comms director for the hon. Prime Minister Harper as well as campaign director for the current Premier in Ontario.

Well, I know this was part of a leadership campaign commitment and playing to a portion of the conservative base in Alberta, but, you know, there are a few challenges. One, it's not broadly supported by Albertans, so it baffles me as a campaign manager why they would put this as Bill 1 and put it so front and centre in an election campaign, a re-election campaign that is just around the corner. This is so off topic, and I don't know how you can fix this bill or why you would want to because it's fundamentally unconservative. You're trying to pass a piece of legislation to make another level of government respect the Constitution more by doing something that is profoundly unconstitutional in itself. Like, I don't know how you square that circle. I think the UCP and Albertans are on the right track in saying the federal government is overreaching on a number of issues around the resource sector, but where they're acting in an unconstitutional way, that's heavy-handed. But the solution to unconstitutionality is not more unconstitutionality, like you know. I think this is going to go down in history as one of the most ill-conceived pieces of policy and legislation, and frankly as a conservative I find this profoundly unconservative.

[The Speaker in the chair]

From many of your lovely colleagues who find it very unconservative . . . [interjections] It's a quote, and it's a quote from the hon. comms director for former Prime Minister Harper. Pretty interesting quote, I would say.

I think the government is having a crisis, and maybe we could even say that it might be an identity crisis: don't quite know where they belong. Even their own entrenched people who have had long histories of working within the conservative movement are calling this piece of legislation unconservative. As a libertarian, for those who are libertarians on that side, I don't know how you understand this piece of legislation and that it even resonates with your fundamental beliefs. It is such a significant overreach. So there's that piece: there is an identity crisis that I think that this current government is having.

Now, on top of that, though, I have spent since this bill was introduced – calling stakeholders, long conversations – a great weekend, really, having a lovely chat about where people think they're headed, what's going to happen with their future investments, what they're concerned about. You know, I haven't heard a single person say that they're okay with this piece of legislation. In fact, all I've heard is: "There's so much uncertainty." "I don't know what this means." "I don't know if this is going to impact my international trade." "I don't know if this is going to



impact my export markets.” “I don’t know if this is going to have a serious impact on me being able to attract more investment into the sector.”

In fact, it actually will impact the competitiveness between Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba when it comes to our agriculture industry. Why would investors come to Alberta when they see a government choosing to continue to talk about the what-ifs or we-don’t-agree when they can go to Manitoba and not have to worry about two governments who are deciding that they’re going to fight with each other?

One of the best quotes I actually heard, or one of the best things that was said to me by one of my stakeholders today, actually, was: the best thing for our economy is a stable economy and a stable democracy. [interjection] It’s not stable, Minister. I appreciate that it’s a great quote. Actually, I totally agree. To have a great, strong economy, we need to have a stable economy, and we need to have a stable democracy. This does not incite a stable democracy – it doesn’t – and because it doesn’t encourage and show the investment community that we have a stable democracy in this province, it creates economic uncertainty. It just naturally does.

We saw the same thing happen with Quebec, and the minister might want to cheer that on, too. If you look at their bonds and what happened with their bonds when they started to get into the whole sovereignty discussion, Ontario bonds were at 10; Quebec’s had to go up to 17, and it took forever for their bonds to drop back down. There were significant economic impacts that were happening in the jurisdiction of Quebec during the discussion around what they were planning on doing. Small businesses were impacted. Local markets were impacted in Quebec because they didn’t know if they were going to be able to get to their markets outside of the province. They didn’t have the same relationships around who they were going to be exporting to even from an interprovincial perspective because their local markets started to shrink because nobody knew what was going to happen to the local economy.

8:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Uncertainty.

**Ms Sweet:** There was a ton of uncertainty.

Would you like to interject? Go ahead.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. I was using that keyword to catch your attention.

My concern is about the specific clauses of this potential law but just really the concept. I’m glad that you were speaking about other jurisdictions that went through this process. I know that, of course, initially people would say: well, Quebec was trying to separate. But, you know, the sovereignty law that they did bring forward in 1976 – right? – was a precursor to that continuum, towards a referendum on separation. Now, we’re not necessarily saying that that’s happening here, although I have my doubts, but just the word, putting a sovereignty act into place, triggers a whole series of decisions that businesses will make, and once that moves, then something else moves. It’s almost like a glacier melting. I’m just wondering if in the agriculture sector you’ve reflected on how that might affect that industry.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, hon. member, for the question. You know, in relation to the agriculture industry I think one of the things that – and I wish we had heard from the minister in regard to this piece of legislation, which we haven’t as of yet, and maybe he will be able to speak to it at some point. Specific to agriculture is that it’s so intertwined with the federal government. There are many regulations and policies that overlap. A lot of the investment that comes into Alberta comes through federal grants and supports. The irrigation project, which this government continues to reannounce

and reannounce about doing more irrigation and saying that it was them, was actually funded primarily by the federal government. There are many projects and many relationships that exist between the province and the federal government.

When we start looking at even trying to champion our international markets, we know that when there is volatility in our democracy, when things are said out of context, our international partners will shut down their trade borders. We’ve seen it with pulses. We’ve seen it with our beef market. We’ve seen it with our pork exports. When we are not working in collaboration between all levels of government, we will impact those international markets.

Again, I haven’t heard from the minister as to how he’s planning on protecting those international markets, how he’s ensuring that those relationships will continue, and how he will continue to champion the agriculture sector when it comes to things about our food safety. CFIA currently is the one that is required to ensure that our food is inspected. It is a federally regulated program. It requires and works in collaboration across interprovincial jurisdictions so that we can sell our product to other markets, whether it be B.C., whether it be Ontario, and whether it be international.

The reason that those systems work is because there is an understanding, both nationally and internationally, about what our products do and how they’re regulated and how they are monitored and how we ensure that our food is safe. Now, we’ve seen already in the letter from the Premier to the minister talking about looking at different mechanisms around food quality and monitoring and also in the mandate letter a direction where we should be looking at trying to get preclearance for exports. That’s going to require some relationship building. That’s going to require the minister to work in collaboration with federal counterparts to be able to develop those things.

Now, does that create economic uncertainty, when we see a government saying, “Well, we don’t want to work on those things” or “We don’t want to work in collaboration”? Does that create a stable democracy? Absolutely not. It does not. It also makes it very difficult to have adult conversations and to try to get things done. In agriculture and forestry, for that matter, when we start looking at the softwood lumber dispute and looking at our trade agreements with the United States, those things have to be done across intergovernmental relationships. They have to be.

You know, have we heard that CAPP is not happy about this bill? Yes, we have. Have we heard the chambers of commerce say the same thing, whether it be the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or the Calgary Chamber of commerce? We absolutely have. But what we’re waiting for and what I hope to hear from this government is: how are they protecting our border in the sense of making sure that our markets are open, that our products are not going to be impacted by the decisions that this government is making under this piece of legislation, that motions that are being drafted, according to the Premier, by ministers aren’t somehow going to prevent the market and our products to get to market through the international markets or even our local markets?

It’s complicated. It’s not as simple as saying: well, we disagree; we don’t like what you’re doing, and therefore we’re going to stop it. We know that doesn’t work for dairy. It doesn’t work for chicken. It doesn’t work for beef. It doesn’t work for pork. Now, when we’re trying to look at value-add with the agrifood industry, trying to encourage investment to come to Alberta and not Saskatchewan and not Manitoba, it is going to become a struggle if we continue to see this piece of legislation the way that it is.

I won’t support it, Mr. Speaker, because I actually believe that there are going to be significant economic impacts that none of the ministers have been able to mitigate and have been able to explain to the rest of us in this House how that’s not going to impact the

economic investment opportunities that we've been working so hard to make sure are coming to Alberta. I believe in a diversified economy. I believe in diversifying our ag sector in that value-add and that agri-processing. [interjection] Member?

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you for accepting the intervention, Member. I know that over the summertime you did an extensive consultation, going to many rural communities, meeting with many rural stakeholders, both economic, agricultural producers. You really reached out to so many of them, and I want to applaud you for that work because I know it's a considerable investment of your time – right? – and you did it gracefully by connecting with so many. I mean, you alluded to this already in your statements, but I was hoping that you could discuss a little bit further about the impacts this bill will have on those communities, those stakeholders, and the people that we're supposed to be here representing.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Member. You know, one of the things that I enjoy most about my job is being able to go outside of Edmonton and go into rural communities. I think part of it is that I come from a small town, so I'm really passionate about making sure that our smaller communities have a strong and vibrant economy.

Now, what do we know about Alberta? Well, most of our smaller economies are driven by our resource sector, whether it be oil and gas, whether it be forestry, and whether it be agriculture. We need to ensure that those economies continue to thrive and that those economies continue to be able to be good-paying jobs for our local, smaller communities. I won't lie. I'm worried about what it's going to do. If we don't see the investment coming into those communities, if we don't see the value-added processing, if we don't see oil and gas companies investing, if we don't see our green tech companies investing, greenhouses, for that matter, looking at expanding their businesses in these local economies, we're going to see a retraction, and I don't want to see a retraction in the smaller communities. I believe that supporting smaller towns, where people can grow up, raise their kids, and continue to work there, is what we should be doing. You know, I think this act has a significant issue in sending the wrong signal when it comes to that piece.

Now, as, you know, my leader also mentioned, I do think it also ignores a major conversation that's also happening. I think all members of this Chamber will acknowledge that no matter what community you come from, health care is a problem. Rural Alberta health care is a significant issue. We can't recruit doctors, get nurses out there. We're hearing of emergency rooms being shut down. We just had the recent story of the individual from Lac La Biche that had to come down into Edmonton for dialysis because the dialysis clinic is full.

8:40

So there is a significant problem that needs to be addressed, and that should be the fundamental priority for this government, not a bill that actually doesn't do anything for the people that elected us to be here, doesn't drive our economy, and sure doesn't address health care and really doesn't address the affordability issue. It ignores all of those things. It is a sad Bill 1, and it's kind of a mess. I would really encourage the government to retract it and to refocus and make their Bill 1 about fixing health care, make their Bill 1 about the affordability mechanisms that they're telling us they're going to do, figure something else out that actually speaks to the people of this province because right now the majority of Albertans do not support this bill, and I think that is the fundamental issue here, that the government is offside with the rest of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** I might just take this opportunity to remind members that we are on amendment RA1 and that they ought to be speaking to the amendment and not the main motion.

It looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is rising.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much. I want to take this opportunity to provide this Legislature and all the members within it, of course, through you, Mr. Speaker, just a caution. Now, I know that it's not the intention of anybody in this House to encourage Albertans to break the rule of law. I know it's not the intention of the members in this House to do so, but I want to draw people's attention back to, at the federal level, what were Conservative policies that did – maybe it wasn't the intention of the people who actually brought those policies into Parliament to encourage people to do damage and hurt people and ultimately kill people, but when the niqab ban was presented, when the barbaric cultural practices hotline was presented, they were presented as ideas.

So the word of caution that I want us to really consider when it comes to the sovereignty act – and we've already seen it, Mr. Speaker, at the Coutts border. Now, I know that none of the members on the other side, again, would actually encourage Albertans to break the law – I know that – never mind actually commit a crime that would lead to the death of an individual, but what we did see there were people that were armed and were actually going to make a move towards being violent.

Now, you're asking: okay; well, why am I bringing up the niqab ban? Why am I bringing up the barbaric cultural practices again? Because what I'm getting at here, Mr. Speaker, is that the policies and ideas that we present within Legislatures and parliaments have a particular impact on the general population. So just a word of caution there. The rhetoric that gets espoused inside of the Legislature could potentially lead to acts that we – of course, we by no means are intending for those things to happen. I'm bringing this up because when the London family was killed, I gave a caution at that time. I said that it's the rhetoric that happens inside of the House, the political rhetoric, that then has an impact on the general population, and then they go out and they act on particular ideas of their own. Now, this, to me, is what I would consider that we be concerned about when we debate regarding Bill 1, because that's in the back of my head. I'll admit that it is a concern of mine.

But getting more to the point and to the reasoned amendment and why I do not support Bill 1, I would say that – and it's nothing new, Mr. Speaker, because we've seen it with a number of pieces of legislation that have been brought inside of the House, that this government, whether it be under the previous leader – and now we're seeing the same thing with the current leader – is concentrating more power in the hands of ministers, and that I find is very concerning because that action in itself is antidemocratic. It's an action that is actually eroding democratic principles, our democratic values that we have here in Alberta by actually putting more and more power in the hands of ministers.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but the act allows a member of cabinet to bring a resolution to the Assembly that states that "a federal initiative is unconstitutional . . . or causes [harm] or is anticipated to cause harm." Of course, the Leader of the Opposition spoke briefly about this particular aspect, and that is something that is decided by the courts. You know, whenever I have the chance to go and visit schools, we always cover, especially for the grade 6 students, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial, all those different levels and how they all work together actually to make sure that our democracy functions properly, making sure that the rule of law is observed and especially that we're all equal under the law.

Now, I know that we have a long way to go. There are a number of issues with our judicial system. Some people get more representation than others. You know, I'm sure that members of this House, when it comes to actually seeing the experience of Indigenous people – now, I'm going to get a little bit more into that with this particular bill – they don't necessarily have equal representation under the law.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, this particular bill, when it was being put together – Indigenous people weren't even consulted on this particular bill. We've heard extensively from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who's been contacted by members of Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 about how that consultation process never took place, and it's my understanding that the Minister of Justice doesn't want to even entertain the idea that this is something that should happen when it comes to this particular bill. So when it comes to the Minister of Indigenous Relations, I'm asking myself: well, is he advocating on behalf of Indigenous people when it comes to this particular bill so that it truly can be more democratic?

Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, but we should be learning from the mistakes that we've made in the past and the reality that we've gone through a process of truth and reconciliation. I'll remind members of the House that the whole process of truth and reconciliation is that you have to face the truth. You have to face the truth of what has happened in the history of Canada. You have to face it, and if you really want to make a change . . . [interjection] Sure, I'll cede to the member from the other side. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. deputy government whip.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Facing the truth. I would like to understand the member's position on section 2, interpretation.

Nothing in this Act [shall] be construed as

- (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the Constitution of Canada,
- (b) authorizing any directive to a person, other than a provincial entity, that would compel the person to act contrary to or otherwise in violation of any federal law, or
- (c) abrogating or derogating from any existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada that are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Looking for constructive criticism here. That is, like, point blank clear in terms of what this act should be interpreted as. What is the constructive criticism, facing the truth, that you'd like to see other than absolute black-and-white, clear print that this will be constitutional and it will not abrogate or derogate from the rights of those individuals in section 35? [interjection]

8:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, just to point out that behind you as well the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is rising.

**Member Loyola:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I'd just like to take an opportunity to intervene in the conversation because I know that you are very concerned about responding to the question that was just asked, and it gives me a good opportunity to . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Answer the question for him?

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry?

. . . reiterate some of the things that we have discussed about the fact that Chief Tony Alexis, for example, has consulted with his

lawyers, and they have very clearly said that section 2(c) does not in fact eliminate everything else that happens in the act. I think you know that, but I feel it's important to be able to respond to the question. The section in 2(c) talks about the desire for people not to assume that that's what's going to happen, but then when you go on to actually do something, it doesn't matter if you say, "Oh, I'm not trying to insult you, sir" if you go on to then insult them. You know, we see this happening all the time in our normal dialogue, and I know that you know that this is what is being told to the chiefs, that the act itself belies the thing that is being said in 2(c).

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for sharing the particular response of an Indigenous leader to the bill.

**Mr. Williams:** How about your response?

**Member Loyola:** My response is the fact that the bill itself says one thing in one place but doesn't necessarily address it further on.

Mr. Speaker, this is characteristically the attitude of mainly Conservative governments throughout several jurisdictions in this country when it comes to dealing with First Nations communities and leaders. They think that they know it all, so there's no need to consult with Indigenous leaders at all. They know it all, so they're just going to move forward the way that they like without even consulting Indigenous leaders. Now, if they would have consulted with Indigenous leaders, Mr. Speaker, then perhaps we'd have a bill that at least you could say: okay; well, they consulted with Indigenous leaders. But we don't even have that, right?

Again I go back to the whole issue at hand. We see, and I'm reminded that, yeah, members on the other side when this bill was actually presented – we were saying: hey, this allows the Premier herself to go behind closed doors with her cabinet and actually make legislation and not even have to bring it into the House. Then the members on the others side: oh, well, they're claiming that we didn't even read the bill. Now we have members on the other side, including the Premier herself, saying: okay; yeah, we're going to have to introduce some amendments here in order to make this change. But the whole idea, Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of this bill gives no confidence to the people of Alberta that this government knows what they're doing and how it's actually going to impact communities when it comes to the rule of law.

Now, Mr. Speaker, several members on this side of the House have spoken to stakeholders that have spoken out against the sovereignty act already. You know, there's the Calgary Chamber president and CEO, Deborah Yedlin, who said in an interview: there's no shred of evidence that this act will lead to economic growth; you can't tell me this is going to support economic growth and support continued economic diversification in this province. The CEO, Lisa Baiton, of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers: we are concerned about any government policy that has the potential to create uncertainty for investors. And this is, in fact, creating uncertainty.

Now, the members on the other side know just as well as I do that when it comes to venture capitalists, when it comes to attracting capital to the province of Alberta, they're looking at the strength of our economy. They're looking at a policy that will actually make it more of a secure investment for them. They want it to be as much of a sure thing as possible, and this particular bill doesn't do any of that. It doesn't do any of that, because at the end of the day, you know, you want a piece of legislation that is

going to, a policy that is going to encourage the industry to be lucrative and productive.

And, yes, here I am talking about oil and gas. You know, like, the members on the other side of the House like to talk about how we're not supporters of oil and gas when we were the ones who advocated very firmly, Mr. Speaker – advocated very firmly – for the Trans Mountain pipeline, trying to bring all stakeholders to the table in order to make the Trans Mountain pipeline a reality. And very early on – very early on – our leader of the Alberta NDP requested Indigenous people, First Nations communities, representatives, leaders, environmentalists, CEOs in the petroleum industry, all to come together and sit down and be like: okay; how can we get this thing done? The magic word there is “co-operation,” is bringing all the stakeholders together and having them co-operate. How can we make this a reality? How can we get the Trans Mountain pipeline done?

What I've seen over the last three years, Mr. Speaker, is a government that rather than creating the conditions for co-operation between different levels of government, between different stakeholders, between different Indigenous communities, rather than creating co-operation, they're creating division. We should be working towards unity. [interjection] Oh. I see that I have the Member for Edmonton-West Henday who would like to make an intervention, which I will accept.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's, you know, members of this side of the House raising the issue, whether it's the many constitutional experts or investors who have come forward, as the member was just speaking to, again and again beyond ensuring that we are creating an environment where there are incentives to be here, whether it's through taxation, whether it's through grants and otherwise, the fact is that we need the rule of law to prevail. Unfortunately, going back to what the member on the other side of the House – looking under interpretation, what we see in here in section 2, that “nothing in this Act can be construed as (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the Constitution of Canada.” Again I would go back to the idea that just because you write it here does not make it so.

Going further to page 7 in section 8, that “no cause of action lies against and no action or proceeding may be commenced against” – and it goes on to talk about Crowns or agencies that are within this act that may take action that might be contrary to the Constitution because of a decision that was made through motion . . . [Mr. Carson's speaking time expired] Oh. Didn't quite get there, but how important that is.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-West Henday. You know, I think that the best way to answer that would be to actually quote Emmett Macfarlane, who called it “the most unconstitutional bill in Canada's modern history.” You know, economics prof Trevor Tombe also pointed to legislation under Bill Aberhart to disagree. Modern history in the constitutional context means that

upon the passing of such a resolution, Bill 1 gives a free hand to the government to change any law on the books and to order “provincial entities” – which include any provincial agencies or institutions (municipalities, universities and even the police!) – to ignore or violate federal law, even criminal law.

9:00

Again I go back to my opening statement providing to this Legislature and all the members within it, through you, of course, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be careful. We need to be absolutely careful in our debate and what we are suggesting. Your intention may not be that, but there are particular individuals in our society

that will hear one thing and they'll go out and they'll act on it, and they will erode our rule of law.

**The Speaker:** On amendment RA1 the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 1. Of course, we're on amendment RA1, a reasoned amendment, and I'll be speaking in support of this amendment.

Certainly, you know, we've heard far and wide from the business community, Indigenous leaders, academics, journalists, and even elected representatives from the governing party that the sovereignty act is legislation that will hurt Albertans. Even members of their own caucus, the UCP, who presented this bill, have spoken publicly denouncing it. Besides hurting our business sector by creating significant uncertainty, which has already been created – we've created some fear amongst investors. We've already heard from investors saying that with this kind of legislation that creates instability – and, of course, we know that businesses thrive when there's stability. So I'm kind of confused by the UCP, who declare themselves champions for business, that they would actually move to create this instability in the economy and the business community. And it's not just us that are saying it; it's business leaders themselves, chambers of commerce, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. It is illogical, really, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to understand why.

The Official Opposition, I just want to highlight, did something we rarely do when bills are introduced, and that is that we voted against the first reading. By convention we generally vote in favour of first reading of bills. We, however, did not do this in our first reading because we knew this bill was so deeply flawed. We voted against it. Since doing so, the Albertans, Canadians that I've just mentioned at the outset have spoken far and wide supporting that action. You know, people across this country see how deeply flawed this bill is and how it needs to not pass. That, of course, is why I'm speaking in support of the reasoned amendment.

Just for a bit of history, I thought it'd be interesting to share with the Legislature that we've voted against first reading of two other bills during this 30th session of the Legislative Assembly. The first one was Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act. Just to remind members of the Assembly, in short, Bill 9 imposed a delay on wage talks for front-line workers who took pay freezes in the first years of their contracts and then had the right to reopen pay negotiations with arbitration, if needed, in 2019. Because of this egregious betrayal that the UCP levelled against AUPE members employed at Alberta Health Services, the government of Alberta, postsecondary education, boards and agencies, the NDP caucus voted against first reading of Bill 9, just like we're doing today, because, again, it was a deeply flawed, deeply troubling bill. We stood together that that shouldn't even go in front of the Legislature at all.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Just to remind you some more about Bill 9, to add salt to the wound of this significant betrayal of workers, Premier Kenney at the time handed out earplugs to the members of his caucus during the debate in the Legislature. You know, many things were said about that, but one of the things I want to say: it was just a very stunning show of disrespect.

Well, here we are all these years later, and Jason Kenney is no longer the Premier. Despite his profession that he wanted legislative decorum, he stoked disrespect of the public discourses, saying one thing and doing another. Certainly, there is a word that we all know

for this type of behaviour. That is another situation when we voted against first reading, like we have done for Bill 1. Again, I just want to reiterate that that's why I think it's important that we support the reasoned amendment.

I did say that we had done it two previous times. Then the second time we did it before was when we voted against first reading in this 30th Legislature on Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. The key concern we had with this bill was that the bill terminated the contract of Alberta's Election Commissioner, Lorne Gibson. He was in the midst of an investigation into allegations of illegal donations in the 2017 UCP leadership race. We were assured by Premier Kenney that the investigation would continue, but what actually happened is that everything went dark. In fact, some members may remember that the Leader of the Official Opposition was removed from this Chamber because she accused the government of obstructing justice by firing the Election Commissioner.

These are two very significant examples of our NDP caucus voting against previous legislation in this 30th Legislature because those bills were so egregious, and I absolutely stand with the decisions of my caucus regarding that. We have done that again. We did that on throne speech day, which was November 29 – yes? – against this sovereignty act, Bill 1.

It's hard to sort of top some of what I've just articulated, but this Bill 1 is going to create much more havoc and much more distress although these bills obviously created significant difficulties for workers, really a deep betrayal of an agreement the government had with members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, just created new legislation to override that, and then, of course, the second one is, you know, an investigation into their own allegations of improper donations, taking out the person who was doing the investigation, taking away their job. These are pretty significant things that Albertans should be definitely very concerned about. Sadly, this government is continuing to do things that are hurting our province, are hurting Albertans, so that is why our caucus stood so strongly and voted extraordinarily against the first reading of Bill 1.

I must say that also a significant concern of mine, as has been shared by my previous colleagues, is: why would this be Bill 1 in this Legislative Assembly? There are so many significant issues going on in Alberta. We know that our health care system is in crisis, and sadly it seems the decisions being made by the UCP government are only making it worse: you know, accusing AHS of manufacturing an issue with staffing, firing the board, and putting in sort of a UCP supporter to be an administrator. I'm sure that he won't have much power in his position but will be doing exactly what the cabinet tells him to. There are so many key issues that need to be addressed, so that is definitely why I think it's very important for us to support this reasoned amendment. [interjection] Yes, sir.

9:10

**Mr. Eggen:** Would you accept an intervention from myself?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes, I will from you.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. Yeah, absolutely. I really appreciate your comments generally, and it's, I think, constructive to look at the history of using, you know, a choice to vote on first reading of potential laws that affect Albertans.

I know you have particular expertise in regard to seniors and housing – and I don't, quite frankly, but I'd be very interested to learn more – and I know that many of those projects that we look for in perhaps Infrastructure but specifically focused and pointed to seniors and housing would be a joint venture between the provincial government and the federal government. I'm sure you've kind of

thought about, you know, how this antagonistic and arbitrary Bill 1 would potentially affect housing projects going down in the future for Albertans. What can we do to mitigate that besides, of course, killing the bill?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Right. Thank you very much for the intervention. Certainly, yes, that is a concern. Of course, we know that in the throne speech, at sort of the end of the last page or so, the UCP did talk about some programs that they thought the federal government had too much interference in, you know, in the provincial jurisdiction. They identify health care. They identify child care. They identify education. These are just three examples. They don't say housing, but it could easily be housing.

I mean, one of the major concerns I have, certainly, as the former minister of seniors and housing is just the lack of investment, lack of action on that file at all. I have met with stakeholders across the province and people needing affordable housing, and you know the province is just missing in action. There's no investment. They did do a report, but nothing has really happened. Nothing has changed, so people are going ahead without the province because the province isn't there.

Municipalities, different nonprofits are working directly with the federal partners. Will that be outlawed by this bill? Will that be not allowed? If that means projects won't go ahead and we know that Alberta has – you know, we don't even have average access to affordable housing. Across Canada it's about 4.3 per cent, but in Alberta we only have 2.9 per cent of affordable housing. We need so much more. This bill could really jeopardize and put us even further behind, and I'm hoping the minister is thinking about these questions and addressing them with his colleagues, with the cabinet because we need investment in these areas. Will this bill mean that the UCP is going to tell people who are wanting to work with the federal government, "No, you can't do that because they shouldn't be mucking around in our stuff" or whatever? That is a huge issue. I mean, this is just one scenario and one of the reasons why we should support this reasoned amendment and make sure that this bill does not go ahead.

My colleague, when he asked me the question about, for example, housing, seniors' housing maybe more particularly, sort of led me to look at, you know, the three key issues, I think, with this bill. My colleagues have spoken at length about the issues, but I'll just do a quick summary and highlight some of the things that I've seen and they've articulated as well.

We already know about the Henry VIII clause, which is actually section 4 of the act, and this gives extraordinary powers to Executive Council. If the Legislative Assembly approves a resolution brought forward by a minister, the Executive Council then has the powers to suspend or amend that legislation. This limits democracy, which I've heard the members opposite say on so many occasions is of utmost importance to them, so that behind closed doors in Executive Council they'll be making decisions that really should be made in this Chamber with all members who are elected, 87 of us, who represent our diverse communities. Instead, this legislation really has this extraordinary power to let the cabinet make those decisions. That, of course, is one egregious mistake.

The second was that this legislation is too wide ranging. It confers powers to defy federal law when the UCP feels offended by the federal government, so they just define – like, a federal initiative is a "law, program, policy, agreement or action." As I was saying, in the throne speech they do list federal programs such as provincial health care, child care, education, and I just spoke briefly about, "What does that mean for housing?" and sort of shared some ramifications about that.

Then the third . . . [interjection] Yes, hon. member. Go ahead.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much. I know that you do a lot of door-knocking in your constituency and then in other constituencies across the province, because you lend a hand in others as well. Particularly when it comes to affordable child health care, I was hoping that you could share a little bit about that regarding the door-knocking that you've done and what you've heard from Albertans and how important that is.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just a reminder to all members that on interventions it's a super excellent practice to speak through the chair at all times.

The hon. member.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you. Thanks for that reminder, Madam Speaker. Absolutely, child care is a key issue for families. We know it is expensive, high-quality child care, and we know that without that we don't have full employment. A lot of times women, because they tend to be the primary caregivers – not always, but still largely women more than men do stay home with kids; it becomes prohibitive for them to actually go out and work even if they want to, even if they're wanting to, you know, get back within their profession or whatever work they did previous to having children – feel that they can't do that because it is so extraordinarily expensive.

The federal program, that invested significant, significant funds in a program, has been a real game changer for so many families. You know, I have three sons of my own. All of them are adults now, but certainly when I was a young mom and working and a single mom at times, I struggled. It was hard. It was like a mortgage payment. Sometimes it's been referred to as a mortgage payment. I did my best to make ends meet. It still made sense for me to work in terms of the kind of job I had, but it was very difficult. The federal government has really stepped up. The affordable child care program is so key, and I know it's a really important program. Will this be one of the initiatives where the UCP will say, "Well, they're mucking around in our stuff, and we want it this way or that way"? It's hard to know what this is. That's why it is too wide ranging. That's sort of the second critique of this legislation.

Then a third one is that it's completely impractical. It's so broad in scope. Provincial entities that the UCP could say: okay; you have to defy federal law. Like, one of those federal initiatives: it could be a law, it could be a program, it could be a service. But provincial entities – and this is a big, broad definition – include almost any body that receives provincial funding, including municipalities, school boards, universities, and police forces. You know, they could be ordered to defy federal laws. This certainly throws a lot of chaos into the Alberta community.

Frankly, this bill really makes Alberta look ridiculous. It's kind of a bit of a laughingstock. If you've seen any of the media in the last while, Alberta is really taking a step in a direction that others, constitutional scholars . . .

9:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on the reasoned amendment on Bill 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise this evening to speak to Bill 1, more specifically the amendment before us. Again, just looking at it: that this act "be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill is negatively impacting investment decisions and the Alberta economy and should not proceed in order to protect the economic well-being of Albertans."

Now, we've heard quite a fulsome discussion this evening. Not nearly enough, I don't think, Madam Speaker; I think that we still

have some more conversations to have this evening and into the future. But specifically on this reasoned amendment and why it would be so important to move forward with it and not read this a second time and not have this legislation proceed, I think that there are several arguments for that, and a few that have been made: one, of course, the economic argument and the uncertainty that this legislation is creating in the business environment when it comes to investors being concerned about what the future of relations between the federal and provincial government looks like and what, you know, potentially arbitrary decisions that this provincial government might be trying to make in the future, whether a variety of issues that might come up in the near future. Again, through discussions or press conferences that this government and the Premier and these ministers have come forward with, unfortunately there hasn't been much further clarity since it was introduced.

Again, a number of concerns. The massive amount of power that this government is trying to give itself and this cabinet is trying to give itself: you know, we saw this play out in regard to Bill 10, and there was a massive uproar from a variety of different experts on the left, on the right, academics and constitutional experts. A variety of people came forward and shared their concerns about Bill 10 and the additional powers that that was going to authorize under the Alberta Public Health Act.

Eventually the UCP came back, and the Premier at the time, Jason Kenney – I believe I can use his name now; correct me if I'm wrong, Madam Speaker – came forward after that legislation was in the past and said:

Over the past year it has become clear that this power . . .

The power provided by Bill 10.

. . . is not necessary . . . I've always been uncomfortable with this idea of the executive part of government being able to modify legislation. That's the power that belongs exclusively with the elected representatives of Albertans in the legislative assembly.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, that at the time of Bill 10 and the caucus meetings that happened following that, many members in the government and that continue to be in the government raised concerns about the amount of power that this cabinet was giving themselves.

Now, I'm sure that when we reflect back on Bill 1 and the time that has passed since then and the massive amount of new people who've been added to cabinet, there are probably fewer private members that are concerned about giving the cabinet more power since there are so many of them now. But I sure hope that there are still at least a few private members that are raising concerns about the power that this government is once again trying to give themselves. I hope that, with all the disagreements that I've had with the prior Premier, Jason Kenney, they might feel the clarity there and might vote against this legislation and support this reasoned amendment. We will wait and see, Madam Speaker.

Of course, I'm not sure, based on the amount of, you know, backtracking that a number of leadership contestants at the time, now cabinet ministers, have done – of course, the now Deputy Premier took it one step further and said: I'm sure there are safeguards in place – and this is in reference to the Member for Lethbridge-East, I believe. That Deputy Premier said: I believe safeguards are in place to ensure that this type of power isn't abused.

Now, I might be getting my quote wrong, Madam Speaker, but at that same time the Deputy Premier said that they hadn't actually read the legislation. You know, these are the types of concerns that I have when ministers are speaking on behalf of the Crown and on behalf of the government and saying: "Don't worry about this legislation. It doesn't do what you're saying it's going to do, but I actually haven't read it. Just take my word for it." I mean, that's

very concerning. I think that no matter who you are, what side of the political spectrum you're from, that should be concerning. So it was interesting that that member and the Deputy Premier had a moment of clarity there and decided to share that they had not actually read the legislation a few days, at least, after it had been introduced.

Now, again, other leadership contestants that we've seen: the now Finance minister called this legislation a time bomb; the jobs minister, who was earlier today defending this legislation, called Bill 1 a fairy tale at the time; further, the Municipal Affairs minister, another leadership contestant, called this legislation anarchy. The list goes on and on. Unfortunately, since that leadership contest, as we've seen and heard, all of these members have chosen to not follow through with their convictions and instead have stepped aside to let the Premier draft this legislation and put it forward.

I would refer to an article from Global News from December 5, Madam Speaker, which happens to be today, where the Premier stated: you never get things one hundred per cent right all the time. They might have misquoted, but "You never get things right a hundred per cent of the time" is what the Premier stated to Global News. Unfortunately, when we're talking about the flagship bill of a government, for them to bring it forward and not have it right is incredibly unfortunate, to say the least. It reminds me of another saying in the construction industry – it's been a few years since I was there – measure twice; cut once. Of course, the consequences of cutting a two-by-four too short or too long in the construction industry are not necessarily as consequential as fundamentally altering the ability of cabinet and fundamentally altering democracy in the province.

Again, going back to the idea of uncertainty and the changes that are being proposed in this legislation and the concerns that the business community and investors are bringing forward, I had raised through an intervention, Madam Speaker – well, a member opposite brought forward the idea, through an intervention, regarding section 2 that "nothing in this Act is to be construed as," and they were specifically looking at 2(c) there. But this entire section:

- 2 Nothing in this Act is to be construed as  
 (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the  
 Constitution of Canada.

I mean, this is absolutely ridiculous, Madam Speaker. If we had the ability to just write it into legislation and for it to become true, then why wouldn't we just put this in everything? Just because you say that your act is not against the Constitution or not unconstitutional doesn't make it so.

Further, to create more confusion for investors and, again, businesses that are looking to work within a province or a jurisdiction that is able to follow the rule of law and the rule of the land, on page 7 look under section 8:

- No cause of action lies against and no action or proceeding may be commenced against . . .

Further into (a) there:

- . . . in respect of any act or thing done or omitted to be done under or in relation to this Act or a resolution or order under this Act, including, without limitation, any failure to do something when that person has discretionary authority to do something but does not do it, or . . .

And it goes on. Again, a piece of legislation that's saying, "Nothing in this act is unconstitutional" but further saying, "If somebody acts and it is potentially to be considered unconstitutional, no course of action should be taken against them." [interjection] I think I see an intervention here, which I will take.

Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, hon. member. I appreciate your analysis thus far. Further to what you were just talking about, again, where one part of the bill seems to affirm or try to reassure people that, "Oh, we wouldn't do something like that," then another part of the bill, in fact, enables a cabinet to make arbitrary kinds of decisions without bringing laws or bills or alterations for debate in the Legislature.

9:30

You know, perhaps the best illustration of that duplicity that I've seen in the last 72 hours – this is all unfolding very quickly; it's like watching a car crash in slow motion, right? – is where I heard the Premier say that, oh, you know, we would maybe never even use this legislation, right? Remember that, Madam Speaker, where she said, "Oh, well, we'll probably, hopefully – God forbid we would ever have to use this legislation"? Yet she instructed all of her cabinet ministers to find places to use . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member.  
 Please proceed.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do appreciate that interjection. Indeed, this government seems to be and this Premier seems to be saying one thing and then, you know, sometimes from day to day, hour to hour instructing ministers and her cabinet to do something differently.

Again, just looking at this section and no cause of action, that is concerning in and of itself, asking potentially, as described in the definitions of this legislation and as sort of laid out through the legislation, school boards or municipal governments or anyone affected by the Education Act or the Post-secondary Learning Act to make decisions that are potentially contrary to federal law and then telling them that – well, I mean, the legislation lays out, which in and of itself seems like: well, I'm not sure if it's constitutional itself – they can't be held accountable, nor can the ministers be held accountable for the decisions that they're making that might be in contravention of federal law.

I mean, Madam Speaker, if it wasn't so dangerous and so concerning to the business community in terms of the uncertainty that it raises between the relationship between not only the federal government and, of course, our municipal governments and our school boards, duly elected representatives on several different levels across the province, that might be caught in a constitutional battle because the provincial government is upset about a certain decision or funding agreement that may or may not have been put forward . . . [interjection] I see another intervention, Madam Speaker, so I will take that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, hon. member. I'm curious to know the member's thoughts on: if other provinces across the country decided to introduce a similar act, how would Alberta, which is a landlocked province, get our resources to tidewater? I'm a big proponent of LNG. I think there is significant opportunity for Alberta to export LNG globally. I think there's a huge need, that has been exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and a need for ethically sourced energy. Alberta is bringing in a sovereignty act because Alberta doesn't want to use the mechanisms that are already in place to dispute any kind of federal overreach. I'm curious to hear, Madam Speaker, the member's thoughts on: what would happen to the future of Alberta if every province brought in their own sovereignty act, where they could, effectively, unilaterally halt a project that would be in the best interests of the whole country?

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for that interjection as well. Of course, that would be very concerning, and I think that many members have brought forward that if it was the NDP in government bringing forward this legislation, talking about, you know, giving extreme power to cabinet – and, I mean, I thought there were libertarians. I think the Member for Edmonton-Manning brought this issue or this point forward, but I thought there were libertarians left in the Conservative caucus, but their silence on this issue proves otherwise, or the fact that they, you know, have been promoted to the front bench and now have become silent, so many of them.

But specific to that issue, Madam Speaker, I think it's important, again, further in the legislation, looking at judicial review. I mean, if the province makes a decision and, you know, somebody wants to bring forward a judicial review, which, of course, is their right – again, looking at Bill 1, reducing the normal period of seeking that review from six months to 30 days. So somebody concerned about the constitutionality of something, whether it be a funding agreement that potentially the provincial government has backed out of because they're upset with the federal government or a policy regarding energy or agriculture or emissions, whatever it might be – that somebody concerned about the constitutionality of it is now also, from this government, in Bill 1, having the period to gather all of their legal documents and put forward their legal team going from six months to 30 days. Again, these are changes that do not support the idea of strengthening the rule of law. If anything, they are attacking it, and again and again stakeholders from all sides of the political spectrum have said that this, at the end of the day, is going to hurt economic opportunities within our province.

Madam Speaker, I just do want to take one more moment to, again, recognize that we are on a reasoned amendment, that this legislation “be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill is negatively impacting investment.” I am supporting this motion.

How much time do I have, Madam Speaker, if you don't mind?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just over a minute.

**Mr. Carson:** Just over a minute. Wonderful. Thank you.

You know, there are many issues that are going to arise in the near future. One of them that this Premier has sort of mused over is changes to health care premiums, changes to very small health spending accounts, which would not even cover, in many cases, you know, general practitioner or physician visits, and there are many Albertans concerned about that.

Another large concern when we talk about stability in our province is making sure that we are staying within the legislative framework of things like the Canada Health Act. I think that there are a lot more considerations to be made around how this legislation could affect some potential battle in the future. Of course, Madam Speaker, that's hypothetical, but with this Premier and this legislation we're just left completely unsure. Again, we look at the instability that this legislation has created and the uncertainty that through several press conferences and through discussions in the Legislature . . . [Mr. Carson's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there members wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to start by commenting tonight on what a reasoned amendment is supposed to be. A reasoned amendment is a course of action that the Legislature can take that asks for the Legislature to consider a bill that's under consideration in the House. It's used to try and stop the progress of

a bill because they will argue, they will reason that it's a bill that is outside of the scope, or their arguments are that they must use arguments that say that the bill is – what is the bill about? What is it supposed to be about? They're supposed to deal with the bill – what is it about; what is it trying to do? – and that the reasoned amendment, the reasons that they use must stay within the scope of that bill. They must address exactly what that bill is doing and why they would have reasons for not moving forward with that bill based on what is within the bill. Then they must come forward, and they must be able to show that their reasons are fatal to the bill. In other words, it can't just raise a series of objections that could be dealt with by submitting amendments at the committee stage or in the reporting stage but that their reasons point out that there are so many serious flaws in the bill that it just shouldn't go forward.

It must be more than simply a direct negation of the whole principle of the bill. If the reasoned amendment is agreed to, the bill can't make any more progress. We're really talking about reasons that show that there are serious, serious flaws within the bill. As I've been listening tonight, I just don't hear that coming from the opposition. They're not making the case. Bill 1: the primary purpose of this bill is to enforce the Canadian Constitution's division of powers. That's its primary purpose, to ensure that the federal actions, the federal laws passed by the federal government do not encroach on provincial constitutional rights. It shifts the burden. Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, shifts the burden to the federal government to legally challenge Alberta's refusal to enforce unconstitutional or harmful federal legislation.

9:40

If the federal government is passing unconstitutional legislation, we would then, through a motion in the House, refuse to enforce that unconstitutional law. Now, I've heard a lot of arguments and reasons provided by the opposition tonight and earlier for why we shouldn't proceed with this bill. They talk about it being dictatorial; they talk about it being undemocratic; they talk about it being unconstitutional; they talk about a whole series of reasons that sometimes they give, but I'm not sure that there's any real evidence to support their allegations.

If we take a look at one of the arguments that I heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, it was that the cure is worse than the illness; we're creating massive economic instability with this. Let's be clear. The thing that is creating massive economic instability, as we've seen through Bill C-69, which has scared billions and billions of dollars out of this province, which has created an economic situation where many of the businesses in my constituency that are involved in oil and gas have gone under in the last three or four years because we're locked – our access to tidewater is not there because of Bill C-69, Bill C-48.

We can't seem to get our resources out of this province. That's what's created the massive economic instability, and Bill 1 is our response to those unconstitutional laws. We know that the Alberta courts have ruled that Bill C-69 is indeed unconstitutional. If you were going to move forward with the reasoned amendment and your reason is that it's unconstitutional or that, in this case with this argument, it's creating intense economic pressure on the economy . . . [interjection] No. I'm going to finish my points. Thank you.

. . . well, it's just not there. The original passage of an unconstitutional law which interferes with Alberta's rights to be able to own and harvest our natural resources and to send them to markets so that we can produce wealth and generate wealth in this province: it's that unconstitutional federal law that's creating the economic disturbance within this province.



I've been doing some reading about whether it's unconstitutional. Here are some quotes that I'd like to read. This one comes from Eric Adams at the University of Alberta: no province has ever tested whether the constitutional authority exists for a Legislature to order entities within the province, which would include police forces, cities and towns, provincial public agencies, not to comply with federal laws.

Did you hear what it said? This is a professor at the University of Alberta: no province has ever tested whether the constitutional authority exists for a Legislature to order entities within the province, which would include police forces, cities and towns, provincial public agencies, not to comply with federal laws. Hmm; hasn't been tested yet. I would suggest that Bill 1 is just a very creative way of trying to defend and create a shield for Albertans to be able to use to protect our economy and to protect us from a federal government that has often overreached in the passage of its federal laws.

He continues. Adams suggested that there would be a stronger argument for a province to refuse to enforce unconstitutional federal legislation. There are times when a provincial or a municipal jurisdiction has set priorities and ignored federal or existing laws. For example, in the 1970s Quebec stopped prosecuting Henry Morgentaler for what was at the time performing illegal abortions, and the Vancouver police force has also said at times that it would stop charging for possession of marijuana. Hmm. It would appear that we have a situation where their reasoned amendment is that they should stop the bill because it's unconstitutional, yet here there's a professor from the University of Alberta who is saying: oh, that's not particularly unconstitutional; lots of provinces have chosen to co-operate with the federal government or not co-operate with the federal government and either enforce or not enforce federal legislation.

Here's another one, Geoffrey Sigalet, University of B.C. He's the director of the UBC Centre for Constitutional Law and Legal Studies. In its meat, that is, in the meat of Bill 1, it doesn't empower any provincial officials to disobey judicial decisions. Instead, it enables the province via these motions to set conditions or not to co-operate with the federal government in relation to certain federal law the province deems unconstitutional, Sigalet said, and that's totally constitutional. So if the argument for this reasoned amendment is that we've got a bill here that isn't constitutional, well, here's the director of the UBC Centre for Constitutional Law and Legal Studies who is saying: "Oh, guess what? Hmm. That's totally constitutional."

The province didn't say that they're the final arbiter. They didn't say that the courts had nothing over this. They didn't say you can disobey a judge. It's not saying, "We're not going to listen to you, courts, and we're not going to listen to the federal government," he said. It's saying that the federal government has its jurisdiction and we have ours. That sounds pretty constitutional, so the reasoned amendment, I would suggest, doesn't have a leg to stand on.

Tristan Hopper from the *National Post* from December 5 . . . [interjection] Maybe a little later.

Provinces aren't allowed to break federal law, but they've always been able to pick and choose which parts of it they feel like taking seriously . . .

"The provinces can decide to nullify a new enactment simply by refusing to prosecute cases brought under this law," Alan Young, an associate professor at Osgoode Hall Law School . . .

Then he says again:

After the Trudeau government announced a series of 11th hour amendments that would effectively criminalize most types of semi-automatic rifles . . . Saskatchewan Firearms Act, a bill asserting jurisdiction over firearms enforcement.

Hmm. It seems like there are other provinces out there that are trying to set up shields that would protect them from overreach by the federal government, and it's not deemed unconstitutional.

Madam Speaker, if you're going to go and argue for a reasoned amendment and if that reasoned amendment has to stay within the scope of the bill and it has to show that the reasons for not going forward show that the bill is fatally flawed, in other words that it can't just raise a series of objections that could be dealt with by submitting amendments at the committee stage, then my argument would be that this bill needs to be rejected by this House as a reasoned amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to speak to the reasoned amendment RA1, that was introduced by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. It says to move that the motion for Second Reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill is negatively impacting investment decisions and the Alberta economy and should not proceed in order to protect the economic well-being of Albertans.

9:50

While we got a rather interesting definition of what a reasoned amendment is, I find it baffling that members of the government can stand up and deny that this bill is completely creating chaos within industry, within our economic investors. We've heard from so many across the province and across the nation about the concerns with this piece of legislation. While the leadership review was going on, we had members of this now current cabinet that spoke quite openly about their concerns and the devastation and the impact that this would negatively have on Alberta's economy, yet here we are in the Chamber speaking to Bill 1, and there's been nothing that has created a sense of stability, a sense of confidence that would explain why we should proceed with this piece of legislation.

I'm in full support of this reasoned amendment. I do believe that we should stop this piece of legislation from going forward and send a clear and direct message to future investors that it's not going forward. There's an opportunity to regain some sort of stability in the province. We're hearing loud and clear that we are losing investment opportunities. We're hearing concerns . . . [interjection] Absolutely. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I appreciate your perspective.

What I'm curious about: I just want to bring it back to, of course, the amendment and the scope of the amendment. It's to protect the economic well-being of Albertans and negatively impacting investment decisions and the Alberta economy. I know you've been following the Culture ministry closely over this last number of years. There are a number of areas within the Culture ministry that have a significant contribution to our economy, right? Madam Speaker, we have, for example, the film and television industry, which is a burgeoning industry; it's growing quite quickly. But I know from experience as Culture minister that it can move and it can go to one place and then leave very quickly. If circumstances change in the film and television industry, they can just simply pack up and leave.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you to the hon. member for that contribution. I wholeheartedly agree that there are so many potential projects that are at risk because of this piece of this legislation. There are so many investments that come from film and television from outside of the province that employ directly individuals from the province. We have crews; we have lighting; we have costumes. There are so many things that happen once a big production decides to come to Alberta.

When this piece of legislation is signalling to investors that there's chaos, uncertainty, and it's not stable, it creates a space where investors simply might not want to come here when they can go next door to a province that has no sovereignty act before its Legislature. They're not going to sit around and wait to see what if, what happens. The very fact that this piece of legislation was introduced despite outcry from Albertans, from business leaders, from industries, saying that the mere introduction of the legislation, of the Alberta sovereignty act – it needs to stop. We know that international investors saw the introduction of this bill, Bill 1. It signalled that Alberta has simply a different set of rules than the rest of Canada. There's no amount of tweaking, if you will, that could happen that will change that perception.

Regardless of how you change it or add to it or remove it, like some of the members would like you to believe when asked about their flip of stance from being vehemently opposed to it prior to the leadership review to now being in cabinet and agreeing with it – you know, we heard things like: well, there are things that are different; some of the stuff is different. “Things” and “stuff” is not very reassuring language. But the language that this bill has has already signalled significant concern to investors, and the only way, Madam Speaker, that you're going to instill investor confidence is to kill this bill. It's to support this amendment and let it die.

We can't continue to live in a province with so much chaos and so much instability in so many areas caused by this government, to now pile onto that with the introduction of the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. I'm just baffled by why this government isn't listening to some of the business leaders, the industry leaders, economic leaders telling them that it's going to destroy jobs, chase away investment, and stifle Alberta's economy.

People are struggling in this province with their everyday lives. The cost of groceries has gone up, insurance rates, tuition. People are accessing the food bank at record numbers, Madam Speaker, and the very first piece of legislation that this government introduces completely creates more chaos, more instability to investors when we're trying to draw investment into this province. It's hard to argue that a company should come here and invest here when there's this type of chaos happening. The result is going to be that people are not only not going to come and invest here, but people are going to leave.

We've seen it in health care. We saw what happened when this government interfered with doctors and nurses during a health crisis. It continues, Madam Speaker. We've heard from so many health care professionals across the province telling us that they were leaving. They didn't feel supported; they didn't feel like this government was making decisions that were in the best interests of Albertans. Here we are again with Bill 1, talking about legislation that is scaring investors, that is creating instability. [interjection] Yes. I'll give way to the member.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, hon. member. You know, we're talking about not having this bill be read. I'm just curious if you could maybe talk about some of the important things about why this shouldn't be Bill 1. I know you're connected with the children's Stollery. Maybe from your experience in working with some of the

families there that have had children in emergency and things like that, are those some of the things that maybe you're hearing about happening within Calgary and Edmonton, and maybe that should be the priority right now versus the sovereignty act?

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you very much to the hon. member. She knows first-hand what it's like to work with some of our most vulnerable. We worked together in children's services for almost a decade. When you have direct front-line experience, you know how devastating some of the changes that this government has made are, the impact that it's had.

She made reference to a personal connection to the Stollery. I have a few. My son, my youngest, when he was born, he lived at the Stollery. I lived there with him. He was a very, very sick baby. Through the immediate reaction of our pediatrician at the time we were able to have him admitted, and they were able to find a place for me to be able to stay with him. Now, that was almost 19 years ago. My baby will be 19 on December 12. When I look at the state of what the Stollery was then and the care that we received as a family compared to the heartbreaking stories that are happening not just at the children's Stollery but at the Calgary Children's hospital, I can't imagine what the parents are going through right now, Madam Speaker.

**10:00**

To have this absolute crisis in children's health care is absolutely unacceptable, and for the very first piece of legislation that this government introduces amongst this crisis to be the sovereignty act is so out of touch. It is creating more and more chaos and stress, and I can tell you that those parents that are sitting, perhaps in a trailer, waiting 15, 20 hours for their child to see an emergency doctor are outraged, absolutely outraged, with the complete disregard from this government. We are hearing absolutely devastating stories on this side of the House, and I know that members of government are also hearing these stories.

You can't understand what's going on and support this as Bill 1. It just makes absolutely no sense while there is so much chaos and crisis happening in the province for so many Albertans. Why create Bill 1 as a piece of legislation that contributes so much to that instability and crisis? It needs to stop. It needs to not move forward, and people of this Legislature need to support Bill 1 and vote yes for our amendment. We can't in good conscience know what's happening in the province with our children that are requiring emergency health care and proceed on this piece of legislation. Our opposition made two attempts in this very Chamber to discuss the crisis because we knew it wasn't going to be addressed in their first bill, that this is clearly not a government priority, so we brought forward two attempts to discuss children's medical in this Chamber. Both of them were voted down.

We know that there are kids that are sick all across the province. We know that schools are suffering with lack of attendance because of illness. Teachers are stressed out. They're burned out. They're asking for support. The solution was for staff to be pulled from the Rotary Flames House in an attempt to meet the rising unmet patient needs at the Alberta Children's hospital. For those that don't know what the Rotary Flames House does, they provide children and families with respite care. These are kids that are really, really sick, and instead of talking about alternative solutions to how we can support the absolutely harmful wait times of children in this province, this government chose not to debate it. Didn't see it as a priority, and instead we're debating Bill 1. For a health care system that's been broken by this government and a government that's doing nothing to repair it, we're here talking about a piece of legislation that creates so much chaos for our economy.

It just simply does not make sense, Madam Speaker, why when we've heard from leaders across the province saying that this is absolutely not a piece of legislation that should go forward. It gives way too much power to the UCP. It's going to create too much stress and discomfort and harmful intentions to those that are possibly looking at coming to Alberta to invest. Why would this government continue to want to put this forward and risk that? I just don't understand. They talk about, you know, the NDP standing up and creating chaos. Well, a lot of this isn't our words. If you turn on the national news, people are talking about the chaos in Alberta. Why? Because of the introduction of this legislation. The majority of Albertans do not support this legislation, yet here we are debating a bill that this Premier is insisting go ahead despite not understanding it when it was introduced and saying that we were inaccurate and then changing some of her language to say: oh, no; we didn't intend that. It's too late. The damage is already done. This bill was introduced. Investors are worried.

That is not the type of Alberta that we want to draw attraction to. We want people to look to our province and be able to see a stable government. We want them to be able to see that legislation that's going forward is truly in the best interest of Albertans. This government is so out of touch when it comes to what is truly important to Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the reasoned amendment on Bill 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in regard to this reasoned amendment, which says, in essence, that the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act not be read a second time because of the negative impacts on investment decisions and the Alberta economy, not proceed in order to protect the Alberta economic well-being. As I listened with interest to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon talking about the Constitution, I mean, I think that there are constitutional problems with this Alberta sovereignty act, but this particular reasoned amendment is talking about economic impacts specifically.

I've asked a number of speakers during this evening about their own ministerial or critic areas that they are responsible for, to speculate on how this Alberta sovereignty act might have a negative impact on that particular part of the Alberta economy. The area that I know something about, Madam Speaker, is in regard to postsecondary education. Our 26 colleges, universities, polytechnics spread around the province are an incredible asset that will help us to build the economy for now and for the future, to help to build citizens and to build a quality of life for now and the future here in the province of Alberta. Those postsecondaries are almost entirely a joint venture between the provincial government and the federal government. The federal government makes quite a lot of investments and a lot of decisions around postsecondaries here in the province and right across the country as well. Indeed, the investment is essential for particularly research in our postsecondaries here in the province of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, that research work, as diverse as it might be and, you know, through various academic pursuits and scientific and technological pursuits, has real, dramatic, and demonstrable, I should say, effects on our economy here in the province of Alberta. Any time you are compromising that by somehow suggesting that you will put a bill or a law in between the normal course of choices that postsecondaries and academics will make in regard to research and development in a particular institution or somehow directing or redirecting through law the partnerships that exist between provincial

and federal government in postsecondary institutions: that's a real impact on potentially the economy of our province. This is a long-standing way by which our colleges, universities, and polytechnics have been founded over many decades, right? Really, since the beginning of Confederation. To somehow interfere with that process with a false sense of a sovereignty act, I think, is a real problem. [interjection] I will certainly give way to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

10:10

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for allowing me to provide a little bit of an intervention. Of course, when I got up to speak on this reasoned amendment, I was giving the House a bit of a warning. I think that this is another example of a very important warning in terms of the implications that this particular bill not only will have on the immediate economy, but now we're seeing that, well, it could potentially impact our postsecondary institutions. When you're talking about postsecondary institutions and impacts of legislation that they'll have, these impacts are going to go on from generation to generation, down the road. I'm hoping that, Member, you wouldn't mind speaking to what could potentially be some of those implications that perhaps members on the other side of the House aren't really thinking about at this moment when it comes to actually introducing this sovereignty act.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thanks, hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Indeed, you know, it doesn't have to be a generational change. In fact, things can move quite quickly, right? When people make choices around investment – really, grants and choices that are made around postsecondary: it's an investment, too, sometimes tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars. Look at the nanotechnology that the federal government has put into the University of Alberta here, for example. I mean, that has tangible, long-term consequences in a positive way, but by compromising the integrity of the relationship between the federal government and the provincial government, it can have a pretty fast effect on students choosing to study here in the province of Alberta if they feel like there's some element of instability. I see students all of the time in my life, my own professional life, my own personal life. They're pretty mobile, right? They can move from one place to another or choose an acceptance to a department or study for a postsecondary degree all over the world at this point in time. You know, we respect that choice, but we want them to have a top-quality, world-class choice right here in the province of Alberta if they want to do that.

While perhaps it takes generations or a long time to build up the reputation of a postsecondary institution, you could lose that in a matter of months, even, if something like the sovereignty act, you know, rears its ugly head and you find that people are having to second-guess about Alberta and Alberta's commitment to the provincial-federal relationship that has helped to build what a wonderful place that we have to live here today and wonderful postsecondary institutions that we have to study in here today as well. Those are the kinds of things you've got to think about. It's not just what the individual content of this particular sovereignty act is but the very idea of having a bill around sovereignty, as well, that really has an actual effect.

As I said briefly in comments, interventions here earlier this evening, I know that there are substantive differences between sovereignty legislation that was enacted in the province of Quebec from 1976 onwards to even, from time to time, this present day under different circumstances than Alberta. But just the idea of sovereignty legislation, period, is enough for people to vote with their feet. Once one thing moves, then other things start to move,

too, right? Let's say – again, this is an example from Quebec – Sun Life decided to close their headquarters in the city of Montreal 40-some years ago. People took that as a signal, and then suddenly you saw other institutions, financial institutions and railways, and then people started to move on real estate as well because they thought, you know – it's like one thing moves and then everything starts to move, like what I said before, like when a glacier melts.

You know, we have an opportunity to nip it in the bud here, but we also have to recognize the gravity of the situation when you bring up the concept of a sovereignty act, whether people see it for what is in it substantively or they see a trend or a movement and a direction. And I can say, in my judgment and in the judgment of investors and of researchers in postsecondary institutions, in real estate investment, in technology investment, in the oil and gas industry, I think it's demonstrably and almost universally viewed as a negative choice, right?

Let's nip it in the bud now. I think it's not such a bad thing to do – right? – to recognize when you need to change direction. I know it's awkward because, of course, this was the flagship bill of a new Premier and government and so forth, but, you know, when you look at not just the nuts and the bolts but the overall concept and direction, I think there are lots of better ways in which we can move at this juncture in the history of our province.

We have unprecedented inflation, right? This is a 40-year high for a lack of affordability that reaches right through each sector of our society. You know, I mean, we are MLAs. We make good money, but you can see the difference, I'm sure, in the last few months, that everything is much more expensive. Just imagine someone who is earning a third or a quarter or a fifth of the salary that you might have, and just imagine how difficult that is. Imagine having a young child in grade school right now with, really, an unprecedented flu season just getting started and already literally flooding our hospitals and our emergency rooms and our capacity to deal with severe flu symptoms, right? Again, just two examples of something that's literally happening by the minute, in real time, all around us.

We need to deal with using this legislative power and the power of the government of Alberta to mitigate the affordability crisis in this province, to look for ways to build capacity in our public health system in order to reassure public confidence in this government to be able to deal with issues like that. Does it instill confidence in a government when you are faced with two obvious crises right in front of your eyes and then you choose to have this as your first bill? I think not. [interjection] I would gladly give way to the member.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you for the opportunity to intervene. I'm very interested in your perspective on, you know, what is important versus what is not important in terms of the government's time. I know that you are one of the longest serving MLAs in this House at the present time, and you certainly would have some perspective on what happens when a government totally ignores the important issues of the day and focuses on things that are important to them and how that affects the belief of the people of Alberta that their government serves them well. What's the long-term consequence of having a government that doesn't listen to its own people, and how does that cast all of us who serve in this Legislature in a negative light? I'd certainly love to hear your thoughts about sort of the implications of acting in this way, where you ignore serious issues for nonserious ones.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Yeah, I mean, it might seem contradictory, then, why we would be

dwelling on Bill 1 when, of course, we're bringing up these issues that are – you know, it's like a house on fire, right? Why would you be dwelling on Bill 1? Let's just move past it. But you have to deal with what's before you, and hopefully we can recalibrate what is most important here this evening, to move back to what Albertans are really concerned about.

Certainly, I know that everyone is outreaching to their constituents and to Albertans around the province. I've certainly been doing that as well in the last few months, and, you know, it's self-evident what the concerns are for people in regard to health care, in regard to affordability, which extends to education and so forth. When you see something that might interfere with the timely action on those important issues, like debating the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act – right? – at this moment, then you have to deal with that, too, so that you can move past and find what's really most important and what gives best value back to Albertans and Alberta society as well.

You know, I appreciate this amendment. I think that talking about the economic impacts is self-evident, and I've seen lots of people say, with a very quick analysis but a very decisive analysis, that, yeah, it can literally shake markets when you start talking about sovereignty, right?

**10:20**

It doesn't matter if you say: oh, well, it's sovereignty within a happy, stable Canadian environment, and everything is going to be okay. You'll say: well, why are they making excuses so fast, right in the title of the bill? Obviously, something seems fishy. When you have investments, it's not just investment capital but also, as I said, investment in research and technology and human investment – right? – people making choices about whether they would, let's say, move to a research facility and contribute to medical technology or whatever it is they're doing. Then should they move to Alberta, or should they move that to another place that might provide more stability and long-term certainty around being able to work together with provincial funding and federal funding as well? I mean, all of those things work together, right?

We live in a very sophisticated society that we should all be proud of, and we should invest in those strengths every step of the way, right? The fundamental strength, Madam Speaker, is when we work together in the broadest possible way. We work within Confederation. Of course, you know, there are things, issues that the federal government does that we have to push back against, right? I'm no fan of the Liberals, Lord knows, and I certainly have my concerns about federal intrusion, but there are ways by which you can deal with those without bringing up sovereignty, either as a concept or quite specifically, and using it especially as a threat. I mean, that's an antagonistic approach that bears no productive fruit.

Honestly, what we need to do at this juncture in our history is to start to deal with making life more affordable for Albertans, making public health care there when you need it for yourself and your family, to provide the safety and the security that those two things allow: affordability and a safe place with good health care to raise a family, to put down roots, and long-term stability to know that there's a stable government here to deliver for all of those things and other issues as they come forward.

As the Alberta New Democrats that is what we seek to do: to provide stability, to provide a stable government. This Alberta sovereignty act simply does not fit into that model, and thus we would suggest for all Albertans and for this House to vote for this amendment, which would refer this bill to not be read at this time.

Thanks a lot.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on amendment RA1 on Bill 1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be speaking in favour of this amendment, that essentially is asking that this bill not be read a second time because this bill will “negatively [impact] investment decisions and the Alberta economy and should not proceed . . . to protect the economic well-being of Albertans.”

There are a few things that I will touch on. First and foremost, the majority of Albertans do not support this piece of legislation. It’s not a priority for them because there are many other issues that are front and centre for them. First, the cost of living across this province has gone up because of inflation and the UCP policies. Albertans want them to address that.

The second thing is that Alberta’s health care is in crisis, and in Calgary the government’s solution is to put trailers outside children’s hospitals to provide care. That’s where our health system stands right now. This government is pushing ahead with this piece of legislation that will not help us with the cost of living crisis, that will not fix a thing in our health system, and that will result in economic uncertainty and job loss across this province. This bill is giving the Premier and cabinet unprecedented powers to modify the application of laws, to suspend the application of provincial laws as they see fit, and not just that; to rewrite those laws behind closed doors, that power to amend by regulation a statute passed by the Legislature, commonly referred to as the Henry VIII clause. When we pointed that out, the government’s key message was that we were fearmongering, that we didn’t read the bill. It turned out that when they read the bill, they found that clause there, and now they’re trying to work around that. We haven’t seen anything yet, but that’s what they are saying.

The second thing is that when we talk about the uncertainty it creates, we are telling this government that the business community has concerns about this piece of legislation. They are reaching out to us. They are speaking out publicly as well; for instance, the Calgary Chamber of commerce. The Calgary Chamber of commerce CEO said:

There is no shred of evidence that this act will lead to economic growth. You can’t tell me this is going to support economic growth and support continued economic diversification in this province.

She is a hundred per cent right about it because, as the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned earlier, this bill is designed to stoke anger, and it does nothing to help Albertans.

[Mr. Orr in the chair]

That’s why a majority of Albertans don’t believe that this bill will do anything to resolve the grievances they have against Ottawa.

The third thing. Not just the Calgary Chamber of commerce, but we also have heard concerns from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, for the energy industry is very critical to creating jobs, creating wealth, creating prosperity. The windfall surplus that we enjoyed this year: that’s because of our energy sectors. And leaders, stakeholders in that sector are warning this government that this job-killing sovereignty act will not help their industry. It’s scaring investment away. It’s scaring investors away. But, again, the government still refuses to listen.

**10:30**

Three treaty chiefs – 6, 7, and 8 – spoke out against this bill, and the best the government could do to address their concern is to point to a clause in this piece of legislation as if those chiefs didn’t read that clause. And if the government thinks that that clause is enough

to address their concerns, then I would suggest that their joint presser they did, the concern that it raised, clearly shows how Indigenous communities don’t trust this government. They fundamentally lack any trust, any faith in this government. Instead of engaging with them respectfully, meaningfully, they’re trying to read them the provision of the law like that will fix everything for them. That is very disrespectful.

A lot has been talked about the constitutionality of this piece of legislation, and many have written who are not even constitutional scholars. Many constitutional scholars have written as well. I also have a group of friends who are lawyers; they had a lively debate about it as well. But I think one thing is clear, that section 96 of the Constitution gives the federal government authority to appoint judges, superior court judges. The same section was interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada that this section also gives jurisdiction to those superior courts to decide constitutional issues, and that’s in the Constitution of Canada.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Here we have a piece of legislation that gives this Legislature authority to make opinions about the constitutionality of Parliament’s legislation. I think that section 96 would dictate that neither Parliament nor any Legislature can pronounce and decide on the constitutionality of any enactment. That role has been reserved for the courts, not for the Legislature. That’s in the Constitution, section 96, and I urge members to look up its interpretation by the Supreme Court of Canada.

So people are questioning the government’s intention of bringing forward this bill, and the reason for that is that it doesn’t do anything to help address, for instance, issues that we have with any federal piece of legislation. When we were in government, Bill C-69 – we made submissions. We tried to make a case, and when in 2019 the UCP became the government, they adopted and endorsed our submissions. That’s one way of doing things.

When we were in government, we started working on TMX. At that time 3 in 10 Canadians were in favour of that. The then Premier, now the Leader of the Official Opposition, went all across Canada to make a case about that pipeline, about our energy sector. At the end of that tour, 7 in 10 Canadians were in favour of that project. When B.C. and some other groups tried to throw roadblocks, we were able to push the federal government to buy that pipeline, and now we are a few months away from that project to be completed. That will be the first pipeline to tidewater in 40 years. Conservatives were in this province for 44 years. They had the federal government for 10 years. They were not able to build a single pipeline to tidewater. The lack of energy infrastructure that is creating issues for us is the direct result of successive Conservative government failures. They failed to stand up for the sector, and now they’re coming up with this unconstitutional and completely absurd piece of legislation that will not do anything to help us.

Madam Speaker, there is another pretty interesting thing about this bill. This bill gives 30 days for anyone to challenge government decisions in court. That’s usually six months, but they decreased it to 30 days. When courts review government decisions, the default standard is reasonableness. If there is an error of law, they will review decisions based on correctness standards. But what this government did was they inserted a standard of how they want to be reviewed by the courts, and that’s patent unreasonableness.

Albertans expect their government to make decisions that are rational, that are reasonable, that are well thought out, and we’ve got a government that sets standards for themselves of patent unreasonableness.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to amendment RA1 on Bill 1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment RA1 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Sabir
Carson	Goehring	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Loyola	Sweet

Against the motion:

Amery	Jones	Shandro
Copping	LaGrange	Smith, Mark
Dreeshen	Luan	Toews
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Glubish	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Hanson	Orr	Wilson
Horner	Pon	Yaseen
Issik	Savage	

Totals: For – 9 Against – 26

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 1, in second reading. Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight to speak to the main bill, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. I'm disappointed that it was not supported, our motion. I thought that it was quite good in the fact that it represented what Albertans are asking for, that this bill die. I'm hopeful that as we move through debate tonight, the government will do the right thing and perhaps support us in another amendment.

We've already been able to articulate many reasons why this bill is not what Alberta needs. We talked about the importance of having a stable and reliable government, and unfortunately this bill has signalled to so many international investors that Alberta is not a stable place to bring investment, and that's quite concerning. We've heard from the three treaty chiefs that this bill cannot proceed, yet this government is not listening to so many that are coming forward, talking about the concerns that this bill brings simply in its title, never mind the overreach and the gross powers that this government has put into this bill, many things that are alarming to Albertans, to investors, to international investors, to business communities. There is an endless list of people who have come out and spoken against this bill proceeding, and the opposition is listening. We attempted to put forward a reasoned amendment that, unfortunately, was just defeated, Madam Speaker.

I would like to move an amendment, and I have it here with the copies and the original. I will wait until you have it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment RA2.

Hon. member, please proceed to read it into the record.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks this bill presents to federal funding for their projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives.

Madam Speaker, it may come as a surprise to members of the UCP caucus and perhaps even members of the cabinet, but consultation didn't happen prior to the introduction of this bill. We shouldn't be surprised that, based on reports, even after introduction many of the members of cabinet hadn't read the bill. Clearly, there wasn't adequate consultation with the members of the government caucus, so it should come as no surprise that municipal leaders and nonprofit organizations were not consulted with. However, municipal and nonprofit leaders have been loud and clear that they have grave, grave concerns.

**11:00**

Now, I encourage members of this Assembly to look into who is listed as a provincial entity under 1(e): a municipal authority, "an entity that receives a grant or other public funds from the Government that are contingent on the provision of a public service." For each member across the aisle, how many of you have an entity in your riding that fits this? Did you talk to them before standing in full support of this bill?

Let me provide you another quote, Madam Speaker: "issue directives to a provincial entity and its members, officers and agents . . . in respect of [a] federal initiative." When these entities are reading this, they are obviously concerned. There is no clarity on the intention of these directives, and no one has received assurances that the UCP government will not put federal funding at risk; federal funding for affordable housing, federal funding to support newcomers, federal funding to pay their early childhood educators, to build playgrounds, ice arenas, music venues, all a part of every community. When these organizations highlight concerns with the sovereignty act, the Premier tells them that they need to do more internal consulting. It's pretty rich.

With this amendment the members of the UCP have an opportunity to do better, to represent the constituents in their ridings, to prove to Albertans that they are listening. We had members of this cabinet, prior to becoming cabinet members, speak out against this bill. They talked about how concerned they were. They were all together in coming up with comments that said that this bill absolutely will not improve the economy of Alberta. It's nothing more than virtue signalling, a fiscal fairy tale that doesn't make any sense and won't work. Those comments came from a minister that sits in this Chamber, who now has changed their tune, who is now singing the praises of this piece of legislation. So I'm just very concerned that they're not listening to their constituents, that they're not listening to Albertans.

There are some significant concerns with proceeding with this bill. Again, the opposition is speaking on behalf of Albertans and speaking on behalf of business investors, speaking on behalf of national investors and asking the government to not proceed with this piece of legislation. We're asking that it not be read. There's nothing that is happening within this piece of legislation right now that is signalling that it should be something that goes forward.

[The Speaker in the chair]

There are so many nonprofits across this province that should have voice. These are individuals that are relying on grants. They're relying on support from their government. They're relying on stability. The nonprofits in Alberta, I would argue, have been here prior to even the making of the province. These are people that volunteer their time, that work with people in every capacity across every constituency in this province. They work in the sports community. They work in arts. They work in religion. They work in food safety. They work in food security. They are working with the most vulnerable populations and doing the very best that they can to support Albertans right now, and having the information that they have not been consulted is very, very concerning. Our municipal leaders, elected officials across this province, have not been consulted with. I would argue that they have a lot at stake when it comes to the passing of this legislation. How can we, in good faith, move forward with a piece of legislation that has not been consulted on?

We've seen over the past few days the government argue that we were wrong about the interpretation of this bill. We heard ministers come forward, after they said that this bill would destroy the economy, change their tune, but couldn't articulate why and what was better. We heard a Premier say that we were wrong and then backpedal and say: well, we're going to change some things.

We've heard loud and clear from Albertans, from industry that the very introduction of this bill is dangerous. It does not benefit the economy. So there's absolutely nothing that could be introduced that would fix it. The damage is done. The only way, Mr. Speaker, that this government can show that they've been listening to Albertans is to stop this piece of legislation, to support the amendment that I've just introduced and not let this piece of legislation proceed. It should not be read a second time when we know that consultation didn't even happen with their own cabinet. That's concerning. We have a Premier that's putting forward legislation that she clearly didn't completely understand, members of her caucus didn't understand, and for some reason members of her cabinet were opposed to but now suddenly agree with. I think the fact that our municipal leaders and our nonprofit sector have not been consulted with is deeply, deeply concerning.

This gives the government an opportunity to stop the chaos, to stop. We need to be able to look to international investors and to small businesses and say: "We heard you. We value the insight that you bring to this table, the expertise that you bring to this table. We've heard you loud and clear, and we are not going to proceed with the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act." That is the only solution in this mess that was created by this government. It should not be read a second time. I would plead with members of government to vote in support of this reasoned amendment and show Albertans that they're listening, that they want to see success in Alberta, that they want to see an economy thrive. At this point, Mr. Speaker, it's the only way to do that and to signal to international investors and to anybody considering coming to Alberta that they heard them.

This is something that's deeply concerning, that this is the very first piece of legislation that's coming forward from this government when there's so much chaos already happening in the province, and to add to that chaos simply doesn't make sense. The only way to stop is to not proceed with reading this bill a second time. The very first piece of legislation from this government should address what Albertans need support with: health care, housing, affordability. All of that is what Albertans are talking about, not asking a government to create more chaos and to disrupt potential investors from coming here.

11:10

There are so many projects that are in the process right now of coming to Alberta. I would be curious to know how many are paused because of this act. How many investors are looking at what's happening in the province and not even remotely considering coming to Alberta? How many investors are being scared away because of the simple introduction of this piece of legislation? And that damage can't be undone if we proceed with this piece of legislation. No matter how they want to reframe it or introduce amendments, it's not possible. The mere introduction of this legislation is the damage.

When investors look to where they want to put their hard-earned money and their families, that are going to come to support their business here, when they see a government that is in chaos and is putting forward legislation that gives such sweeping powers to them and disregarding the economic impact, why would they invest in Alberta? Why would they come here? There are so many other options for them. And it's simple. All this government has to do is not have this bill read a second time. Support what Albertans are asking for, support what investors are asking for and not proceed with this bill.

It just boggles my mind that we have so many people that want to be part of the economic conversation and so many that are coming forward saying, "Please, we have ideas; we have solutions," and this wasn't one of them. Creating chaos and instability cannot be the right answer. I would please request that everyone in this Chamber support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** On amendment RA2, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I smile because I heard from the other side that someone would love to call the question. I could talk about this bill all night. And, in fact, when it moves to committee, I will, and I hope the minister will be in the Chamber because I will talk your ear off, through the Speaker, of course. That's a trait that I have passed on to my daughter, where she's also quite chatty.

Regardless, I'm standing here to support this reasoned amendment, and I may go through, Mr. Speaker, and outline my reasons for it. As I said to my good friend the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, I was itching to get up and intervene on his speech, and I appreciate his comments and I appreciate his concerns. What I'm going to do is try to address some of those and others and the reason that I'm supporting this reasoned amendment and why I don't support this bill. Quite frankly, it comes down to investor confidence. All of the arguments I'm going to lay out in the next 13 and a half minutes have to do with investor confidence.

It's not about the constitutionality of this bill, and I appreciate the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon outlining some of his rebuttals behind that argument. I appreciate that, and I mean that sincerely. I think too often in this Chamber as of late we've gotten away from debating policy and giving arguments as to why we accept or refute the other side's opinion and points, and we've gotten into a name-calling, hyperpartisan discussion, and quite frankly I don't think Albertans have the appetite for it. I think they're tired of it. I think rightly so. I didn't get into this job to call people names. It's about building.

So the reason that I support this amendment to stop this bill is not about the constitutionality of it. I appreciate – this is how lawyers make their bread and butter, and no offence to the lawyers

in the room, but they can debate this until the cows come home and interpret law. For me, the challenge with this bill – and regardless, Mr. Speaker, if the government and the Premier bring in amendments to fix some of the more challenging sections of the bill, that’s not the issue I have with it. The issue I have with it is that the province of Alberta putting forward a sovereignty act to be able to have two different sets of rules to play by is going to be a deterrent to investors coming to Alberta.

When they look at Canada and they look at the different provinces, investors want certainty. They want stability. They want predictability. When you have one order of government bringing forward a bill that challenges the authority of another order of government in name, that’s a red flag. I don’t expect our international investors to go through the bill and read it and understand the nuances and translate it. They’re going to see – and, rightly or wrongly, the media has covered this bill enough that international investors understand that Alberta has brought forward a bill to challenge a federal government. The challenge with that is that that will be a deterrent.

Now, we all know that provinces have the ability to challenge the federal government through the courts. We’ve always had. We need that. We absolutely need that. We need to be able to hold the federal government to account. We need to be able to ensure that they don’t overreach. There have been times and many times in Alberta’s history where we’ve challenged the federal government and we’ve been successful, as we should. We need to protect Alberta’s interests. We need to stand up for the province. All of us in this Chamber agree with that. The question here is: what is the best mechanism to do that?

My concern, even when, you know, the Premier has said that there will be amendments coming forward – and I’ll talk about the cabinet process. Having been a cabinet minister, I have serious concerns with where we’re at governmentwise. But the point is that even if the government neuters this bill and takes out any kind of teeth, which is what’s one of the concerns of international investors, you still have a sovereignty act that is questioning and putting questions into the minds of investors of the two different orders of government having two different sets of rules. Every international investor I’ve talked to wants simplicity, they want predictability, and they want stability. When you say to an international investor, “We’re going to have two different sets of rules; one is going to be for this province with the federal government, but much of the rest of the country” – and I’m going to carve out a caveat right now on Quebec; I will talk about Quebec. That will deter investors from selecting Alberta. It will. Investors want to know that there’s stability.

Let me give you an example, okay? There are lots of energy companies that, when Donald Trump came into power, talked about how he was going to reverse all of the climate policies and allow coal to continue under his government in perpetuity. Do you think the companies opened a whole bunch of coal mines and continued down that path? No. You know why? Because they recognize that that kind of investment is a 50-year investment, and Donald Trump will be long gone. It’s not even about Donald Trump; I’m not attacking him. Any politician will be long gone over a 50-year span. These companies are looking at: what is the long-term investment? [interjections] My point is – when I’m on a roll, just let me roll. I appreciate the chirps that are going on over there.

11:20

Listen, folks, 15 minutes is not enough time. My daughter would tell you that 15 minutes is not enough time. The point is that the predictability and stability investors are looking for go far beyond an individual political party or a four-year mandate. In fact, that’s

probably the biggest concern that they have. So, for me, even if this bill is, you know, amended or potentially improved, the risk still exists that you have a piece of legislation called the Alberta sovereignty act. I can tell you and I know that very few people that I’m looking at in this Chamber have spoken to international investors in the whites of their eyes in their home country. I mean, largely in part this is not an attack on the government. COVID has inhibited them from travelling internationally. Investors will tell you that they’re not about to read the legislation. They’re about to see that the current provincial government is trying to establish a separate set of rules from the Canadian government, and that’s problematic.

Now, I’m not saying the spirit behind this bill, to give Alberta additional tools to stand up to a federal government – and, quite frankly, I would argue that it doesn’t matter if it’s Liberal or Conservative. I can tell you that there are Conservative governments in Canada who have acted against the province of Alberta. I’ll give the minister, who loves to chirp when I speak, a great example. Which government initiated the regulations to phase out coal in this country? It was Jason Kenney and Stephen Harper. If you shake your head, go and look at the federal *Hansard*. They initiated that six out of 18 coal-fired plants were to be phased out . . .

### Speaker’s Ruling Relevance

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt my good friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. However, we are on amendment RA2, which very specifically speaks to: “the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks of this bill.” It goes on. It says very little about any of the topics which he has discussed up to this point. I provided a pretty wide latitude. However, the hon. the learned member, who’s been in this House for, oh, more than a decade, will know that at no point in time during his tenure has a caucus moved two reasoned amendments to a piece of legislation. While it is within the right of the members to do so, I think it’s reasonable to expect that the relevancy of their remarks will be specific to the amendment.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My point in this is that governments have a significant influence over the investments that come to a province.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Bilous:** I see that I have a colleague of mine who is interested in intervention. I’ll give way.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Member. I appreciate the opportunity to ask you a little bit. I noticed that you were talking earlier about the fact that Quebec has over the years made a number of moves in this particular direction, but one of the things that we’ve learned in the evaluation of Quebec is that they really haven’t recovered properly from their sovereignty attempts in this country. As a result, they are quite a bit further behind economically than they would have been otherwise. I’m wondering if you might have some further comments about the ultimate consequence of taking this kind of a sovereignty approach.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, colleague. Mr. Speaker, do you, sir, know roughly how much time I have left in this . . .

**The Speaker:** Four minutes and 37 seconds, approximately.



**Mr. Bilous:** Four minutes, 37. Okay. I can't wait until this bill goes into Committee of the Whole, in which case, bring your pyjamas.

I want to thank the member for referencing Quebec because here is a very important example of what happened. The members talk about Quebec and how Quebec has stood up for their sovereignty. Are the members aware – the Minister of Finance is looking at me, and I appreciate that he will know this – that Montreal and Quebec used to be the headquarters of all of the major financial institutions of Canada? All of them were in Quebec until they brought in a bill like this, and all of the headquarters moved out of Quebec and into Toronto. How many have moved back? None. How many are going to move back? None. They're going to stay in Toronto. [interjection] I'll give way in a moment, Member. The concern is that a bill like this could have long-term, long-reaching effects, where we know that Alberta and Calgary is the home, is the number two city, for headquarters for our financial sector. A bill like this could chase them out of Alberta.

I'll give way.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Member, for giving way. Your premise of the speech is that if there is one set of rules for the province and another for the federal government, it will cause confusion, and investment will flee. I don't accept that premise. I think that's factually wrong. But if we give that to you and we say that this bill is not amendable and we say that it's not about the constitutionality – and this isn't a partisan question; it's purely pragmatic about investment. I think that as evidence I will posit the historical record of the NDP government in 2015. I remember in Peace River you guys brought forward your first budget, and the day after Shell pulled out of the Carmon Creek investment, a \$12 billion megaproject gone. No more investment came in afterwards.

So whatever hypothetical you think is true here, how do you justify, if it's purely practical and it has nothing to do with partisan politics, not coming to this side of the Chamber and disavowing your role in the last government for the factual flee of capital out of this province, so much more devastating than any hypothetical that you could dream up that may or may not happen from this? It's practical, hon. member. Please answer.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, well, first of all, the member is factually incorrect. Second of all, as I've said, I've spoken with a number of executives from some of the largest oil and gas companies in Alberta and Canada who have said that the Alberta NDP did more for the oil and gas sector than the current UCP government has in the last three and a half years. [interjections] No, laugh it up, because you've drunk the Kool-Aid.

Look at the royalty review. Can any member in this Chamber tell me what the royalty structure was before 2015? I bet you you'd have to struggle to get it, and I'm even looking at former ministers. We modernized through the royalty review, where we incentivized oil and gas companies to continue through the life of the well when productivity declined. Previous to our royalty modernization most companies sealed off wells because they paid the same royalty level when the well was producing 100 per cent as when it was producing as it tailed off, so they capped it. We modernized it. We listened to the oil and gas sector. Let me tell you: there were lots of New Democrat members who were quite frustrated with us because they thought we were giving too many breaks to the energy sector. What we did was that we charted a course that was fair to our oil and gas producers but also ensured that they would continue through the life of the well, which was also a boon for Alberta taxpayers.

I can tell you that this bill in its current state, regardless of what's written in it, has chilled investment. I appreciate that the Member

for Peace River respectfully disagrees, but this is where I will say to the Member for Peace River: are you talking to the international investment community the way that we are? I'm not trying to pull a card. I'm saying that as the former minister of economic development and trade I'm speaking to international investors that I spoke to when we were a government, and they are scared. The sovereignty act has just placed question marks into the viability of investing in Alberta, and even that questioning of, "Is Alberta a predictable place to invest in?" has chilled investment.

Therefore, our government – I won't give way this time, Member. This is why we brought forward a second reasoned amendment, because no matter what amendments the government brings, the chill on investment will not end until this bill is repealed.

**11:30**

I'm all for having a conversation on: what other tools can we come up with to ensure that Alberta and Albertans are a priority? I don't disagree that there have been times where Ottawa has overreached and we need to stand up for Alberta, but the bill, this tool or mechanism, is not the way to stand up for Alberta. My fear is that, like Quebec, it's going to have long-term consequences on Alberta. All of the financial headquarters of Canada moved out of Montreal. Quebec has been reeling from the impacts of their bill for 40 years.

I love this province. I'm an Albertan. I'm born and raised here. I do not want our province to suffer for decades because of a bill that maybe was good intentioned but is not going to deliver the outcomes that the current government thinks it's going to. The unintended consequences far outweigh the benefits that this government may think this bill is going to deliver for Alberta.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I'm supporting this reasoned amendment and cannot support this bill moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on amendment RA2 I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is on his feet, which I will call momentarily, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, but I do want to reiterate, members of the Assembly, that it is not the convention of the Assembly to continue to propose reasoned amendments and then speak to the main bill. So it will be a requirement of members that if they want to propose multiple reasoned amendments, they speak specifically to the amendment, not broadly speaking, as we just saw from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, about the main motion. There will be plenty of time for that in the future.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon should he choose to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't take long, but I would like to speak to the reasoned amendment here. As you rightly have pointed out, the reasoned amendment here is dealing with the potential risks this bill presents to federal funding for projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives. I believe that in this reasoned amendment the argument that they're making is that this bill is going to impact our relationship with the federal government and that it's going to affect things like critical infrastructure and housing, and therefore we should vote in favour of this reasoned amendment to stop the bill from going forward.

Yeah. I believe that the previous member – I appreciated the comments that he had to say. It's true that when governments make decisions, there are potential consequences to those decisions and to the legislation that they pass. I can remember when I got elected the first time in 2015. This young social studies teacher, or younger social studies teacher, went from being in his classroom on the day the election was called in 2015 to a month later being in his

constituency office. Within the first two, three months I think I had five oil and gas company CEOs coming into my office, and I'm going: why are these important people coming to see a little MLA like me? Every one of them had the same message, that the decisions that governments make do have consequences.

Every business in the oil and gas industry, at least the five that came through my constituency office, said: you know, every time we make a decision about how we spend money, we do a risk analysis. Then they went on to proceed to talk about royalty reviews and carbon taxes and increasing corporate tax rates and all of the things that the Alberta government under the New Democratic Party was starting to do. Their message was very simple to me: we can spend our money anywhere in the world, and we're choosing not to spend it in Alberta. So I agree with the member that was speaking just before me here when he says that predictability and stability are important things to have and that the decisions of government can make a huge impact.

Obviously, in this amendment they're worried about federal funding for projects, including critical infrastructure and housing. Yet I would draw to their attention that Bill 1, we've said very clearly, is about creating a shield, that this is about protecting Alberta, that we have had a history over many, many, many years of the federal government passing legislation that has overreach to the point where it's affecting Alberta in very significant ways, passing legislation that even the Alberta courts have ruled is unconstitutional. This is not a sword. Bill 1 is not a sword; it's a shield. It's about protecting Albertans from the overreach of a federal government that has refused to recognize that it has certain constitutional lanes that it has to stay in, and then when it doesn't – you're right – it does affect the predictability and the stability.

So we've had to come in, and, yeah, we had to be a little creative, but we brought before the people in this Legislature Bill 1, that will allow us to create a shield that will protect the citizens and the economy of Alberta from the unpredictability that comes when a federal government begins to overstep its constitutional boundaries as it passes legislation. This bill is allowing us to be able to say: if you are going to do that, if you are going to pass legislation that's going to threaten the economy of Alberta, that's going to create instability, that's not going to allow for businesses to have predictability, then we as the Legislature of Alberta will use this act to protect us and to protect the citizens and the businesses and the constitutional rights of Albertans.

**Member Loyola:** How?

**Mr. Smith:** Through debate and motions in this Legislature. We will bring forward motions that will deal with the individual indiscretions of the federal government as they pass legislation that is outside of their constitutional boundaries.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the member, but what is fair for the goose, in fact, is fair for the gander, and I'm having a hard time understanding how your comments specifically relate to RA2, which very specifically discusses about consultation with nonprofit organizations, municipalities, the potential risks that the bill presents. If the member wants to speak to the main bill, he's welcome to do so. If he wants to speak to the amendment, particularly now that we're moving into additional reasoned amendments, he ought to be speaking specifically to the amendment.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if I've strayed into the indiscretions of other members earlier today.

My point was this, that in creating a shield in Bill 1, it is that; it's a shield. It's there to try not to create a situation where federal funding for projects, like critical infrastructure and housing initiatives, will be threatened but will keep the federal government in their constitutional lane, and when we each stick to our constitutional lanes, then the discussions about how we are going to fund critical infrastructure or highways, et cetera, then the funding discussions between the federal government and the provincial government on housing initiatives and where that money is going to come from are productive discussions. But if we can't have a shield that protects Albertans from the indiscretions of a federal government passing legislation that overreaches their constitutional boundaries, it's then that we begin to get relationships between the federal and the provincial governments that threaten productive conversations on the kinds of critical infrastructure and housing initiatives that are important for all of us to be able to benefit from across this country.

With those comments, I thank this House, and I thank the Speaker for your attention. We will continue the debate through other people. Thank you.

11:40

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to stick to the amendment that is currently in front of us. You know, I believe that it's important that this be supported in the House, and part of that is the consultation with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks that this bill presents to federal funding for their projects, including the infrastructure and the housing initiatives. If we look at the section that it's referencing, it actually speaks to section 1(e), which includes municipal authorities and "an entity that receives a grant or . . . public funds from the Government that are contingent on the provision of a public service," which is what this referral is speaking to.

Now, the reason that I feel like this is very important is that I've been, again, like I said earlier today, since this bill has been introduced, speaking to my stakeholders, and my stakeholders have been clear that they don't understand how this is going to have an impact on their sector in relation to the partnership with the federal government. They haven't been consulted. They haven't had those conversations.

You know, it's a pretty significant piece when we look specifically just at the ag societies alone, which would fit under this section of the act and have not been consulted. The very funding that they receive would include the Canada-Alberta job grant. They receive the energy savings grant. They get funded by FarmSafe. They get funded for local festival grants. They get community anniversary grants. They get Canada greener homes grants. Many of those grants are partnerships between the province and the federal government.

Now, we've heard from the Premier in recent weeks about mandate letters that have been sent to ministers, and she spoke, even in this House during question period, about encouraging her ministers to come up with motions that would speak specifically under this act that could be addressed. Well, when that happens and we look at the grant funding that is being offered to many of these nonprofits that are under the minister's purview, it raises questions around what is going to happen with that partnership with the federal government and the provincial government when it comes to securing those grants.

Now, again, because the industry hasn't been consulted – we are talking about critical infrastructure. We can look at the irrigation partnership that is being funded under the CAP program; 60 per

cent of that is federal, 40 per cent of that is provincial, with a little bit of the municipalities' partnerships. That is a direct partnership and relationship between the federal government and the provincial government.

Those projects, those planning grants, all of the things that are associated with the irrigation network specifically, as one example, could be something that should be discussed with the irrigation networks prior to looking at this act, explaining to the irrigation networks what this means for the partnership that the minister is going to have to have with the federal government. Is this going to be a motion that he may have to bring forward into the House to talk about area management agreements, land management, the partnership that the federal government has around endangered species or looking at invasive species?

Those issues directly relate to the partnership with irrigation networks, which directly relates to the grant money, that directly relates to this specific amendment saying that those consultations never occurred. I'd be curious from the minister if he sat down and had a conversation with the irrigation networks about the potential impacts of the sovereignty act and what that means for their investment. That's just one example.

We could look at, if we want to go back to the annual report for agriculture and forestry, the fact that \$42 million was given through the CAP funds invested in 2021-22, and that was \$42 million for sector capacity, industry growth, risk management for multiple key objectives, including the outcomes of the actual areas of farm efficiency, environmental management, growth and value-add, public trust but doesn't include the administration fee, and then the modernization and streamlining of programs such as service delivery standards, including transparency of the industry, which goes back to my earlier remarks that I made in regard to how this act is going to impede, potentially, the reputation of the agriculture industry at our international markets. How are we going to ensure, from the conversations that are happening when we're working with CFIA around our food inspection, that our export markets, our international partners believe that Alberta is still standing up and doing the appropriate things?

Many of those things are partnerships. Many of those individuals are producer groups that are going to be significantly impacted if the government chooses to start using motions in this House and start creating disagreements with the federal government. This is a significant amount of investment money.

I do want to acknowledge, though, that because of all the money that was transferred, maybe the minister is not as concerned because he actually didn't use the full federal transfer budget last year, left some money on the table. It's in your report, Minister, that there was a shortfall. It didn't actually all get spent.

Now, under CAP we saw \$3 billion of federal, provincial, and territorial funding investment into agriculture and the agrifood sector. That was effective April 1, '18, to 2023. Now, more than \$400 million of that will be invested over the five-year period for agrifood- and agriproduct-based industries, but again 60 per cent of that funding is coming from the feds; 40 per cent of that is coming from provincial governments.

Again, working closely with our producer groups, as indicated within the annual report, the minister will continue to work closely with the industry to support growth and diversification using that federal dollar transfer. So was the consultation happening? What is going to guarantee these organizations, that are currently going to be receiving that amount of money through their grant transfers, that they're going to continue to have that? Has that guarantee, has that conversation happened with those producer groups?

Now, they receive grants, so they qualify under this amendment. That was part of the consultation piece. When I talk to stakeholders,

they haven't had those conversations. They're not aware of all these different impacts that are going to happen.

Of course, we could talk about AgriStability and AgriRecovery and the partnerships that happen with that and the fact that, you know, 322 producers had to sign up due to the severe drought and that \$1.5 million was paid out in the 2021 program year. We could also talk about the Canadian federal-provincial-territorial agreement that happened on the reference margins, also significant federal transfers that impact direct producers. We could also talk about the \$9.28 million that was required, that was used to help with the livestock producers, crop and forage producers, beekeepers, and mixed farmers, all of which should have been consulted with under this legislation before it was introduced.

Now, of course, \$400 million was also allotted from the federal government for AgriRecovery specific to livestock feed, the initiative which, I believe, the minister just put some more money into. Thank you for that. But, again, that is a grant program that is administered by the livestock feed association through a grant, which is dependent on the relationship between the federal government and the province.

Now, of course, when we had a severe drought, \$352 million was provided under phase 1 and then phase 2 of the CALFA, which covers about 2 million animals in the province, also the beekeepers, with \$1.9 million to help with drought-caused low forage. Those are significant things that impact many of the minister's stakeholders.

Now, on top of that, there's also federal funding to support farm smart, which includes vegetation management, prescribed fire, FireSmart planning, and general wildfire prevention projects with Indigenous communities. We've already heard from many of our colleagues here that the Indigenous communities are not feeling like they've been consulted on this piece of legislation. In fact, that is a significant investment, \$1.3 million to work with Indigenous communities on fire – significant – yet clearly from my colleague it was mentioned that the Indigenous community doesn't feel like they were consulted. Those conversations didn't happen. They don't know what's going to happen with their FireSmart grant and how that's going to work with the Indigenous partnerships that were created through the federal government.

**11:50**

And, of course, my favourite, the mountain pine beetle: also significant funding that comes from the federal government. One million dollars was allotted to help control – oh, sorry. It was \$60 million. It was a cost share with the federal-provincial agreement to enhance the mountain pine beetle management program, with additional funds also being obtained by \$1 million from our lovely colleagues in Saskatchewan because they don't want the mountain pine beetle.

So what does that look like? How do those partnerships, not just with the federal government but with our interprovincial partnerships that we have with B.C. and Saskatchewan – money transfers back and forth between governments all the time to ensure that we are protecting our environmental sustainability.

**Mr. Williams:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted. The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Point of Order  
Relevance**

**Mr. Williams:** I rise under Standing Order 23(b), speaking to a question other than under discussion. I've yet to hear anything

about the second reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be very happy to hear more about it.

**The Speaker:** I'm not convinced you're listening, then, because largely all of her remarks have been on the reasoned amendment.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Sort of like reading the bill. Yeah, just like reading the bill. Clearly not paying attention.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Sweet:** Again, as I'm speaking to this, there are significant transfers that are happening between the different provinces.

Now, the other thing that I think is significant that we need to look at is that the revenue from the government of Canada was \$270 million more than budgeted in the last budget by the minister, and part of that was because of the fact that we had such a significant drought in the last season, so there was increase of another \$253 million for agriculture income supports for the Canada-Alberta livestock feed assistance program in response to the province-wide drought, increased funding of \$22 million for AgriInsurance due to increased commodity prices and insured acres.

Now, additional funding of \$2 million was also provided due to increased wildfire activity on federal land, so the feds helped us out. That's good. It's their land. These increases were partly off-set by lower funding on the pine beetle. So there were actually significant changes from the 2021 actuals. The revenue from the government of Canada was actually increased to the province by \$236 million, mostly due, again, to the Canada-Alberta livestock feed assistance program, significant transfers from the federal government. [interjection] Go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. You know, on what you've been describing in regard to the federal grant funding and whether it has the potential risk for this funding to be gone using this new sovereignty act, I would like to just ask two things or put two things out. Do we have perhaps an aggregate of how much money is at stake in the agriculture industry from federal – I mean, you don't have to do the math now. But I see a pattern, for example in postsecondary, where it's almost as though this provincial government has been taking this sovereignty act out for a test drive for years now, leaving money at the table because of not matching grants that come from the federal government to fund postsecondary, child care, a whole range of things, where literally those programs and that money that was meant for Alberta families was left on the table because this government was failing to put forward the matching funds, right? So it's almost like trying a sovereignty act soft version of it, and here we are today.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, hon. member. Actually, I do have the numbers. The total budget for the federal transfers was \$46.8 million. It was not fully spent. To give the minister some leeway, it was due to supply chain disruptions that were experienced by many of the grant recipients, partly because of COVID. So I'll give you that. So \$42 million was spent, and there was \$46.8 million in total that was transferred. COVID got in the way, supply chains got in the way, but all of that is grant funding. That is a significant amount of money.

Now, on top of that, we also have the Alberta employment training funding program. The Canada-Alberta job grant is a federal-provincial partnership under which Alberta employers and the government share the cost of training new and existing employees, and the program contributes up to about \$15,000 per trainee, per employee; again, a partnership that exists for agriculture

and other jurisdictions in regard to supporting new employment growth in the province.

On top of that is the Alberta jobs now program, which is about \$370 million to private, nonprofit businesses – just so the member is aware, I'm talking about nonprofits – to support much-needed jobs for underemployed and unemployed Albertans across the province. Employers will be able to apply for the grant, that covers 25 per cent of an employee's salary or training costs up to a maximum of \$25,000 per employee. The second applicant intake for this program is actually at the end of the month.

So those are a couple of other grant programs that have significant impact for our nonprofits. They help get people into the workforce, yet nobody was consulted on that.

Now, we look at the federal transfers that also exist. The accelerated investment incentive: another one. The accelerated investment incentive was introduced in 2018 as a means to encourage investment in capital assets. This incentive was to enhance first-year allowance for certain property that is subject to capital cost allowance rules – I'm sure the Minister of Finance thinks that's good – manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment acquired. It was available from 2018 until 2024 and up to use till 2028. This would encourage any property that would allow businesses to immediately write off the full cost of machinery and equipment used for manufacturing or processing of goods, and these measures are scheduled to be phased out between 2024 and 2027. Again, for those who are looking at agrifood, any of those investment companies, any of our producer groups that are trying to look at trying to set up greenhouses, any of our horticultural industries, any of those things – and I have many, many, many more, but I see I am running out of time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on amendment RA2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this referral amendment. I quite enjoyed the speech just given by the Member for Edmonton-Manning, and I intend to take some of my time to kind of follow up on what she said. She clearly has given numerous examples of federal initiatives that are in jeopardy when we look at what could potentially happen with this act and clearly has outlined in depth many reasons why this bill should not proceed forward, as it threatens institutions here in the province of Alberta.

I want to speak about the underlying fundamental argument that is inherent in the extremely well-articulated set of examples that were given by the member, because it is a concern that is expressed across a number of different groups of people, whether they be stakeholders or whether they be First Nations or whether they be nonprofit institutions here in the province of Alberta, that the intent of this act is to, as the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon says, be a shield for the province of Alberta.

However, in the actual construction of the bill it is clear that it's only a shield for a very select few people. For everyone else it's a sword. For everyone else the outcome is likely to be that they will find themselves at the losing end of this situation, and the reason why is because the bill talks about the fact that they will only use it to protect the public interest here in Alberta. But what it doesn't do is that it doesn't clearly outline what public interest means. I'm not asking for a definition of public interest. What I'm saying is that the nonprofits and the First Nations and the farmers and other groups in the province of Alberta have learned quite clearly that often, when the public interest is raised as a reason for some kind of action on the part of the government, it turns out it is not, in fact, the wider

public interest but the interest of a very narrow or select few within the public.

12:00

This government has been really consistent on that, consistently moving money from the poor to the rich, moving power from the collective to individuals within government. And that has made people nervous. You know, I had a chance earlier in the House today to talk about Grand Chief Arthur Noskey saying that they learned from the first bill brought in by this government that the bills were not written for First Nations. They know that because the bill was intended to stop protesters who were trying to protect treaty rights. He said: we can see that it wasn't written for non-Indigenous people because they certainly didn't use it at the Coutts border crossing. He said: given that experience with this government we understand that we do not fit into public interest when the bill suggests that. This is the underlying issue that all of these organizations have, and they've seen it in many other places.

We've heard the Member for Edmonton-Manning articulate many examples when the current government has failed to work co-operatively with the federal government to bring dollars into this province. I can tell you that I've certainly heard that, too, when I go around the province, that this government has made the decision not to accept federal dollars because they want to stand off from them, and the consequence is that people here in this province lose out.

I know, for example, that this provincial government is one of the very last governments in this country to accept any kind of a deal at all on child care, which meant for months, even up to a year, people who could have had their child care subsidized did not get it subsidized. They lost money. They personally lost money. And then when it was brought into the province, the intent of the federal legislation was undermined because this government had a different idea of how child care should be funded.

One of the consequences, when I went and visited, for example, the Metis Calgary Family Services, was that their lowest income participants in their child care were actually charged more money under the Alberta program than they were previously to the Alberta program coming in, so the very poorest of the poor were the ones who ended up paying more. They did not feel like they were part of the public interest at that time, and that's the reason for this amendment. The amendment is that this government has not consulted appropriately with a wide range of Albertans to ask how they might understand public interest to include that wide range of Albertans.

As such, the fear across nonprofits and across First Nations, across institutions in the province of Alberta is that this government isn't really interested in the broader public interest but only the interests of a few within the public. If the government can't understand that, they simply need to go to the communities out there that have been telling us over and over again that that is the problem. We know, for example, that in the First Nations community they have articulated deep concerns about how this might affect their treaty rights. We know that section 2(c) was an attempt to say that it won't affect treaty rights, but we also know that that doesn't hold any sway when the rest of the bill actually does affect treaty rights. They're saying that that's what concerns them. That's what is going to be the reason why they are standing up repeatedly to ask that this bill be stopped.

Chief Tony Alexis from the Alexis First Nations, for example, has said: please at least stop the bill until the time of an election. What he's asking for is a broad consultation about how this will affect the interests of the public. Whose public interest? That's the question that they're all asking. Whose interests are involved in the public interest? It certainly isn't the First Nations, and it certainly

isn't the nonprofit societies, which is why we are asking this bill to be returned and to be stopped at this particular time. [interjection] I see that there is an intervention, and I will cede my time for a moment.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I like the way that you are contextualizing this, through the Speaker, of course, because if it's not for so many people that you just described – and immediately your description made me think about: to what degree is it for postsecondary, for students, for support staff, for research professors, for endowment contributors to postsecondary institutions? Again, you see this insidious reach by this UCP government over the last three years of dictating, you know, where people make their money and how they would tolerate quite serious cuts without ever talking to the actual people who were affected by those decisions.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Member. I appreciate the intervention. I think it's important that we recognize that there is a wide range of institutions in this province, and postsecondary clearly is one set of interests in this province, but those interests are unique to postsecondary. They aren't necessarily the same interests that would be of concern to, for example, nonprofit societies or may not be the same as the interests of, for example, people who are wishing to make investments in the province from a profit motive.

The point is that there are multiple interests. Each group has different concerns that they need to protect, and each group will have to live with the consequences of this government deciding on their behalf what public interests are. And what we've seen with this government is that they don't have the same values around postsecondary, for example, that the postsecondary institutions have. The postsecondary institutions have seen massive, serious cuts in this province. The University of Alberta has lost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700 million under this government's control, and they clearly do not feel like that has been doing anything for the benefit of their faculty, of their students, or of their staff. But they have no control because this government has decided what's in the public interest and has not allowed the people who actually know the most about education at the postsecondary level to make the decision about what public interest is. They have taken that power and brought it into the government, where it should rest in the community, and that's exactly the fundamental issue inherent in this bill.

This government is continually taking powers and moving it into the government. We've seen them do this repeatedly over the last almost four years now, and each time we stand up and say that this is antidemocratic. You are giving the power to ministers to make decisions about things that should be in the public sphere, especially in a Westminster democracy. It should be brought into this House. It should be debated in this House. It should reflect the concerns and the desires of people in the community. But this government has continually made the decision: "No. We're not going to do that. We're not going to involve the people in the decision-making. We're going to bring it in-house. We're going to make the decision in our cabinet room." In this bill they're actually attempting to do that without any reference to the Westminster democracy, of which we're all a part. They've been caught on that, and apparently there is a possibility that we might see some changes to the bill over the next little while, but of course we haven't seen any yet, so we can't really think that that is actually going to happen until it does. No evidence of it so far.

I think that all we can go on, then, is: what is the government's previous behaviour? The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. In this case we've seen a government that has

undermined community values. [interjection] I see that there's an intervention.

12:10

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to him, I'd just like to highlight the fact that, again, this is not new with this government. Over the last three years we've seen a number of bills being proposed in this House where it's the centralization of decision-making. Power is put directly in the hands of ministers, and I would like your opinion. Like, I mean, the only reason why I would think that this government would do that is because they're so focused on their own ideology and implementing their ideological approach in changing Alberta to fit what they believe is the only way. I believe that that just reeks of arrogance, and it needs to be challenged.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you for that intervention.

I think, you know, we've certainly laid out the argument for this referral amendment, that inherent in the referral amendment is a plea to go back to the community, to speak to the community about how it is that they will be affected and to not make decisions that ultimately are negative for the community. We've seen time and time again, as the Member for Edmonton-Manning articulated extremely well, as the people at the Metis Calgary Family Services told me about the child care, as the city of Edmonton experienced with regard to the province not co-operating with getting federal dollars for housing at a time when we are experiencing some of the worst housing crisis in this province. We can go on and on and on and talk about the examples of when this government has really failed to understand that although they have an agenda, it does not reflect the agenda of the vast majority of the population in the province of Alberta.

The polls that we see coming out right now are telling us quite clearly that that is true. You know, it's funny. We're in this House, and we're quite used in the House to having debates where we have this sort of both sides kind of argument going on, where both sides introduce their experts and their commentators and say: well, our guy says this. But we're in a very funny situation here on this particular bill because for the first time in my life I'm standing up and instead of saying, "My guy says this," I'm starting to say; your guys say this; your conservative commentators are saying things. I mean, it's interesting that, for example, Kory Teneycke, who was the Conservative strategist for the 2022 Ontario PC election, was a campaign manager, said that, quote, it's fundamentally unconservative. He said that, quote, the solution to unconstitutionality is not more unconstitutionality.

Here we are saying this over and over again. We list the people who are conservatives in every other aspect saying that this is not reflective of who we are. However you define public interest, it is not reflecting the conservative values or understanding of what public interest is. So if the left is saying that this is not public interest, if the First Nations are saying that this is not public interest, and the conservative community is saying that this is not public interest, whose interest is it? It's a very narrow, ideological group of people that are having their interests being put forward, and that's the fundamental problem here in this particular case.

I mean, we did see minister after minister come out against this particular bill. We saw the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance come out against it. We saw the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism come out against it. We saw the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development come out against it. We saw the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas come out against it. We saw the Minister of Municipal Affairs come out against it.

We know all of them voted against the person who was going to bring this in. They tried to stop it, and not one of them has stood up and told us what specifically is different about this bill than the one that they voted against.

We know that the CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce has come out against it. We know that the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has come out against it. We know that the CEO of CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, has come out against it. Now we have the very successful campaign manager of the 2022 PC campaign in Ontario coming out against it. I mean, we literally have a list of all the people who should have been part of their community, who should have been saying that this is the right way to go. They are asking you to do exactly what we are asking you to do right now, and that is to stop this bill, to refer this bill out of the Legislature, to seek to end this bill at this particular time and bring it back at another time, after we've had some proper consultation.

I know, for example, the Minister of Indigenous Relations has suggested that some consultation is going on, yet I have literally been on the phone for days now talking to chiefs across this province who are telling me that they haven't received a phone call. They haven't heard from the minister, so if there's consultation going on, it has not had time to go very deeply into the community and, as such, does not reflect the community's interests.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On amendment RA2, are there others? The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. There's been a lot of discussion over the last few hours. It's hard to remember where we started, but in regard to this amendment and needing to consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities, a lot was said previously about agriculture specifically.

[Mr. Walker in the chair]

I can say that, you know, 70 different industry groups – one of the groups that was mentioned previously, the irrigation districts: I actually spoke to them today. They were so concerned that they brought it up zero times while we went through a laundry list of things that they were concerned about, that we're working towards.

Much was brought up about the relationship with the federal government and the provincial government in regard to the CAP program, which, going forward, will be the SCAP program. I can assure the opposition; I know they're very concerned. I think they believe, they misunderstand, or they think that money was left on the table. That's not the case. It's a five-year program. It was signed on to by an NDP agriculture minister, and it rolls year to year. We'll be very sure to use all the money right up until the end of March, before the next program starts. I hope that provides a little clarity to how that actually works.

The 60-40 relationship: it's an important one between the federal government and the provincial government. It touches on a lot of things. It touches on, you know, things that they want to see moving forward, maybe protections on the environment, maybe efficiencies in irrigation, but also the business risk management suite, which we're all very concerned about and want to ensure is very robust for our producers and can kind of answer changing landscapes economically for farmers in every different part of the sector.

Something I did in a big way before I went to Saskatoon, and eventually after a lot of, I would say, hard-fought negotiation on behalf of the province, was consult with all of those industry groups about the federal-provincial relationship and that agreement

specifically. We held our own round-tables during the Calgary Stampede where they begged me: don't even sign it if it's a bad deal; please tell us that you're able to go there and dig your feet in the ground and don't let them back you into a bad deal.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It was usually around the idea that the federal government was going to push their emission and environmental goals to the point of making the things that are most important to our producers, the production insurance, the AgriStability program, that will keep them in business when we get those bad years. They wanted to ensure that the federal government kept out of those programs so they were actually still actuarially sound and made sense. That was the commentary and feedback that I heard in what I would call extensive consultations.

We did go to Saskatoon. We did sign another five-year deal. I think there was a lot of give-and-take. In fact, on the side of the road, over a Zoom call, I spoke to all of those industry groups again to just explain to them the rationale behind why we said yes to the things we did, what we gained on, what were our hills to die on, so to speak, and how we came to an agreement. In the end, the program was substantially increased; it hadn't seen an increase in over a decade, certainly not during the time when the NDP signed an agreement. We were able to see the money increased, we were able to use it well, and we came to some real compromise. I think that should be the goal of our relationship with the federal government.

12:20

If you're going to sit there and say that all of those things are in jeopardy because the province of Alberta uses this act like a shield and then these things will be in jeopardy, well, then, I'd say that we probably have a bigger problem to talk about, because we're talking about a federal government supporting the agriculture sector across the country. If we have to worry about a five-year agreement that we signed on to in good faith to deal with all of these things, from production insurance to the environment and these pursuits that both of us share, if those are truly in jeopardy: what are we talking about here? I think we have a far bigger problem.

I would say that I didn't hear from any of those groups that they were concerned about this jeopardizing that. If that is what those members are saying, I think maybe they should phone Jagmeet on the mother ship and say: what the heck is going on, boss? Unless that's your intention. If that's what you're saying, then come out and say it. But all I would say is that this amendment is silly. This bill has been talked about. We're here to stick up for Alberta, we're here to treat it like a shield, and if any of those things are in jeopardy, we have a far bigger problem.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on amendment RA2? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday on the amendment.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise early in the morning in the Legislative Assembly here to speak to the amendment before us, the reasoned amendment, again, stating that Bill 1, [the] Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks this bill presents to federal funding for their projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives.

I didn't plan on reading all of that, but I did.

You know, there are a few pieces within this reasoned amendment that I plan on supporting for a number of reasons. One of the topics that stands out here and that has been discussed to some extent at length is the relationship with the municipalities. We

see, even in Edmonton here, that my councillor has been vocal about their concerns regarding Bill 1, kind of relating it back to: imagine if we gave these types of powers to – obviously, municipal governments are a little bit different – the current mayor or the next mayor, what kind of concerns that might raise.

Again, we have our own municipal partners raising concerns. It's not only this battle that this government is considering taking up with the federal government. But whether it's an innocent bystander or not, Mr. Speaker, our municipalities are going to be stuck right in the middle of this. We talk about – and I think that the Member for Edmonton-Manning, as did many other members, spoke to several important programs that are potentially going to be put at risk or stakeholders that might be concerned about the changes being proposed in Bill 1.

Just looking back to some of the decisions that this government has made, the previous member made an important point about housing, that the city of Edmonton is now having to fund for themselves because the provincial government is not willing to take up their role as a partner. At that time, when those discussions have been happening over the last weeks, the Finance minister – the only thing that they could put together was that there might be more funding in the next budget, which is obviously an inadequate answer considering we are losing lives right now.

This relates back to our relationship with municipalities and the need to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations. Again, when we look back to the relationship that this UCP government has had with the federal government over the last several years and especially through the pandemic, obviously, coming from very different directions, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford made the very clear point that this UCP government, I think, makes many decisions that are not generally popular with the majority of Albertans and are making decisions, whether it's about funding, whether it's about legislation that they're putting forward, that clearly are not supported by the majority of Albertans.

In this case, through the pandemic, we saw money left on the table. A report at the time – I believe it was January 2021 – showed that the provincial government left more than \$675 million in federal money on the table for a number of programs: essential worker wage top-ups, job training in hard-hit sectors, rapid housing initiatives, long-term care supports as well as help for early childhood educators. I'm sure that list isn't extensive, but again, when we look at the decision of this government to not support the city of Edmonton in ensuring that there are adequate shelters and adequate funding for potentially temporary housing, they had an opportunity to fix this. There were federal dollars on the table through the pandemic specifically earmarked for rapid housing initiatives, but I think that in this instance the provincial government didn't have an adequate plan in place to access the entirety of those funds. The minister of housing can correct me if I'm wrong. Maybe he wants to make clear how many federal dollars were actually left on the table. Again looking at the report, it does say that it was because there wasn't an adequate plan in place to access those additional dollars.

So when we look at the relationship between the federal and provincial governments and how it relates to Bill 1 as well as, of course, how that is going to affect our municipalities, who have to bear much of the cost of the unhoused population, I think it's important to point out that the provincial government had an opportunity to work with the federal government but, for one reason or another, did not access those tens of millions if not hundreds of millions of dollars for, specifically in this case, rapid housing initiatives, and now we find ourselves in a situation where municipalities are having to fund that themselves.

When we look at the issue around affordable housing or shelter space or, even further, when we talk about, you know, rehabilitation and the direction that this government has taken, I have grave concerns, if the federal government is putting money on the table, that because of a disagreement about who should be able to accept that money, the type of person, whether they are trying to get out of addiction, whether they are just at the front end of that process, there are so many questions left to be answered about what this government, again, in section 3 under resolutions, describes as “anticipated to cause harm to Albertans.” I mean, again, it is such a general concept or general subsection that they’ve included in here, and beyond that, of course, Mr. Speaker . . . [interjection] I see an interjection, that I’m happy to take.

Thank you.

**Member Loyola:** I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, through you, the Member for Edmonton-West Henday. I’d like to express my gratitude, really, to all the members who have gotten up and spoken to this reasoned amendment, highlighting the implications of Bill 1 and how it could have a really drastic impact on individuals within our own province here. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was expressing how, well, it’s not in the interest of Indigenous people, it’s not in the interest of the nonprofit organizations, and now the Member for Edmonton-West Henday is talking about the most marginalized people in our society, people that need access to housing now. I don’t think this government has given it enough thought about the implications that this sovereignty act and the relationship that we have with the federal government – I just find it astounding that hundreds of millions of dollars are being left on the table by this government.

12:30

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you for that, Member. I really do appreciate that. I truly and completely agree with that point, that there really seem to be many unintended consequences, not only when we look at the economic consequences but the consequences of our relationship with nonprofit organizations, municipalities as listed in this reasoned amendment. Of course, again, that’s not an extensive list, but these are some of the organizations and stakeholders who could be dramatically impacted by the fight that potentially could take place because of this legislation.

Again, looking back at the idea that this government and this cabinet wants to give itself such extraordinary powers, specifically under the resolutions clauses: “anticipated to cause harm to Albertans.” How do you quantify that, Mr. Speaker? “Anticipated to.” We’re talking about changes that the federal government not only in this legislation clearly shows that they have already taken – that’s one thing, of course – but that they are anticipated to take. We don’t even know that they’re planning to do it. We haven’t seen the legislation that the cabinet and provincial UCP is saying that they might be doing. I mean, it seems quite absurd, and to threaten our relationship with stakeholders and other partners and levels of government is just a recipe for disaster.

Again, looking at the concerns around rapid housing initiatives and ensuring that, especially as things get colder and colder here – we’ve seen a drastic drop – we should all be working together to ensure that things like housing initiatives are moving forward and not held back because of a difference in opinion based on, you know, this current government’s direction compared to the federal government, compared to previous provincial governments or municipalities.

It’s quite clear, through the discussions that we’ve had on Bill 1 this evening and previously, that this government and this Premier have not adequately consulted with municipalities. That has

become very clear from the comments that have been made by municipal leaders in Edmonton and across the province. This government has not been able to show adequate evidence that nonprofit organizations have been consulted on this. It seems quite clear that they haven’t been. Again, beyond municipalities that are potentially going to be affected by this, as previous members have said, nonprofit organizations have a lot to lose in this fight that this current UCP government wants to start as well.

Again, I understand, as previous members have, that there are grievances that we have with the federal government. By no means do I agree with many of the decisions that they make, but the fact is that when we talk about leaving money on the table, this government, well, has done quite an exceptional job of that, again looking at the figure of \$675 million through the pandemic that this government left on the table in federal funding. For what, Mr. Speaker? Because they have a difference in opinion on whether essential workers should be getting a wage top-up? I mean, these are decisions that have drastic impacts on the people in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the idea of the early childhood educators and the \$10-a-day child care funding agreement has come up as well. For one, that it took so long for this provincial government to get that agreement in place has impacts on Alberta families as well as nonprofit organizations in our communities.

Beyond some of those issues that I’ve brought up, I know that the issue of climate change and taking action, whether it be lowering emissions or lowering our electricity bills because of the extensive growth of our bills across the city and across the province because of this government’s unwillingness to take meaningful action, whether it’s community leagues, whether it’s nonprofits from various sectors, you know, looking to access federal funding for green initiatives, again, if we have a provincial government that’s saying, “Well, we don’t agree with your, you know, decisions around emissions” or “We don’t agree with your decisions around how you’re funding green initiatives in our community, so we are not going to match those funding agreements,” that is going to have a negative impact on our community as well.

So it really goes back to the priorities of this government, that they aren’t willing to adequately consult. The fact is that it seems quite clear that the Premier – definitely the Deputy Premier, because they made the statement that they had not even read the legislation to a journalist at the time. That was the Deputy Premier from Lethbridge-East, I believe, Mr. Speaker. But many, many of the government members and the cabinet members who at one point completely disagreed with this legislation are now willing to put federal funding at risk for important projects in our community, are willing to put their relationships with municipalities and their relationships with nonprofits in jeopardy because they aren’t willing to stand up to this rather draconian piece of legislation.

So again I ask all members in the House this evening, or this morning, to please consider supporting this reasoned amendment because the fact is that it’s very clear over the weeks that we’ve been discussing this legislation that this government has not adequately consulted with nonprofit organizations, with municipalities, and that there is grave concern about critical infrastructure and housing initiatives across this province.

We’ve seen previously – I think that we had a little bit of clarity this afternoon in question period from the Premier that there isn’t a plan to go back on the Springbank dam project, but, you know, that, apparently, was only cleared up today, and there are many other initiatives, whether we’re talking about the green line in Calgary, the funding around that, in Edmonton the valley line west LRT, where we had committed the provincial funding to match the federal funding under our time in government. There was a moment



where there was some concern around that because of decisions and comments that the minister, the UCP minister, at the time was making. So, again, when we look at these important infrastructure projects that could be put in jeopardy because of a disagreement between the federal and provincial governments, that is very concerning to me and should be very concerning to all Albertans.

I think from the push-back that we've seen, again, from all sides, not simply from progressives – you know, we have seen many conservatives very concerned with this as well about what it might do or what it will do to our economic environment, the stability, ensuring that the rule of law is upheld in our province, that it is not going to have a negative impact on our relationships between stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on amendment RA2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join the debate on RA2, which indicates that we should not now read a second time Bill 1

because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks this bill presents to federal funding for their projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives.

To even go more broadly than this amendment, I just wanted to go right back to the legislation as it relates to the RA2 amendment. It describes a provincial entity in quite a bit of detail, you know, and the reasoned amendment is indicating how nonprofits, of course, are impacted, municipalities are impacted, but it's also even broader than what we're suggesting here.

It's talking about

- (i) a public agency as defined in the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act,
- (ii) a Crown-controlled organization as defined in the Financial Administration Act,
- (iii) an entity that carries out a power, duty or function under an enactment,
- (iv) an entity that receives a grant or other public funds from the Government that are contingent on the provision of a public service,
- (v) a regional health authority . . .

I'm not even half done.

This list is extensive. It is so broad ranging. I am very curious and perhaps concerned also whether the government can actually manage all of this, to understand what provincial entities – they've created legislation that is so unwieldy that it's going to be impossible to implement or even to understand.

**12:40**

The other piece that is, again, extremely wide ranging is that "federal initiative" means a federal law, program, policy, agreement or action, or a proposed or anticipated federal law, program, policy, agreement or action." These are the things that this legislation is supposed to regulate and that are extremely – I don't know. Really, a very broad ranging, significant number of organizations in this province would be impacted. Of course, as many of my colleagues have spoken about already, so many federal initiatives, based on the definition I just read, are, you know, intersecting with all of these organizations that serve Albertans.

If we even just look at one area, let's look at affordable housing, the annual report of seniors and housing 2021-22. It talks about federal money that they get. It talks about the Canada infrastructure program, the Canada housing benefit – for people who don't know, that's the rent supplement program – capital grants from the

national housing strategy, and the social housing agreement. These programs in one year alone invested from the federal government \$91 million approximately. So we're not talking about just a little bit of money; we're talking about a significant amount of money that is fundamental to Alberta's affordable housing in our province that serves vulnerable Albertans. This legislation really shakes that all up and makes those bodies that receive that funding very concerned.

We already have difficulties, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the provincial government being willing to work with the federal government on these programs. You know, one of the things that the UCP did when they first came into government was that they cut the rent supplement program by about \$16 million. Of course, we have matching funds with the federal, so if we cut it here, then we're not going to get the federal money.

I've heard time and time again from so many stakeholders that the province is missing in action. They actually are going directly to the federal government, working with their local municipalities. I hear this from so many housing management bodies, nonprofits all across this province. They say that the province is missing in action. They're not investing. What did they do since they've become government? They wrote a report – that's about all they've done – and they talked about privatizing affordable housing and selling off a whole bunch of our assets, doing a real estate review to see where they can get rid of assets. And then they say – this is back to Bill 78 – that that will go back into affordable housing, yet the legislation, of course, never indicated that, so that was an amendment that we brought forward for that, to support affordable housing in our province.

Regardless, this government has really dropped the ball on housing. I mean, I suppose it seems kind of ridiculous for me to say this, but it perhaps indicates how little this government cares about affordable housing. They've even just amalgamated a whole bunch of stuff into one ministry. Seniors and housing are all in Seniors, Community and Social Services. Housing doesn't even have a title anymore in a ministry. You know, it used to be with seniors and housing, which gave it some – our government gave it some importance, of course, by having a ministry that was specifically focused on those two aspects. But this government has just amalgamated a tremendous amount of very important supports for vulnerable Albertans into one ministry.

I'm sure it's overwhelming for the minister because it's untenable. How can he be able to manage all of that? Really, I have heard hardly anything from him since he's come into office except for his own personal sharing of his experience working in the nonprofit sector. No investments in affordable housing. No movement on that area.

These investments we receive from the federal government are not trivial, and I think the housing sector has every right to be, you know, extremely concerned about this legislation. That's why this amendment to Bill 1, RA2, is so important, and I urge all the people in this Legislature to vote in favour of it because we really haven't given a voice to those housing management bodies, to nonprofits in the sector.

You know, I've said this many times in the House: we know that we have less affordable housing than is needed in our province. We have less than the national average; about 4.3 per cent of housing is affordable. Here in Alberta it's only 2.9 per cent. We're behind. We need to invest significantly, but sadly this government has not chosen to. If they're not going to work with the federal government and their robust programs like the ones I've indicated to you here – the Canada housing benefit, capital grants from the national housing strategy, and the social housing agreement – we're not going to have the housing we need, and indeed that's our situation at the moment.

Municipalities are doing the best they can. I mean, we know we're in a crisis. I don't know. What did someone say to me? Like, with the wind chill and everything it's, you know, more than minus 30 below today or something like that this evening. I know that people are living rough out in the community in the Edmonton area, and they need that housing. They need permanent supportive housing because we know that vulnerable people with mental health and addiction issues – providing them just with the bricks and mortar of a building is not enough. We must provide them wraparound services.

The city of Edmonton has been crying, honestly, literally, for a long time, trying to move this government to see the importance, and their asks haven't even been that significant. You know, I think it was about \$9 million they looked for for operating these wraparound services for permanent supportive housing. This government has kept turning away, turning a blind eye. Literally, people are dying in our city, and we know that people are losing limbs because of being frozen. Horrific things are happening in our community, and this investment in affordable housing is so key to making sure that people are safe and that they live with dignity.

So that's why RA2, voting in favour of that, is so important. We need every dollar we can get. We need the province to step up, but for some reason they haven't decided that this is an important part. Even though we have a significant surplus, it's not an important part of what they see as key for helping our city, our province. We know that, you know, it costs more for someone to live rough. It costs us as the public more than to give them affordable housing. Anyway, there are just a million arguments. There are human rights, economic arguments to having enough housing for people. Of course, we want to work very closely with the federal government to ensure that happens, and if this sovereignty act isn't willing to work with the federal government, which it certainly seems to indicate it won't, we think: whoa; we need to slow down, and we need to make sure that we understand the consequences of this very significant legislation.

**12:50**

Has the UCP consulted with the housing management bodies? We have the Greater Edmonton Foundation here, that serves seniors. About 4,000 seniors live in lodges across the greater Edmonton area. In Calgary we have Silvera, which does amazing work serving seniors in keeping them well housed and supported. We also have sort of our affordable housing partners like Sevita and the Calgary Housing Company. These are the big four, we call them, that do

significant work to support Albertans who are vulnerable. Has the UCP spoken to them about any concerns that they might have regarding how this legislation will impact the receipt of dollars?

Also, not long ago I was at the grand opening of a facility in Calgary, and it was kind of a unique joint venture between HomeSpace and Inn from the Cold. The city of Calgary put in millions of dollars, the feds put in millions of dollars, and the province put in very minimal. People are overcompensating for the province instead of the province stepping up.

You know, some of what this bill could create, even more difficulty in the sector, seems to be already manifesting. It's not only in this area but in other nonprofits that certainly do tremendous work, certainly nonprofits that work with vulnerable Albertans that use drugs, Jasper Place Wellness Centre, some of the inner-city agencies like Boyle community services, Bissell Centre, those places. Those are also nonprofits that are so important to making sure that vulnerable Albertans are supported.

We know that because of the UCP's very narrow view of what needs to happen for people who use substances, use drugs – of course, we know that evidence shows that we need a continuum of services. We certainly do need to have detox centres. We need to have residential treatment. We need all sorts of the things that the UCP likes to call recovery.

But we need harm reduction services, too, and that's one area that the UCP wants to cut back in and has already, so much so that we already know that they have cut federal funding or have not received federal funding or they have received federal funding that they have rejected. That's already happened. We know that the different harm reduction programs – or they've delayed harm reduction programs because of their very narrow ideological view on what people who are using drugs need. But we know – I mean, one of the things that we certainly say is: how can anybody go into recovery if they're dead? We need to support people where they're at, so harm reduction services are fundamental. Right now we really continue to be in a significant crisis, so working with the federal government to make sure that there is a significant investment in that area is important.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the Assembly until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon, December 6.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:54 a.m. on Tuesday]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 6, 2022

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
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Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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Ceci  
Dach  
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Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Nixon, Jason  
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Aheer  
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Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood has an introduction on the Speaker's behalf. The hon. member.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is my honour today to announce two special guests. Today we have joining us Jayme Erickson, an Airdrie medic with Airdrie EMS. As well, we have Richie Reed, a medic with HALO here in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly six outstanding members of the Strathcona professional firefighters' association. I along with my colleagues and all Albertans am truly grateful for the dedication and service of our first responders. I want to thank Elliot Davis, Eric Lowe, Tyler Brady, Ryan Woodland, and Robert Russell for their service and for all that they have taught me these last three years. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you three IAFF members who have joined us here today in the Chamber all the way from Lethbridge. They are Brent Nunweiler, Brendan Pyne, and Patrick Misura. I ask, to honour and recognize their tremendous contribution to the city of Lethbridge, that the House extend to these dedicated public servants a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five honourable guests from Red Deer firefighters' association local 1190. We're delighted to welcome here today Stephen Belich, Dan Henschel, Kevin Bettsworth, Lyle Wesner, and Billy Kamp. On behalf of all the Assembly we want to thank you for the tremendous work you do, and God bless you all so much.

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce five amazing members of the St. Albert firefighters' integrated service with the EMS. They are Greg Harvey, Al Zimmerman, Dean Dumbeck, Sean Richards, and Noel Johnstone. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly guests from X-energy Canada: Katherine Moshonas Cole, Rosemary Yeremian, and Monifa Miller. Please rise and get the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please join me in welcoming Steve Westlake of the Canmore Firefighters Association, who has joined us here today. Thank you, Steve.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I invite all members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming members of the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association executive, including President Matt Osborne and Secretary-Treasurer Jamie Blayne. They represent the APFFPA, over 75 per cent of Alberta's population through representing firefighters.

**Mr. Copping:** It is with pleasure that I rise to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly my guests from the Calgary Firefighters Association. Joining us today is Jean-Pierre LeBlanc, vice-president, and Codey McIntyre, acting vice-president. I want to sincerely thank them for all the work they do representing firefighters, working with their families, and saving Calgarians.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly – please join me in welcoming members from the Spruce Grove firefighters local 3021 who have joined us here today: Jordan Hanratty, Joel McKay, Justin Jaeger, and Cole Hoeber.

### Members' Statements

#### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Capital Projects

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, international investment is essential for creating good jobs for Albertans. Large-scale infrastructure projects in our energy sector and other emerging spaces put people to work and allow them to put food on their table, pay their bills, and put a little bit away for that well-deserved vacation. I was proud to serve in a government that delivered on getting our resources to tidewater with the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which has put nearly 30,000 people to work and will be completed next year. I'm proud to stand in this House on behalf of skilled tradespeople every day, and I was so proud to see our leader commit to fund training centres should we form the next government.

Sadly, so much of our construction industry is watching in horror right now as the Premier attempts to ram through her undemocratic, job-killing sovereignty act, a deeply flawed piece of legislation. Sometimes national economic challenges require national solutions, and I'm proud to live in a country where provinces and different levels of government can come together to develop those solutions. There would be no Trans Mountain in a world with sovereignty acts. That's tens of thousands of Alberta jobs lost. But it gets worse. There are very real and very serious concerns about what this horrible bill could mean for federal housing funding, for large-scale investments in transit projects, and more.

We know that this Premier has already mused about pulling out of the Springbank dam and abandoning Calgary's long-awaited green line. Again, more good-paying jobs lost, and those jobs are

needed now more than ever as this government's economic plan has been a disaster. Alberta has the second-lowest wage growth in all of Canada, and inflation has outpaced wage growth by four times. My constituents and so many others are working harder and harder and falling farther and farther behind.

The job-killing, wage-killing sovereignty act is the last thing we need. We need more infrastructure projects. We need more jobs, not less. Pull this legislation now, and let's build a better future for Alberta workers.

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

### Children's Pain Medication

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada we have a shortage of children's pain medication. Supply chain issues and increased demand have put pressures on hospitals and physicians' offices as parents seek out alternative sources from their local pharmacy, whose shelves are empty. This is the scene playing out from Victoria to St. John's, and this is a major concern for Alberta parents and this government as the health and well-being of our children is so important. I myself have heard many stories from parents from Calgary-Hays, and it's a growing concern and something that must be dealt with. Our 635,000 children need relief, and they need it now.

That's why our government has taken action to support families and ease the strain on our health care system. Just this morning the Premier and Health minister announced that this Alberta government has acquired at minimum 5 million bottles of acetaminophen and ibuprofen from Atabay pharmaceuticals. As soon as it arrives, it will be sent out to pharmacies across Alberta. I want to thank the efforts of this government as well as the efforts of Alberta Health Services in identifying and connecting with the manufacturer to get this much-needed medicine so swiftly.

With 5 million doses being the minimum amount we are receiving from the manufacturer, Albertans can be assured there will be a constant supply while the issues facing the national importation process are worked out. As the Health minister said earlier this morning, as soon as Health Canada completes the expedited approval process, the first 10 shipments will be sent to Alberta. Once here it will be mere days before pharmacy shelves will be stocked with acetaminophen and ibuprofen for Alberta's children. I have been told that actions speak louder than words. Well, Mr. Speaker, with 5 million bottles worth of action, that is strong medicine for Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

### 33rd Anniversary of l'École Polytechnique Shootings

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-three years ago, on December 6, 1989, 14 women were murdered in the école Polytechnique massacre in Montreal. Today we honour their memory. Today we remember 14 women whose lives were full of hope, love, and potential: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daignault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

1:40

Our government is invested in a future where women, girls, and gender-diverse people live without fear of violence. This means shifting to a culture of consent, engaging men and boys, improving our response to gender-based violence, and supporting survivors. Today we take action for those who have experienced gender-based violence and take

time to remember those who we have lost to it. Today we remember the 14 women who were killed in the Polytechnique massacre simply because they were women. We are committed to acknowledgement, education, action, and support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Renaud:** This morning I and my colleagues met with representatives from the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association to learn about the issues that are facing their members as part of the fall Legislature conference. The APFFPA are fierce advocates for issues facing firefighters and paramedics across the province, and opposition caucus has actively met with them over the 30th Legislature to listen, support, and bring their issues to this Assembly.

That is why yesterday our leader committed that an NDP government will ensure that all firefighters that worked in the Fort McMurray fires be eligible for catastrophic traumatic exposure presumptive WCB coverage, and these members would not have to meet the latency periods of up to 15 years of exposure for cancers. Unfortunately, when asked if the UCP minister of jobs would support this, his reply was that government had already done this. What a slap in the face to the firefighters who gathered from across the province, who are with us today in the gallery, and who've reached out to members of all parties to highlight their issues, members like the St. Albert firefighters, who are deeply concerned about a number of issues facing integrated services like St. Albert's that have been made so much worse by decisions that are negatively impacting their ability to serve the city.

Alberta's professional firefighters and paramedics have many issues that they need us to know about and act on: issues related to system improvement that will lessen their difficulty recruiting, issues about safe staffing levels, more regional autonomy, and so much more. What I've learned from the extraordinary St. Albert firefighters, all 126 of them, is that governments will continue to get it wrong until they directly consult with them.

Mr. Speaker, the APFFPA has already lost members who fought in the Fort McMurray fire. Other young members are fighting cancer and WCB and wondering what will happen to their families when they're gone in a few years. I hope the UCP will listen and join the NDP in ending the uncertainty for hundreds of Alberta firefighters that worked so tirelessly to save Fort McMurray.

Thank you.

### Montana Erickson

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I stand before you and the Assembly today with a heavy heart. At any given time a paramedic working in their community can be faced with a situation that many of us cannot ever imagine. On November 15 Jayme Erickson arrived at the scene of a crash on an icy stretch of Alberta highway. She didn't know it at the time, but she was responding to an accident involving her own 15-year-old daughter. It is every parent's worst nightmare to lose their child, but I can't comprehend the intense trauma of attending to one's own child.

To honour and memorialize the beautiful life of Montana Erickson, it's important to celebrate the amazing person that she was. I want the Assembly to know how much she meant to her family and how much she meant to so many countless others. Montana had a kind and graceful spirit that left a lasting impression on everyone who had the privilege of knowing her. She was a firecracker, a dedicated friend who would always stand up for the right thing. Montana was an athlete that finished fifth at the Canadian national swimming junior

championships. She was dedicated to helping people, which is why in her final hours she donated her organs, saving the lives of so many others. Montana is a hero. She meant so much to so many, and her presence will have a lasting impression on our communities and in Alberta.

May Jayme, her husband, Sean, their friends, families, and members of the EMS community find peace through this tough time. In honour of Montana and the daily sacrifice of our medics, let this serve as a reminder of the support and healing needed for our medics across this province. I promise to hold that dear to my heart and start that healing.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you. [Standing ovation]

### Gender-based Violence Prevention

**Member Irwin:** Today, December 6, is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. I ask this Assembly to take a moment with me and remember the lives of 14 brilliant young women who in 1989 were killed at an attack at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal, an attack fuelled by antifeminist violence and misogyny. These women were killed because they were women.

In the year since we last marked this day, roughly 170 women and 2SLGBTQ-plus people have died in Canada due to gender-based violence, a number that has risen in the past three years. We know that Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people are 12 times more likely to face gender-based violence than non-Indigenous people. Gender-based violence must stop.

Women, girls, two-spirit, nonbinary, and transgender people should be safe in all aspects of their lives. They should be safe in their homes, in their workplaces, in their communities, on their walks, and in their schools. They have every right to be safe here, yet we cannot stand in this House and say that they are when Alberta has the second-highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people in the country and 1 in 3 women in Canada will face gender-based violence in their lifetime.

This government cannot continue to mark the anniversary of l'école Polytechnique by saying "never again" without action. Words are simply not enough. The women of this province need tangible and immediate action. Their lives depend on it.

### Health Spending Accounts

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, not every Albertan interacts with the health care system in the same way. Many Albertans seek different kinds of care outside of the traditional doctor's office. Currently Albertans are paying out of pocket for services not covered by Alberta health insurance, things like the dentist, the chiropractor, counsellors, and other needed health professionals. Some Albertans desperately need these services to deal with chronic pain, additional medications, mental health, and other treatments, and our government has a solution.

Imagine for a moment a family of four with an extra \$1,200 to spend on these alternative services. Little Johnny needs braces; the family is able to use this extra \$1,200 to off-set the cost. Imagine that Johnny doesn't need the braces, but his little sister Sally requires orthotics. In any circumstance the family is able to pay for things that they need to make life more comfortable.

Recently our Premier has proposed putting a health spending account into action for all Albertans to use to pay for health expenses that are not covered by Alberta health insurance. We will invest \$300 a year into these accounts, and we will also incentivize and encourage employers to contribute to these accounts as well.

Mr. Speaker, this money would be beneficial for all Albertans. Anyone with compassion for those who are struggling financially

in this province can see how important this extra money will be, yet the leader of the NDP continues to call this idea incredibly radical and extremely damaging. I don't know about you, but those are not the terms that I would use to describe this health spending account that falls in line with the Canada Health Act. This spending account will enhance our health care system rather than damage it, like the NDP have told Albertans it will. Our government is here to stand up for Albertans, and we will continue to be creative in solutions for all Albertans.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is important for all of us as elected officials to stand up for Alberta. The difference is that my party knows we can do that without upending the Constitution, eroding democracy, and hurting investor certainty, and Albertans agree. According to a recent poll by Leger more than two-thirds of Albertans disagree with the act, and that was before this Premier made such a mess of it. No amendments can save this bill, so why doesn't the Premier admit that her bill doesn't need clarification, that what it needs is to just be quashed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition quoted Don Braid. Well, I see your Don Braid, and I raise you a Rex Murphy. Rex Murphy disagreed with the sovereignty act and my characterization of it yesterday as well. You know why he disagreed with the sovereignty act and my characterization of it? Because he said that Alberta has not been ignored. He said, "I must go all caps and exclamation mark. You could only wish in your sweetest dreams Alberta was ignored. In your deepest prayers you could only have hoped that Alberta and its energy industry had been ignored." This is the reason we need the sovereignty act.

1:50

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Murphy is going to Murphy.

Meanwhile others actually agree with us. Columnist Robyn Urback wrote that it seems like this legislation was "written in crayon." Rob Breakenridge said that the confusions and reversals are hurting public confidence. Long-time Harper strategist Kory Teneycke said that this will, quote, go down as one of the most ill-conceived pieces of legislation ever written. End quote. He then went on to call it un-Conservative. To the Premier: is she really saying that she's the only one that's right and everyone else is wrong?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Jack Major, who's a former Canadian Supreme Court justice – I think he knows a thing or two about the Constitution. What's so terrible about the province saying that if you want to impose on us, you'd better make sure you're doing it constitutionally?

Let me just continue with what Rex Murphy had to say. He said:

Madam Premier, you could only hope that Alberta was ignored.

The truth is it had the mean attention and been the unrelenting object of every global warming obsessive in the entire world.

And, during the last seven years,

of which the leader opposite was Premier,

your national government was either gently on side with the critics, gave a nod to their furious indictments, and [almost] certainly gave . . . no defence whatsoever.

And that goes . . .

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, today a Calgary city solicitor said that the best case scenario is that the bill be withdrawn, and this morning two Alberta constitutional experts, people that are still writing about constitutional law, Martin Olszynski and Nigel Bankes, wrote that separate and apart from the Premier's undemocratic power grab there are still other sections that render the bill unconstitutional. "Amendments will do nothing to address our most significant concerns." Why won't the Premier admit that her flagship bill is sinking and withdraw it today?

**Ms Smith:** I've quoted Jack Major, a former Canadian Supreme Court justice. I've quoted Geoffrey Sigalet, University of B.C. centre for constitutional law. Jesse Hartery, constitutional lawyer:

The federal government has its own executive branch to implement and enforce its laws. The provinces are free to assist in that implementation if they wish. But if they have different enforcement priorities, they have . . .

Listen to this word.

. . . the sovereign right to decline enforcement of federal laws and require the federal government to do so itself, with its own funds.

We know that this is a constitutional act, and we look forward to testing that.

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

### Respiratory Illness in Children

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago our party asked the Premier to address the shortage of over-the-counter children's medication, and we are very pleased to see progress announced today. However, this does not address the recent surge in pediatric respiratory illnesses in our ERs. In other provinces the chief medical officers of health are educating the public about what they can do to protect their children and stop the spread. Yet here? Crickets. To the Premier: is this total absence of public health leadership happening at her direction, and if so, why?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the chief medical officer of health routinely offers press releases and routinely gives direction to those who seek his advice. That's the role of the chief medical officer of health. It is the role of our Health minister and the role of Alberta Health Services to make sure that if children get sick, they have not only the medication that the parents need to be able to treat them, and that was what the children's acetaminophen announcement was about today. We've been working on this for weeks, and the fact of the matter is that Alberta Health Services did a terrific job of seeking out and finding supplies so that we can help.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, right now Alberta children are being hit with the public health triple whammy of COVID, influenza, and RSV. Recent reports show that Alberta has the highest rate of influenza in Canada and one of the lowest rates of immunization amongst children. Now, the Premier fired the former CMOH, and now we have a volunteer in charge of public health. To make matters worse, though, will the Premier confirm today that both deputy CMOHs have now resigned as well under her leadership?

**Ms Smith:** Dr. Mark Joffe has the respect of our Health minister and myself. He is not filling the role as a volunteer. He is filling the role as our chief medical officer of health . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** . . . and he is giving advice to those who are seeking it. The most important thing we can do right now is make sure that when a child gets sick, they have the medication that they need. That was the reason why we put all of our effort into securing a supply of 5 million bottles of acetaminophen and ibuprofen. It's going to make sure that families are protected.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I asked the Premier was whether or not our volunteer CMOH is getting the support of the two deputy chief medical officers of health that we understand have resigned. She hasn't given us an answer. Meanwhile nobody is speaking up to give appropriate information to our families. Will the Premier, as a result, stand and encourage – not mandate but encourage – vaccines as an important tool in preventing the public health crisis currently overtaking our ERs and threatening the safety of children, and if not, why not?

**Ms Smith:** The Leader of the Opposition knows that RSV is the most common childhood illness and that there is not vaccine for it. I think we all wish that there was a silver bullet, and I think that what we actually need to have is to ensure that people have the medication they need. I spoke with a pharmacist today, and the number one most important thing when somebody gets ill is that if they have a high fever, they need that fever to break. If they don't have the fever . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Okay. The hon. the Premier has the call. It would be helpful if the Assembly could hear her.

**Ms Smith:** The most important thing is getting the medication to the families because this is what is going on. When you have a high fever, if you can't get the medication, then parents are going the only place they know, which is the emergency room. We're addressing that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I just caution members, whether they're making on the record or off the record comments that may be unparliamentary, that if the Speaker can hear them, they certainly would be that.

The hon Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**Mr. Sabir:** For days now the Premier and the Minister of Justice have tried to convince Albertans that Bill 1 was not the undemocratic power grab that constitutional experts, lawyers, journalists, business leaders, and Albertans knew that it was. That's ignoring the fact that the sovereignty act will give this cabinet the power to unilaterally modify, suspend, and rewrite laws. That was the power that the Premier and the Justice minister wanted. Can the Premier explain why she wanted these almost dictatorial powers and who advised her that this was the way to go?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the act has always been very clear. Rex Murphy understands it. He says:

Your sovereignty act is a good thing. Why would I say so?

It is very simple, though perhaps not obvious [to everyone].

The act is not a constitutional challenge. It is not a matter of jurisdictional measures. Those are its surface points.

What it really carries is a demand for respect and fairness.

Albertans have been disrespected and they feel it on a personal level.

The impulse behind the act is an overdue call that Alberta receive the respect that is . . . its due. That the federal Liberals wake up to the fact that Canada is a Confederation, and that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** The Justice minister told the media yesterday that he provides legal opinion to the cabinet and described his role as being counsel to the Executive Council. This bill was a poorly drafted attempt at giving extreme power to the cabinet at the expense of the democratic rights of Albertans, and Albertans deserve to know how such a disaster was created. Will the Premier today authorize the Justice minister to speak to the public about the legal opinion he provided about this disastrous, undemocratic piece of legislation she tried to force onto Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I've been very open about the legal advice that we have received. All the legal advice that we have received has been how we craft this legislation so that it respects the rights of our Aboriginal citizens, so that it respects the Charter, and so that it enforces the fact that we are going to defend our constitutional rights under sections 92 through 95 of the act. All of our legal advice has been crafted in order to make sure it falls within those parameters. We made a couple of amendments based on the advice we got back from our caucus, and we're going to go forward with the amended bill. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

2:00

**Mr. Sabir:** The Justice minister and the Premier spent their days following the tabling of this act insulting business leaders and Albertans who warned about the consequences it would have on our economy and democracy. We deserve to hear from the legal advice provided to cabinet and know why the minister signed off on this terrible piece of legislation. Will the Premier sanction the release of the legal opinion the Justice minister provided to cabinet on Bill 1? If she won't, can she explain how she expects anyone to trust her or her government on pretty much anything?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Yeah. Everything is on the table. The reason why we're putting this legislation forward is to make sure that we are enforcing our rights under the Constitution. That is the beginning and the end of it. When you look at Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan First Act, the only difference that we did in this province is that rather than have an independent appointed tribunal as the starting point for any motion that we would put forward, we made sure that it was this Assembly. Any time we take a motion under the sovereignty act, we want to assert that MLAs begin the process because they are the duly elected members representing Albertans, and I encourage the NDP to support the bill just like their counterparts in . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

#### Health Care Services in Southern Alberta

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I am hearing directly from health care workers and patients in Lethbridge that the Chinook regional hospital could be on the cusp of capacity issues due to staffing shortages. This is the predictable outcome of three years of UCP war on front-line health care workers and a refusal of the UCP government to take responsibility and show leadership on our city's most important issue. People in Lethbridge do not want to hear excuses for our multiple and overlapping health care crises. Will

the Minister of Health stand today and explain the full extent of the situation in Lethbridge and provide details on what he will do to address it, not more excuses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. We are seeing a high volume of patients at the Chinook regional hospital both in the ICU and the emergency department. Now, as of right now, just to be clear, no in-house patients have been transferred due to capacity and no incoming patients have been diverted. That has not happened. Hospitals across the globe are dealing with challenges. We understand that depending on the volumes that are coming in, we have, as we've done pre-COVID and we're doing now, transferred patients on an as-needed basis, but that's not happening right now. We're providing the services to Lethbridge patients.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, then, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons the volume might be high in the ER is because 40,000 people don't have a family doctor.

Now, a few weeks ago I raised the alarm of Lethbridge only having one full-time obstetrician and gynecologist to support pregnant women. Month after month it has been the NDP opposition raising the alarm about the challenges to health care in southern Alberta. Not a word from any UCP MLA. I guess the Deputy Premier can't be bothered to read about that either. On the ob-gyn crisis, what is the Minister of Health doing to ensure women in Lethbridge can deliver babies in our own city?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working very hard on recruiting physicians across the entire province, including in Lethbridge. I'm pleased to say that 17 family medicine physicians have committed to the community of Lethbridge, 13 of which are awaiting their CPSA practice readiness. We already have a number started. We're looking forward to have the remainder start over the next number of months. This is a challenge that's not only being faced in Lethbridge but, quite frankly, across the province and around first-world nations in the world, but we are working very hard to be able to recruit and retain physicians, and we're going to continue to do so.

**Ms Phillips:** Now, Mr. Speaker, the UCP is far more concerned about the job-killing sovereignty act than fixing health care in Lethbridge, but let's see if we can get a local perspective here. Will the Deputy Premier from Lethbridge-East please explain about his priorities and what his plan is for – and he can take his pick of any of the multiple overlapping crises that his government has authored, whether it's capacity staffing issues, family doctors, EMS, ob-gyn shortage. What's the plan on any of these crises that the UCP has authored?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased about the plan that we're putting forward to address the challenges that health care is facing here in our province and, quite frankly, that provinces across the country are facing at the same time. We are investing more money than we ever had before: \$22 billion this year, an additional \$600 million next year, \$600 million the year after that. We have put in place an official administrator to help speed up the changes through AHS, and that includes working on key issues such as EMS, emergency departments, getting caught up on surgeries, and driving decision-making down. We have a plan recruiting, training, and bringing more health care workers into . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East is next.

### Children's Pain Medication

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been speaking with many of my constituents, and the recent wave of the flu and other respiratory illnesses has been a hot topic, especially access to children's cold medication like Tylenol and Advil. Across the country, pharmacy shelves are empty, and parents don't have over-the-counter meds they need for their sick kids. Ottawa is seemingly doing very little to provide a long-term solution. Would the Minister of Health be able to tell this Assembly and concerned parents across Alberta what our government might be able to do to help?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Today there is great news for parents throughout Alberta. The Premier and I were able to make an announcement that, in order to combat the shortage of children's pain medication, the government is working to acquire 5 million retail units of acetaminophen and ibuprofen. We've been working with AHS to find a manufacturer who can provide the medication, and I'm pleased to say that Atabay pharmaceuticals will be able to provide a steady supply for our province. Once Health Canada gives their final approvals, Alberta's parents will once again have access to the much-needed pain medications they need for their children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. That's fantastic news for Alberta parents. Given that these parents need these medications as soon as possible so that they can alleviate the fevers and teething pain affecting thousands of Albertan kids and given that this is a province-wide issue and parents in rural and remote areas of Alberta need these medications, too, can the minister tell us what the plan is to ensure that units of children's Tylenol and Advil are distributed to pharmacies all across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the member for the question. We know that parents across our entire province need access to these essential pain medications, and they need it quickly. That's why AHS will be using the pharmaceutical distributor McKesson to ensure every pharmacy in Alberta gets prompt and efficient shipment as needed. Now, McKesson is the same company that already is contracted to distribute vaccines to pharmacies throughout the province, and I'm glad that Alberta families will soon have access to these needed medications to alleviate their children's pain and their worries.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks, Minister. Given that Albertans are concerned about the rising costs and the current inflation crisis and given that many of my constituents are seeing rising costs on all essentials, everything from ground beef to lettuce, and given that families are having to make difficult choices on how they spend their hard-earned money, can the minister tell Albertans what steps are being taken to ensure that prices for these medications remain affordable for Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again for the question, Mr. Speaker. We know that many Albertans are under financial strain because of the rising cost of essentials like medication and groceries due to inflation. That's why we will ensure that parents will be able to pay approximately the same retail prices as listed now, which is about \$12 per bottle on average. Many Albertans are facing significant strain on their finances, especially families with children, so I'm pleased that we can take steps to ensure that everyone can afford to buy the pain medication that their children need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is next.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, there is an EMS crisis in Alberta. In Ponoka the mayor called on this government to step up and do more following a number of recent incidents, including one where volunteer firefighters were forced to take a pedestrian hit by a car to the hospital in the back of a pickup because they could wait no longer for an ambulance. Albertans deserve to know that an ambulance is coming when they call, but for far too many since the UCP formed government, it's simply not the case. Will the Minister of Health stand today, take responsibility for the crisis we're seeing in our system, and apologize to the first responders forced to take action because of the pressures added by the UCP?

**Mr. Copping:** I will take this opportunity, first off, to thank all of our paramedics and our first responders for providing services to Albertans, much-needed services, during these challenging times. Mr. Speaker, as you know, call volumes have upped 30 per cent since last summer, and we have made significant investments to be able to address the challenges. As part of Budget 2022 we invested \$64 million, thus putting more ambulances on the streets in Calgary and Edmonton as well as putting ambulances in rural areas. We also put in place a 10-point plan, and I'd like to talk more about that in a moment.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that there's another crisis, Minister – yesterday this minister tabled Bill 4, claimed that it would, quote, ensure stable funding for Alberta's doctors. End quote. Given that what it actually does is undo the catastrophic decision made by the Justice minister when he was in Health to let this government unilaterally tear up their agreement with doctors, something supported by every member of this government – now, given that that decision launched their war on doctors in the midst of a pandemic, devastated primary care, made it impossible for many to see a family doctor, and so much more, rather than pat himself on the back, will this minister apologize to physicians for supporting that awful policy?

2:10

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the case. We are seeing challenges in Alberta in regard to family physicians like challenges are being seen across the entire country. It has nothing to do with the policy; it has everything to do with the challenges of the pandemic. That said, I am very pleased and proud of the work that our government has done working with the AMA to reach this tremendous agreement, that was supported by more than 70 per cent of doctors. This agreement is focused on partnership. This agreement is focused on stability. This agreement is focused on innovation. It will help us attract and retain doctors to this province.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that that agreement is mostly about cleaning up the mess made by the minister to his left and given



that Albertans are coping with long wait times for ambulances and emergency rooms and for family doctors and given that this government has stated that they're supposedly focused on addressing the health care crisis but given that in order to actually address it, they need to take ownership for their failures and commit to real change, will the Health minister stand today and admit that when it comes to Alberta's EMS, hospital, and primary care system, he and his predecessor got it wrong and apologize for those that are caught in the wake of their legacy of failure?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to change. We are committed to change, and we are putting money where our mouths are. As part of Budget 2022 we are spending \$22 billion, the most ever, and on top of that, to be able to address challenges with COVID and get caught up on surgeries, there's more money allocated this year. We are putting another \$1.2 billion into the system, and we know we need to transform the system. That is why in September we announced MAPS, modernizing Alberta's primary care system. I'm looking forward to the presentation coming forward on that so we can move on that quickly as well as work in terms of expanding capacity across our entire system.

### Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, words matter. This fall the Premier said inaccurate ones, that unvaccinated people, quote, have been the most discriminated against group that I've ever witnessed in my lifetime. End quote. The Premier has yet to apologize for what she said. Hate crimes are on the rise, and her comments negate the experience of racialized and marginalized Albertans. Will the Premier stand up and offer a formal apology for her harmful words? Will she acknowledge the very real racism, discrimination, and violence that people face in this province?

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, this government stands strongly supporting all efforts against any sort of racism. We support every work from the community stakeholders for actions taken against any sort of antiracism work. I myself stood on the steps with community leaders to fight for antiracist remarks and actions in this province. We are committed to continuing that work. I'm pleased to work with others who are sharing our passion on this part.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that during COVID Canada saw a steep rise in anti-Asian hate, with a 700 per cent rise in some areas, and given that half of Chinese Canadians experienced some form of hate in relation to COVID-19 and given that anti-Muslim hate crimes have skyrocketed in Alberta, with Muslim hijabi women being the primary targets, can the Premier explain why she said that the unvaccinated are the most discriminated against because they couldn't go to a restaurant when many racialized Albertans have been subjected to real violence during the pandemic?

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, our government took actions, and we created a first-of-its-kind action plan that shows that this government is committed to working with marginalized communities to address racism in Alberta. This antiracism action plan will help combat racism and ensure marginalized Albertans have equal access to information, resources, services, and opportunities. I myself come from an ethnocultural minority. I can tell you that it hasn't been lost that we need to have the voices of all the marginal communities to be fair and to be . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that the answer is no and given that racialized and marginalized Albertans have spoken out against the Premier's harmful comments, expressing that they are upset over the wilful neglect of their lived experience of discrimination, and given that the Premier or any of her cabinet ministers seem unable to offer a sincere apology for the harm she has caused, can the Premier explain what her government plans to do to protect racialized and marginalized Albertans from the very real and oftentimes violent discrimination they face in this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to work with all that share this vision here. I invite the opposition to join us to fight for antiracism. Myself, I have grown from a community that experienced that. This issue is across all political stipes here, and we're committed to taking action there. I invite the opposition to join us to do more work in this area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Education Concerns

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is full of young families and students who are eager to make this school year a great one, one that offers educational choices, learning opportunities, and unique experiences in top-tier facilities. To achieve these goals for students, our teachers and front-line staff must be supported in order to give our students the education and school year they deserve. To the Minister of Education: what have you done to support our teachers and front-line education workers, who have dedicated themselves to supporting our students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We are committed to supporting our teachers and front-line workers in the best manner possible. Budget 2022 provides an education funding increase of more than \$700 million over the next three years, including \$142 million for the '22-23 fiscal year to support and hire teachers. Eight hundred more teachers and principals have been hired this school year as well as an additional 800 educational assistants. We're continuing to support our schools and making sure they have what they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that our public schools are currently facing challenges related to this year's flu season and the cyclical wave of respiratory viruses and given that many students have had to miss classes as a result of these seasonal illnesses, to the same minister: what are you doing in terms of supporting school boards as they tackle this year's wave of viruses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to supporting school boards, parents, teachers, and staff members by being responsive and providing clarity and leadership. School boards wanted clarity, and we provided much-needed clarity last week, with new regulatory changes. As the Minister of Health shared yesterday in the House, the spike that we saw is going down. We will continue to work with Health and school boards to ensure that the kids can learn safely in our schools and in our classrooms.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that countless schools in Alberta are in desperate need of capital improvements such as Spruce Grove composite high school and given that this school is bursting at the seams, with more students on the way, and given that renewing schools such as this one creates vibrant communities and a fantastic place for our children to learn, to the Minister of Education: what are you doing to follow through on the commitment to building and renewing our school infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to building and renewing infrastructure and revitalizing communities. That's why we've committed to building 66 school projects since we got elected, at a cost of over \$2 billion. I have to add: that's more than the members opposite did. Although I cannot comment on capital projects that may be considered for Budget 2023, we are committed to continuing to build more schools in communities that need them the most, as is evident by my mandate letter. We are supporting enrolment growth in growing communities, preserving and modernizing existing facilities, and revitalizing communities right across this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is next.

#### Children's Health Care

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children in Alberta are in crisis. Parents in Edmonton-South are losing sleep after finding nothing but empty shelves when they go looking for medication. Family doctors are moving away from Alberta, and any who are left aren't accepting new patients. ER wait times are stretching longer than a business day. This government's response has been unjust and hurts our communities. My question for the Minister of Health is simple. Will he stand up today and commit to prioritizing Alberta's children and invest public dollars in reducing wait times and sourcing supplies for pediatric care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I was very pleased today to announce with the Premier to address one of the issues raised by the hon. member, and that is the purchase of 5 million bottles of ibuprofen and acetaminophen, because the shelves are empty, and we know that that's a hardship not only on Alberta parents, but it's also a hardship on our children's hospitals because parents can't treat their children at home. With this announcement, we are moving forward with bringing 5 million bottles into the province once we get Health Canada approval, which I'm very hopeful we can do in the next few weeks.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that that's not enough because the current state of our system is so bad that hospitals have been forced to pause respite services and given that this crisis was preventable from the very beginning – children are getting sick from preventable illnesses, and we know the solutions that are needed to keep them healthy and well – will the minister take the responsibility and apologize to this House and all Albertans for failing our children and neglecting their needs in favour of his political games?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to appoint Dr. Joffe as the chief medical officer of health, and I was very pleased when he put out guidance to Alberta parents. We are in flu season. There are respiratory viruses that are circulating, so Dr. Joffe put out guidance to parents, and first and foremost in that was: go get your flu shot. I'm very pleased that we are actually running a flu campaign. Perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-South got the text – I know I got it on my phone – to go get your flu shot. We also asked parents to make the choice to get all the shots that are available for them so they can protect themselves.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that at least one minister is willing to tell Albertans to get their flu shot and given that he's previously known that Alberta's pediatric care is under strain and given that doctors and medical professionals across this province have stated that this government's Band-Aid solutions are simply not enough, will the minister commit to funding an expedited completion of the Edmonton south hospital so that my constituents can finally see some current measures to assist in health care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are taking action to be able to support our hospital system and to support strictly our system targeted at children. We've made a number of changes to be able to get staff where they're needed, and what we're doing is that we're expanding capacity, capacity across the entire spectrum, not only in hospital beds but also in the emergency departments. We have put in place, for example, in the Alberta Children's hospital a fast-track system so we can actually treat people immediately and allow them to go home, and as I already said, we're bringing in Tylenol.

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

#### Education Concerns

*(continued)*

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent ATA pulse survey shows the devastating impact of the current UCP government on students, staff, and families in Alberta schools. Challenging class sizes, growing complexity of students, and a lack of resources are just some of the issues that have resulted in unacceptable levels of stress. More than 90 per cent of teachers have said that they are exhausted at the end of each day, and more than half of them plan to leave the profession within five years. Will the Minister of Education apologize for driving teachers from the profession?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to share with the whole House that 1,253 teachers took part in the survey. There are over 46,000 teachers in the ATA. As well, there are other teachers that teach outside of the ATA. That being said, it is of prime concern for me to address the issues that are happening within our school authorities. Yes, we've been working on all these issues, including class size, and I've invited the ATA president and his executive to meet with me.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, given that the government is forcing school staff to work double duty by requiring school boards to ensure that all students have both in-person and online learning when there are large numbers of kids sick without providing any new supports – we need more staff in schools is the answer – and given that many schools have seen an average of 10 per cent

absenteeism among students and the CBE reported last week that 122 teaching jobs were unfilled, 54 support staff jobs weren't filled, will the Minister of Education finally wake up and listen to the students, staff, and families and what they've been telling her? They need help to deliver quality public education.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite took the time to actually listen to parents, she'd know that they want stability in their school system. If she took the time to listen to school boards, she would know that they want that clarity. In fact, what we provided was clarity to the school authority. The member opposite's old school board – she was a board chair for Edmonton public school division. The new chair, Trisha Estabrooks, said recently, and I quote: all Albertans now understand that it's not within the jurisdiction, nor should it ever have been within the jurisdiction, of individual school boards to make decisions that belong to . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the ATA survey revealed that the majority of teachers are using their personal funds to purchase resources necessary to help them deliver the UCP's disastrous curriculum and given that 84 per cent of teachers report students having huge gaps in their learning and not being able to understand the UCP curriculum, will the Minister of Education admit what educators have already been telling her for more than two years, that students deserve better than her disastrous curriculum, which is hurting our international reputation and Alberta students?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, what students deserve is less fearmongering from the other side. That's what they deserve. In fact, the curriculum is being implemented and is going extremely well. In fact, I met with every single school division, and you know what they didn't raise? They didn't raise the curriculum. They didn't raise curriculum implementation. No, they didn't. In fact, they raised transportation issues, mental health and wellness issues, and capital issues, but curriculum was not on it. In fact, I can go back to the fact that we had teachers piloting the curriculum through the pandemic who saw outstanding outcomes. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

### Health Care System (continued)

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been struggling to receive consistent, quality health care for far too long. I'm hearing concerns from my constituents that our health care system is unable to meet the current and growing demand. Their concerns are not unique, however. Across the province Albertans are demanding that Alberta Health take action and make the necessary changes to address the ongoing issues. Alberta Health Services is under reform and as a first step has seen appointed an official administrator, Dr. John Cowell. Can the Minister of Health please explain why replacing an 11-person board with a sole administrator was deemed the best solution for our health care crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for her question. We know that the health system is under strain here in Alberta. This is similar across the entire country, in all provinces across the country. The part-time AHS board did great work, but we need full-time leadership to provide urgent, efficient, effective, timely, and decisive leadership to improve productivity

and health care outcomes. The appointment of Dr. John Cowell as the official administrator fills that need perfectly, and I am looking forward to seeing the changes that he'll be making over the coming weeks. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's government has acknowledged that the current system was not working and that there's an overdue need for responsible health care and has since committed to making Alberta Health its number one priority and given that Albertans can no longer continue to accept increasing wait times and are eager to start seeing prompt changes in their health care system, can the Minister of Health outline what next steps will be taken to address the issues of our health care system? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks once again to the hon. member. Dr. Cowell has hit the ground running, and we have identified four areas that need his swift attention: first, to improve EMS response times; second, to decrease emergency room wait times; third, to reduce wait times for surgery; and finally, to develop long-term reforms through consultation with front-line workers and others to drive down decision-making. We need quick action on these goals, and I'm confident that he and AHS will make the changes necessary to alleviate the strain on our health care system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta Health Services is actively working towards operating at its fullest potential and aims to have reforms completed as soon as possible and given that Dr. Cowell has been entrusted to work closely with health partners and drive the necessary changes promised to Alberta families and given that immediate action is vital to ensuring Alberta families have access to the first-class health care they deserve, can the minister outline how Albertans will be assured that the official administrator is successfully effecting change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks once again to the hon. member. We all know that you manage what you measure. That is why we have actually put in place a number of measurements to be able to track the progress that AHS is making. These indicators include reduced response time from an emergency call to ambulance arrival, reduced waiting times in Alberta's emergency rooms, reduced surgery wait times within clinically acceptable wait times, the number of calls appropriately stepped down from 911 to Health Link. These are just a few of the measures that we'll be using to track progress, and we are taking the steps needed to make sure that right changes are being made to strengthen our health care system.

2:30

### Kananaskis Conservation Pass

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, since June 2021 Albertans have been forced to pay to visit Kananaskis. The government's K pass program has raked in \$50 million, dollars that should never have been taken from the hard-working people of this province. Even worse, \$2 million of that went to a security firm to enforce the pass. This government cost Albertans millions and lied about where that

money went, all while this government operates on a surplus. Can the minister please explain to Albertans why they continue to pay for this pass? Can't we all just enjoy Kananaskis for free, the way Peter Lougheed intended?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much for that question, my very first of this session. I'd like to talk about our parks here. I like to promote them everywhere. As for the K pass, it's under review with a new Premier and a new crew. We want to ensure it's fair and good and accomplishing all that it should. Viewing a mountain, its peaks like a steeple, it's a fact that parks are for people.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that there once was a man from Nantucket . . .

**The Speaker:** No preambles.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Many people in Alberta want to spend their time off enjoying Alberta's mountains, but given the cost-of-living crisis, the government's absurd K pass program has made a trip to the mountains infeasible for many Albertans and given that the Premier herself has described the K pass program as ridiculous and said that she was in agreement with the NDP that this pass should not continue, can the minister tell us when Albertans will not have to pay the K pass any longer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thanks again for the question. I'm resisting the urge to go into Dr. Seuss rhyme again.

This government is focused on the concerns of Albertans. We're concerned on affordability, health care, and dealing with an obstructionist federal government. However, we can walk and chew gum at the same time, so we are working on other issues, too, including the K pass, and making sure that our parks are serving the needs of Albertans and our visitors and, of course, increasing tourism. The K pass is one of those things we are reviewing and working on.

Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that many people choose to live in Alberta because of our unique access to outdoor landscapes and given that the usage of Alberta's parks has hit record numbers during the pandemic, with provincial parks seeing around a 48 per cent increase in visitors since 2020, and given that Albertans' budgets are simply stretched too thin at the moment, why is the minister still reviewing this when he knows full well that this would help Albertans visit Kananaskis Country today? Don't wait for a review; just repeal the K pass today. Why can't he commit to that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thanks again for the question. It's always interesting to hear the NDP talk about cost and how things are costing Albertans. Of course, the NDP brought in a carbon tax that they didn't campaign on, and that increased the cost of everything for all Albertans. Now, we know that they're supporting their comrades in Ottawa regarding the tripling of the carbon tax. Maybe it's a news flash to them, but in order to travel and enjoy the parks like Kananaskis, the people of Alberta have to pay for gas and increased carbon tax fees. If they want to do something for Albertans . . .

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the minister of jobs if he would echo the Official Opposition's pledge to support firefighters who responded to the Horse River wildfire in Fort McMurray. Nearly 2,500 structures were destroyed, and firefighters were exposed to massive amounts of toxins and carcinogens for days without the ability to decontaminate. The minister declined and instead suggested individual cases should come to him. Why won't this government do the right thing, commit to extending presumptive cancer coverage to these heroes? They should not have to reach out to the minister individually on a case-by-case basis.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, that's not what I said, but I would like to acknowledge right now that firefighters have a very demanding job. We need to have their back when it's necessary, and it's necessary now. That's why Alberta was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to put forward presumptive coverage. Every single firefighter in Fort McMurray or otherwise in Alberta has that ability to be presumed and have presumptive coverage. But what I need to say right now is that with this experienced higher risks for firefighters – and that's on a continual basis; not just the Fort McMurray firefighters – why didn't the NDP, when they were in government, do something about it?

**Ms Gray:** Given a Fort McMurray firefighter with 10 years of service fought the Horse River wildfire and was subsequently diagnosed with kidney cancer, given this Fort McMurray wildfire firefighter and his family were denied coverage when he didn't meet the cancer latency period – he has since passed, and his family is still appealing four years later – given a Leduc firefighter who fought the same wildfire is currently going through the appeals process after being denied coverage for the same reason and given the minister stated these firefighters already qualify for presumptive coverage when they do not, will the minister meet with the APFFPA and other firefighters?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we're always monitoring these complex issues. They're evidence based. If the evidence proves that this is caused as a result of their service, it's included in the list. We're constantly updating it. But would I meet with firefighters? I've been in politics for almost 20 years, and I'll meet with anybody any time, especially those people that serve Albertans.

**Ms Gray:** Given that yesterday the minister was unaware that Alberta is no longer the leader in the country in presumptive cancer coverage, given that Yukon, B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, and Newfoundland are now covering cancers Alberta does not, like penile, pancreatic, and thyroid, given that Alberta firefighters are being denied coverage for those cancers and given we have new research like that from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, will this minister and government commit, like the Official Opposition has, to updating presumptive cancer coverage based on the latest science?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, that party was in power just three years ago, and what did they do for the firefighters and for this? Nothing. We are working on it. It's a complex matter. It's evidence based, and we're working to balance what's in the best interest of firefighters and the best interest of Albertans because they work together.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

### Highway 3 Twinning

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 25 of this year a decades-long-awaited announcement was provided to southern Albertans. The Premier along with the transportation and Infrastructure ministers joined me in Medicine Hat to announce the twinning of not only the stretch of highway between Taber and Burdett but also the twinning of the whole of highway 3. To the Premier or the minister of transportation: why was it so important to announce this critical piece of infrastructure now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy for twinning highway 3. I was proud to stand beside him, the Premier, and the Deputy Premier to announce that we are twinning highway 3, and that'll be a four-lane highway from Medicine Hat all the way to the B.C. border. It'll safely keep up to the economic growth in southern Alberta, especially when we're seeing huge gains in the agriculture and oil and gas industries down there. As a government we will attract investment, secure jobs, and protect communities all across this province.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Minister. Given many in southern Alberta have been waiting for a long time for this announcement and given that the corridor between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat has become a major agrifood processing corridor in Canada, can the minister tell us what this important twinning project will do to grow the agrifood processing corridor in this area?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. Member for Taber-Warner has not only advocated to twin highway 3 but has also helped to bring in investment all across southern Alberta. This government has helped to create a game changer investment to expand 200,000 more irrigated acres in southern Alberta, and that's attracted ready-to-eat potato product processors, sugar beet processors, expanded our livestock sector, so these types of investments that the government is doing really do help job creators in this province, which have strong families and strong communities all across the province.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, given that I mentioned in my earlier question that the stretch of highway between Taber and Burdett is to be twinned and given the fact that this stretch of road will be the first of eight sections to be twinned, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please provide this House with more information about when shovels will be in the ground on this first section?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to answer the question: next spring, but not if, though, Alberta had federal NDP representatives as their provincial government. Now, the NDP want to bring in restrictive contract arrangements that will actually spark labour wars here in the province of Alberta. Look what the NDP just did in B.C. They increased the cost of provincial construction projects about 20 to 30 per cent. The NDP drastically reduced the number of bidders on these projects, cutting the number of eligible contractors, although if they are friends of the NDP with their big union bosses, they do get

to bid on the contracts, but we're never going to see that here in the province of Alberta with this government.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 14, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is resumed, no more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 15, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is resumed, no more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 5

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave for first reading of I guess it would be Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader has a tabling.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Official Opposition met with members of the APFFPA, the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association. I am tabling five copies of their three lobby papers: Addressing the Crisis in EMS and Pre-hospital Care; Government of Alberta Restriction on Alberta Pension Services; and Presumptive Cancer Coverages – Firefighter in Alberta Cancer Registry – Catastrophic Traumatic Exposures.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two tablings today. The first one is a white paper by the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers showing that grocers make 2 per cent margins. I have the five requisite copies here.

The second one I have is a report by Dalhousie University showing that there are many reasons for the higher prices we're seeing on grocery store shelves, but one of them is not gouging from grocery retailers. I have the five requisite copies as well.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Ordres du jour.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**

**Bill 3**

**Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm more prepared for this one, so thank you very much. I'm pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Albertans value their land. They work hard for it. They work hard to maintain it. They work hard to improve it. It's their home. It's their place of relaxation and recreation. And for some folks, like our farmers and ranchers, the land is also their livelihood. Given how hard Albertans work for their land and how important it is to them, Alberta's laws should be there to protect property rights for the owners of this land. However, under current provincial law it's possible for Albertans to have their land taken away from them through adverse possession. Now, this means that someone who has been squatting upon privately owned land can go to court and potentially claim ownership if they've been occupying the land for 10 years.

As it stands now, adverse possessors can't try to claim public land or municipal land or land in irrigation districts. This proposed legislation wants to make this the same for privately held land. Allowing squatters to take land away from hard-working Albertans, who are the rightful landowners, is unfair. It creates stress for landowners because they have to constantly police the property and to protect it from adverse possession; for example, by monitoring property lines and continually fixing fences. Someone who has inherited or paid for the land and is the registered owner shouldn't have to face a constant and nebulous threat of losing it. The Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, proposes changes which will remove this threat and give private landowners the same protections that are currently in place for public land.

Bill 3 proposes to amend three existing pieces of legislation: first, the Law of Property Act; second, the Land Titles Act; and, third, the Limitations Act. Amendments to the Law of Property Act would abolish adverse possession. Amendments to section 69 of this act include additional core powers to resolve any disputes that could arise.

The Land Titles Act is being amended to permit a court order issued under the new section 69 of the Law of Property Act to be registered at the land titles office once the office is certain there will be no appeal of the court's decision. Amendments to the Land Titles Act will also protect titles that are already existing when these have been issued on the basis of a court order finding adverse possession.

The Limitations Act is being amended to remove limitation periods for a claim to recover possession of real property and for a claim respecting lasting improvements or encroachments under the Law of Property Act. Specifically, when a registered owner starts an action to recover possession of land, the adverse possessor will not be able to use a defence of adverse possession. Amendments would also keep in place a 10-year limitation period to recover possession of real property for an adverse possession claim that begins before adverse possession is abolished.

If these changes pass, folks will no longer be able to go to court to claim adverse possession of land that they are on, and if someone is possessing land that they are not the registered owner of, registered owners can get a court order to get the land back at any time. Now, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake: these proposed changes

are dearly sought by Albertans. This fact is based on consultations and recommendations from various interested groups. Back in 2016 the Property Rights Advocate recommended abolishing adverse possession in their annual report, and in 2020 the Alberta Law Reform Institute also recommended abolishing adverse possession here in Alberta.

A number of hon. members as well, hon. members of this Assembly, led consultations with stakeholders and the public over several months in 2021 and '22 as members of the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights. Now, part of this committee's mandate was to consider whether the law of adverse possession should be abolished. During their consultations the committee received many heartfelt pleas and requests from Albertans, farmers, landowners to abolish it and recommended as much in their final report. I want to thank this committee for listening to Albertans and making this recommendation on their behalf. The work of the committee along with the recommendations of expert groups send a strong message that adverse possession should be abolished.

Now, before I finish, I also want to give a shout-out to Mr. Ken Allred, who is the former Member for St. Albert, a former professional land surveyor, and who has had concerns about adverse possession for over 50 years. In fact, 10 years ago, in 2012, he had a private member's bill proposing to abolish adverse possession in this province. Unfortunately, at that time, 10 years ago, that private member's bill died on the Order Paper. Now, Mr. Speaker, the question of abolishing adverse possession has been brought before this House before, and we're very happy to continue the work that was started by Mr. Ken Allred.

I'm hoping that Bill 3 will have a different output than his private member's bill and that both sides of this House will support getting rid of someone's ability to essentially steal another person's property. If passed, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, will send a clear message that squatting cannot lead to ownership. It would allow Alberta's landowners to use and to enjoy their property without the ongoing burden of making sure that no one is using it and the constant worry of potentially losing their land. It will strengthen Alberta's property rights law and bring peace of mind to landowners across the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to move second reading of Bill 3. Thank you.

**2:50**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill 3. Are there are others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak at second reading of Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I've taken the chance to read the bill, something which I think all members of the Assembly should do before they stand up and speak and debate on a bill, actually read the bill. Sorry. I know that shouldn't have to be said, but given what we've seen from this government caucus over the last week or so, I think it's a timely reminder that one should know the bills. When they're going to speak out and make accusations about what it means, you should first understand what it means.

I've had the opportunity to look over Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, I think there's pretty much consensus within the members of the – I don't want to presume for my colleagues, of course, but there does seem to be a consensus around what this bill is intended to address, which is, of course, to essentially limit or eliminate the common-law adverse possession rights.

Most people might be familiar with the idea of adverse possession, maybe not in its formal sense of the word but the idea of squatter's rights. The idea that if – we've all heard the old saying, Mr. Speaker, you know, that possession is nine-tenths of the law – you've possessed a piece of land or property for a period of time, eventually it becomes yours: that's sort of the underlying principle behind this sort of adverse possession, that if an individual has occupied an area of land for a significant period of time and has exercised use of that land, then it becomes theirs and they have a legal entitlement to that land.

Of course, there are many who would have strong objections, and we know that based on consultations that were done not only by this government through their Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, but also there have been consultations done by numerous other bodies, including the Alberta Law Reform Institute, to really evaluate what the perception is by Albertans, particularly rural landowners, about adverse possession. Generally speaking, you know, it tends to fly in the face of what we understand is fair and right, that somebody might be able to take claim to your property simply by using it or are occupying it without your permission. That does seem to be an affront to most people's understanding of what's fair and what's right.

Now, what we do know is that the actual claim of adverse possession rights under the common law has actually been quite rare. It's not actually something that has been exercised to prove an entitlement. But, again, it goes back to this idea of principles and what is fair and what is right. So it has been, you know, sort of an issue that has not been addressed statutorily in Alberta for some time.

In fact, I note that a number of jurisdictions do already have – they've addressed through legislation, through statute rights to basically eliminate adverse possession. Unfortunately, Alberta has not followed that, and it's a little bit, you know – it seems contrary to what we kind of know about the strong sense of pride that Albertans, and particularly rural Albertans, take in their land and their property.

Of course, often on rural properties there isn't clear delineation the way we would see it in urban centres, where you have an idea of what your property line is: you've got a city, municipality comes out and assesses it, and you've got your property lines and you usually have a fence or something. Of course, in rural areas it may not be that clear, so often encroachments onto somebody else's land are not as obvious. It may be, you know, a section of a piece of land. But we do know that that concern is out there, and it is high time, I believe, that we address that through legislation.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'm happy to see that this bill has come forward, and I know that a number of the members of our caucus as well as the government caucus sat on that select special committee on real property and heard from a number of Albertans that wanted to see adverse possession, you know, essentially limited or eliminated through legislation. I'm glad to see this come forward. One of the things that I think – of course, in second reading we're talking about things in a high level. I have read the bill, and there are a couple of questions. It seems to align with a number of the recommendations that have come forward through a number of bodies, including the Alberta Law Reform Institute.

The Alberta Law Reform Institute issued I believe it is in 2017 – they did a fulsome kind of analysis of adverse possession, and they issued a final report that sort of outlined the recommendations about the pieces of legislation that would have to be changed and amended to address these issues around adverse possession. Further

to that Alberta Law Reform Institute Report, we know that, you know, our Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights went out and consulted and basically reached similar conclusions about how legislation should be amended.

One of the things that I, you know, was looking for – and I want to give credit, actually, to an article that was written on September 10, 2019, by Stella Varvis. It's sort of a blog post put on *ABlawg.ca*, which is a law blog. Shout-out to anybody who watched *Arrested Development*. Bob Loblaw's law blog. No? Okay. Anyways, it's a law blog written by University of Calgary law professors on various issues. Stella Varvis wrote a blog post about the end of adverse possession and sort of outlined a number of things that we should look for when it actually comes time to do that.

The first issue that should be addressed is that, you know, we know that in adverse possession usually there's a 10-year limitation period. An individual has to have occupied it for at least 10 years, and that occupation must be exclusive, open, notorious, and continuous. That's the sort of standard. Stella Varvis, in her blog post, was essentially saying: okay; look, if we're going to be eliminating adverse possession through statute, we need to make sure that we aren't sort of messing with – it's probably not the term she used; it's not the term she used – any adverse possession claims that had come before this law had come into force. It's basically saying that if there have been adverse possession claims that have been made prior to any amendments being made, they should be held in force, and the same should apply for any pending claims. If there are any matters before the courts at the time that this bill would, say, perhaps be proclaimed, then we would ensure that those claims could proceed under the previous common law.

I believe that that is addressed in the bill, in Bill 3. My reading of it suggests that section 1(3) of Bill 3 does seem to address that by basically saying that, you know, when this bill would come into force and that any – I'm looking at the addition of section 74.1 to the Land Titles Act and subsection (2), which says that "any successful claim to quiet title recovered under the former provision continues," which seems to suggest that, yes, any claims that happened before the act comes into effect would be continuing. That seems to address that concern as well as that any ongoing claims would also continue. So I believe that appears to be addressed.

These are the kinds of questions I'm posing with the hope that perhaps the Minister of Justice could also comment as to whether his reading is the same, that it does address these issues. I assume he is capable of reading the bill and understanding it.

Another issue that was raised in this law blog was about whether claims to recover possession of real property can be brought in at any time. Section 69 of the – and I'm going to remind myself – Law of Property Act, yes, talks about what happens when somebody who does not legally have title to land but has been occupying and using the lands for a period of time and made improvements, significant improvements to the land. In that case it would be, for example, somebody has, through a mistake, perhaps not intending to deliberately try to possess somebody else's land, occupied on land and built something. Maybe they've built a building, a farmhouse, a house, some sort of improvement . . .

**Mr. Dach:** A well.

**Ms Pancholi:** . . . a well, dug a well. There's a good example from the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

But they've actually invested and improved on the land. What happens to that person's claim to that property? Of course, there needs to be some clarity as to how that's addressed, and one of the suggestions was, of course, that we ensure that, similarly, there is no limitation on which an individual who has actually improved the

land may be able to recover their title to that. Again, that limitation does seem to be removed in Bill 3, but I do seek clarification from the Minister of Justice to confirm that. It does seem to be – I'm looking on page 5 of the bill, I believe it is. Yes. It amends the Limitations Act section 3(2), which does seem to suggest that there is no limitation period on a claimant who has made improvements to the land. That, again, seems to be addressed by the bill.

3:00

The fourth issue is that the blog suggests that there should not actually be significant changes to the definitions in section 69 of the Law of Property Act, that essentially it doesn't change who is defined as somebody who has an interest and that there's no requirement that there be proof that the individual had a mistaken belief. Again, I believe that that is addressed in the bill, but I would seek confirmation from the Minister of Justice on that issue.

The next thing that I sort of looked at, Madam Speaker, was the recommendations that came out of the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, of course, that members of both government and opposition caucus were part of, because they did come forward with a number of specific recommendations around adverse possession. When looking at this final report, which was issued in June of this year, the committee advised that it recommended adopting the Law Reform Institute recommendations that I referred to earlier and indicated that, yes, they support a recommendation that the Land Titles Act be amended to abolish any future claims of adverse possession as well as that the Law of Property Act be amended to provide that an assign does not have to prove the belief of the person who made an improvement.

That, Madam Speaker, refers to the idea that when somebody has made improvements on the land and that maybe gets passed down to somebody else, a family member, because when we're talking about this kind of possession of land, we're often talking about it going back decades and generations, it's not the responsibility of an heir or an assign to follow to actually have to prove that, you know, their parent, their grandparent, their great-grandparent had a genuine belief. They don't have to prove that; it's simply assumed because that's often an impossible thing to prove. That's what the committee recommended, that it not be required to be proved, and I believe that's reflected in the bill and that the limitation periods be addressed as discussed in that law blog that was issued. That's another recommendation that came from the committee. Once again, it appears that that has been addressed.

I outline this, Madam Speaker, only to say that, you know, those are the checks and balances that we would normally go through when we're looking at these kinds of changes. We would look at what committee work has been done, what consultation has been done, what, shockingly, the experts believe on something, and in this case – right? – the experts from the Alberta Law Reform Institute have done the analysis. I believe in following expert advice and considering that seriously. Again, that should not be a controversial statement, but it seems to be more and more controversial with this government and this Premier.

You'd look at all of those pieces. You'd look, of course, at the landowners themselves and their feedback, and I believe that was very much the work of the committee, to travel around and do that kind of analysis and listen to landowners and hear what their concerns are and then to draft legislation that meets those recommendations, legislation that has thoughtfully gone through all of the proper processes: legislative review committee, cabinet committee, all of those things, the rigours and processes that we would expect from strong legislation. That's what we'd want to see. I can say that it appears that with Bill 3 that has happened. I can't say that that's happened for all the bills that have been brought

forward by this government and this Premier so far this session, but certainly in this case it does seem to reflect that.

Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't still questions for implications for, for example, the courts. If we are going to remove this common-law principle of adverse possession, are there implications for the courts, especially when removing the limitation periods for claims related to improvements that have been made on land? Has any analysis been done, you know, by the government as to whether or not there will be any implications for the court system? I think this is an important question to ask, Madam Speaker, as we know that our court systems continue to be under enormous strain with limited resources. What are the implications? Are there any? I think that's a question to ask.

The other key issue that I would raise, Madam Speaker, which – I would have to go back, and perhaps those members who were on the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights can speak to this when they have an opportunity. I'd like to know what the feedback was from Indigenous groups such as First Nations and Métis associations about what consultation was done. You know, when we're talking about adverse possession, we're usually talking about adverse possession on private land, not Crown land. There are obviously different considerations that happen on Crown land, but I would want to be satisfied that we have consulted appropriately and that there has been an opportunity for feedback and assessment of any lands where potentially Métis and First Nations may be occupying to be sure that there are no implications here that may affect their treaty rights. Again, I will put that to members of the caucus, government and opposition, who may have sat on committee, to say what feedback they would have received, because I didn't hear any reflection of those comments from the Minister of Justice when he introduced this bill for second reading.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, this is really a bill that I think we can fundamentally support with some questions answered. We want to bring our legislation with respect to property rights in line with what other jurisdictions have done. We know that this is an improvement over Bill 206, which was a private member's bill that was brought forward that didn't quite think through all of these pieces regarding limitation periods, and it appears that, you know, the committee's work as well as this bill are an attempt to address some of the challenges that were brought forward in that private member's bill.

You know, we think it's deeply important that we have clarity around a lot of things related to property rights, economic investment, and making sure that we know that property owners, both landowners as well as businesses, require certainty. It's a principle that we fundamentally agree with, and particularly now, when Alberta is at position, at a time of potentially great opportunity, certainty is more important than ever. That's what we hear loud and clear from the business community, from the oil and gas sector, from those who have major projects. They want to know that there is certainty. That's why we do not support any legislation that's going to bring greater chaos and uncertainty to our economy such as Bill 1 brought forward by this government.

Our principles have been pretty clear on this, Madam Speaker. We know which way the economy needs. When we talk to all of those individuals – now, I've been doing this work; I know my colleagues have as well – across the province, they want to have some certainty with respect to their rights, and they want to have certainty with respect to investments and the growth of their oil and gas sector or agriculture or forestry. Whatever the sector, we need that kind of certainty.

So this is a bill that I believe, Madam Speaker, we will or at least I can say that I will support. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to



it today, and I look forward to the opportunity to speak to it again at further debate.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on second reading of Bill 3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to rise and to speak to Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. As a member of the committee that did travel the province to do consultation on the potential changes that were going to be under what was Bill 206 and now have been drafted as Bill 3, we heard quite a bit of feedback in relation to a variety of different things that could be changed. I am pleased to see that Bill 3 does incorporate the recommendations that came out of the final report and that it looks like there will be a shift to address some of the concerns that were brought forward.

I think one of the things that I also appreciate about Bill 3 and something that all members of the Chamber can appreciate is that this was a bipartisan committee where we were able to travel the province together and do consultation together in a collaborative way and have something that was created that, I think, addresses the concerns that were brought forward. You know, the opposition and the government do have the ability to work together and to come up with something that addresses the concerns that Albertans have. My hope is that the government will choose to listen to the opposition on some other things and maybe withdraw their other bills.

[Mr. Orr in the chair]

But in relation to Bill 3 I have a couple of questions that I'm hoping at some point the minister will be able to address, and part of that was around the submission that the RMA submitted to the committee. I don't see it. In fairness, you know, I'm still going through the bill and trying to make sure that everything is in there.

3:10

One of the things that was brought up by the Rural Municipalities association was the concern around the financial compensation when it comes to the various districts that municipalities have to develop when it comes to land management and the concern that the compensation for landowners, if the regulation is changed around the impacts of private property rights or removing this land-use planning authority, could become problematic for municipalities. Now, I don't know if that is addressed in this piece of legislation, if that has been acknowledged, or if we are saying that the financial remedy component that exists in the bill would be primarily between two landowners side by side or something that has been structurally built. But we do know that there have been concerns in the past that were brought up in regard to a quarter section of land that's been used or had had a highway expansion zoned for it or an intersection potentially being built and then a dispute occurring between who actually owned that land, whether it was landowner A or landowner B, and who was going to be compensated for the loss of that section.

The question, I think, again, goes back to: how will this work in practicality when we're looking at municipalities trying to do appropriate planning? You know, there will be concerns around economic growth, looking at the fact that there are also the concerns around external impacts like noise and pollution, traffic around certain areas. How will that be addressed under these pieces of legislation to ensure that municipalities have the capacity to be able to grow and work with their REDAs and incorporate their expansion or their growth within their communities while also

ensuring that we are protecting landowners' rights? I do have that question.

I do also have the question in regard to the financial compensation piece, which is the section on the Law of Property Act. Section 69 is repealed. Then we have section 69(1), lasting improvements or buildings made on wrong land. I am anticipating that this is just going to be able to grant the courts the ability to move through all three of these different components, whether it be that the order would be that the improvements be removed or abandoned, that an easement be put and limited in time, or that the improver acquire the land on which the improvements are made from the registered owner of the land in the amount and what terms the court thinks.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

As long as we are working in a way that there is an agreement by the courts that either the structure is removed – I think the example that my colleague mentioned was around whether or not it would be some form of a well or a fenceline. We could be looking at, again, if we're talking about expansion of roads – some of that is pretty permanent infrastructure; it's not as easily removed – ensuring that there is compensation that is appropriate.

I am curious. When the minister is able to respond at some point, I don't believe that there is any type and if it would be a regulation or not around what those compensation levels would look like. Is it going to just be an assessment of property value? Is there going to be impact? What will the scope be in the ability to ensure that that is happening and that the dispute is being able to be resolved? I know we heard some examples at committee of an ongoing dispute around a fenceline that was actually within city limits. It was between two homeowners, and there was a significant dispute between what side the fence was on and whose property it was on. This dispute has been going on for it sounds like a significant period of time. I think they were at, like, 10 years of trying to work with the city on getting the zoning re-evaluated and property lines reassessed. I couldn't even imagine the relationship between the two neighbours in relation to trying to live side by side while disputing whether or not the fence is on their property or someone else's property but that it was something that – it just continuously kept coming up and has been going on for a significant period of time, so it would be interesting to hear, you know, sort of the remedy of how this would work in a piece like that.

Now, I know we had some other submissions that also came in through CAPP more specific to the bill that we were currently consulting on, which was Bill 206, which, you know, dropped off the Order Paper and quickly became Bill 3. Well, not quickly; I think we spent quite a few months travelling the province. But there were some recommendations, I think, that came through that are not reflected in the bill, and I think there's fairness in the submission that some of the pieces that were submitted to the committee were outside the scope of what this piece of legislation really was intended to do.

But there were some comments made around the burdens of the AER and trying to ensure that there is no duplication of effort between what business and stakeholders have to go through and whether or not this piece of legislation would actually impede or impact any regulatory or policy shifts through some of that evaluation or regulation that needs to be done. So I'd be curious to hear from one of the ministers in relation to if there is any overlap or any potential conflict between what, let's say, for example, the oil and gas industry already has to go through in getting approval for, you know, being able to build a new well or looking at pipeline or any of those kinds of things, if this will create a second level that they will have to then work through in relation to what they're already doing with the AER.

I think we would see that similarly with our grazing lease holders, and of course some of the forestry industry may have some questions in relation to this and just how those land management agreements are going to be reflected. How does this bill interact with those pieces of legislation? Of course, we want to ensure that when we're looking at property rights – and this piece of legislation is addressing the concerns that were brought forward at committee, but also we want to make sure that it hasn't now created a second stream. Is there a way to ensure that policies or regulations are being streamlined between this piece of legislation and anything else that currently exists when it comes to working through those approval processes?

I would be curious to hear from the Minister of Justice if he consulted with his counterparts in the ministry of agriculture, in the Ministry of Energy as well as the ministry of – what is it now? – forestry and protected areas? [interjection] Oh, yes. Sorry.

**Member Irwin:** Yes. Thank you so much to the Member for Edmonton-Manning. I'm just blown away by her knowledge on this, and I know she was one of the committee members as well. You know, I just thought I'd jump up when she mentioned – she's been asking a lot of really important, critical questions of the Justice minister, so I am hopeful that we will hear from the Justice minister. We've got a lot of questions for him.

I'm also hopeful that we'll hear from the members opposite. You know, this is one of their bills, and they've said that many of them are quite passionate about this. They mentioned it in the opening remarks, that they're hearing from a lot of their constituents, so it's a little intriguing that so far it's only been NDP members speaking to this bill. I honestly want to learn more about it. I can admit that I'm no property rights expert, so I would love to hear from the UCP members about, you know, what the impetus is and what they're hearing from their constituents. Again, admittedly, I'm no expert on this. That would be my request.

3:20

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Member.

Actually, maybe just for a point of clarity, Madam Speaker, for myself, is the chair of the committee allowed to speak if you've taken on a different role?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry. What do you mean?

**Ms Sweet:** Well, the member that was the chair of this committee is now, I believe, a parliamentary secretary, so are they allowed to speak to the bill? Just out of curiosity, not that I'm requesting that he does, but I can't remember what all the different rules are.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yeah. Of course, he can speak as a member, just like any other member, for his allotted time frame on any number one stage of the bill or amendment.

**Ms Sweet:** I couldn't remember if parliamentary secretaries were allowed to speak.

**The Deputy Speaker:** But perhaps what you are seeking is best done in a committee stage process for more of a back and forth, and you'll get what you seek. But he can speak when he has time.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you. With all the changes I wasn't quite sure who is considered a private member and who's part of executive and all the things now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll clarify. In question period, no, that wouldn't be allowed in that relationship, but certainly in this Assembly you can do whatever you want, almost.

**Ms Sweet:** Oh. Well, let's see. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, that could be fun.

Anyway, going back again to some of the other questions that did come up, I do recognize that this is intertwined with a variety of different ministries in how this can be interpreted and how this can be impacted. You know, coming from being in government, I do know that you can create one piece of legislation, and then that will sometimes have trickle effects into other pieces of legislation, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

Again, I am hoping that at some point we'll get some of the clarity around specifically, I think, some of the submissions that were provided to the committee. You know, we had some agricultural producers that also submitted to the committee asking for some clarity around the surface landowners regarding their rights when it comes to pore spaces and specifically the groundwater, expanding of property rights, the right to sell, protect, and the right of compensation, which I think is covered in here.

The pore space question, though, which came up from a variety of different stakeholders: pore space wasn't just from crop producers, but pore space came up from our Western Stock Growers', Grazing Leaseholders Association. Maybe I missed it, and I'm happy to get clarity again, but I don't know if this question was answered or if the government has a plan around that. Maybe it's something that's still in the works, or maybe it's not in the works. It is kind of an ongoing conversation, I think, when we start looking at carbon capture and what that means.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Other members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm actually really excited today to stand up in support of Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. As the member was stating previously, I was the chair of the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights. We engaged this work. We submitted, of course, the report midsummer. I was extremely excited about the opportunity to be able to be the chair of this initiative, travel around the province, and engage in this very important conversation which does surround property rights, which many of us expressed as actually being one of the foundational pillars of our freedom in our country.

Throughout that process we engaged in many different ways. You know, we had some limited capacity at times during COVID, but of course we did have the opportunity to be able to travel around to locations throughout the province – north, central, south – and allow individuals to be able to approach us and bring to us the issues that mattered to them most.

What I would say is that throughout that process adverse possession came up numerous times, and what I think I found was shocking more than anything was that Alberta was an outlier in this area. Adverse possession, this archaic law better known as squatters' rights, had been abolished in many other provinces. With that, we recognized: what was the purpose of this? Why was this still a thing in a province like Alberta, that, of course, had been so extensively surveyed that there was really no reason for this kind of archaic law to exist anymore?

With the written submissions we saw many specialists that spoke to the impacts of what can happen in adverse possession. Anecdotally, even in my own constituency I heard stories of a farmer that approached me and had mentioned, you know, his experience and how he almost lost 48 acres of land where his neighbour had rebuilt a fence. It seemed insignificant at the time, but when you consider the length of this fence – it was only off roughly just over 20 feet, but when you calculate the amount of land over the length of that fence, it equated to a substantial

number of acres, which is really important for a farmer to be able to have in order to be able to sustain his farm.

You know, it was those types of stories that really brought this legislation to the top of the pile. It just was so outdated, and we kept hearing this over and over again both in the written submissions and the virtual meeting that we also had, that we hosted here in Edmonton. We had a lot of people call in and speak about adverse possession and how it needed to be removed as soon as possible. Even one individual shared stories that this isn't just a rural issue, that this practice of adverse possession has been enforced in urban situations. When I went and approached this individual, we unpacked this conversation, recognizing that he lived in an urban setting where a fence had been moved for longer than 10 years. The neighbour had claimed that land, and it actually put his own house – his own house, the house he lived in – into noncompliance, which severely would impact his evaluation of his property when he goes to sell.

When you think about these instances and you think about what the impact is on these landowners and consider that for a lot of people in Alberta, their largest investment is their home – this is where people put the bulk of their money for their entire lives. This bill, Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, that does abolish adverse possession, is protecting landowners, and it's protecting one of their greatest investments. I think that what we need to focus on here right now is doing that. You have to be able to protect landowners when it comes to their property.

This is a fundamentally easy change, considering the archaic nature of this bill and the fact that multiple bills, through the private member process, have actually been introduced in this Legislature. So that gave us a foundation, I believe, as a government to be able to go back to the minister and say: "You know, there have been multiple attempts on this. This is an extremely outdated piece of legislation." It protects property owners and their largest investment in many cases, which is their property.

I think this Alberta-led conversation is extremely important. With that, members opposite also partook in this engagement throughout the province. They were there to be able to see individuals come up on a variety of different issues. I consider Bill 3, you know, an important part also of our platform commitment as a UCP government. One of the things we promised Albertans we were going to do was to look at how we were going to continue to strengthen property rights and protect them, being the fact that it is one of those fundamental pillars of our freedoms, of our democracy here in Canada. With that, of course, we heard a lot of different issues. This one just presented itself and kind of rose to the top of the pile first and foremost because of how outdated it was, because of how many individuals had approached us on the situation, on the impact it would have for the loss of value of land and actually loss of land itself.

3:30

We've said it through and through. Farmers, when it comes down to it – you think about how many miles of fence that a farmer can have. It's pretty hard for him to be checking if any of those fences have been moved, and even the ability to be able to survey that is a cost to those individuals. With adverse possession in place, I mean, the amount of time and effort a person would have to put into ensuring that he's not going to lose land if fences are moved is just outrageous. We want our farmers focused on what they should be doing, which is producing high-quality products, which is what Alberta is so well known for, and putting foods on the table for not just Albertans but Canadians and the world.

This was a learning experience for me as the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, and as the chair it was a huge

learning exercise. Though this bill is simple in essence, you recognize that it has three overlapping pieces of legislation that it does affect in order to have the full protection. I have reviewed the bill and spoke to the minister directly, and I do believe he's accomplished that quite well considering the overarching legislation that currently exists in the province to be able to ensure that this practice doesn't continue. I'm really happy today to see that this is a priority here in the fall.

You know, bills like this are incredibly important for the future of Alberta. Even the thought of adverse possession, though very uncommon, when you do mention it to the average individual, they're actually, I think, blown away that this is something that still can exist in today's society considering the technology that we have to be able to survey our land, to stake our land, just the thought alone that because a fence is placed in the wrong position for a period of time, somebody can just all of a sudden gain the use of that land permanently, take it away from somebody else. So I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice for putting this as a priority in Bill 3 and bringing it to this House. I think this is going to have an incredible impact for Alberta moving forward, and I'm glad to see that archaic pieces of legislation like this are removed and that this government continues with its platform to continue to protect and strengthen property rights.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for my chance to be able to speak to this incredible bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to rise this afternoon, provide some comments this afternoon around Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. You know, I do appreciate the Member for Highwood for jumping up and providing some comments. It's nice to get that back and forth a little bit, you know, because it was supposed to be a joint effort. The whole topic of property rights has certainly – let's just call it what it is. It's dragged on for far too long, you know, past this government, past the former NDP government, past that. It's been going on for a while, so it's nice to see some results that are actually happening.

Now, of course, I would be a little bit remiss, Madam Speaker – I think that, as one of the members of that committee as well, there were some missed opportunities maybe, which presented themselves a little bit more when we had the chance to do the public engagement and the on-site engagement as well. I know that there were some suggestions around maybe some acts that should be considered that, unfortunately, I think the committee didn't when thinking about its recommendations, its deliberations, and how it could better serve Albertans.

Just one quick example of one of the acts that wasn't considered was the Water Act. I know, from a couple of the engagement sessions that I attended, water came up around the property rights, potentially. I can't remember the location – it might have been Eckville – where a gravel pit was close by a property. There were concerns, of course, quality of life around the dust and whatnot. That was certainly brought up from that individual but also potential contamination of their well. You know, had we looked at giving ourselves the ability to consider that act, we would have been able to have a lot more information to be able to come to some recommendations. Certainly, water did come up several times. Now that I think about it, when we had that recent issue with a potential I think it was a feedlot near one of our lakes, certainly having to consider the Water Act might have been helpful in some of these. Again, just a missed opportunity on our part.

Now, there was one thing I did want to point out because my friend from Edmonton-Whitemud had pointed out around potential

consultations with Indigenous, Métis. I guess I was dismayed that we weren't able to go do on-site consultations. I certainly know the pandemic played a very, very large part in making that extremely difficult. I really would have liked to have seen the opportunity to get that important input from those folks for us to consider in terms of recommendations that we gave to the government. Again, just kind of a little bit of a missed opportunity. I don't know. They always say that hindsight is 20/20. Could you have done something better in terms of trying to reach out, make those connections? You know, it's easy to shine that crystal ball and try and come up with an answer.

As the chair had mentioned, adverse possession did come up quite a bit. That was certain. It was definitely a fascinating experience for me. I'm certainly no expert when it comes to property rights. Some of the scenarios that people brought up during the consultation process and the in-person events were quite the learning experience, to say the least. I know one of the things that actually came up several times – I think it was the in-person meetings that I know I was able to attend; I couldn't get to all of them – was around damage to properties, I guess maybe more specifically fencelines with hunters entering onto properties to go hunt and, unfortunately, damaging the property and owners stuck with the bill to try to replace that. The chair had mentioned, you know, that trying to keep track of all of that fenceline is hard enough as it is, but when you do keep track of it and all of a sudden you have a big hole in your fence, that's certainly a problem. I would have liked to have maybe seen something in Bill 3 around that because that did come up several times from individuals and people that would write in to our offices because they knew all the members of the committee.

Also, I think it might have been Eckville again, too, where there was actually a little bit of a confrontation between one of the landowners and some hunters. That was certainly a little bit disturbing, to say the least. You know, it would have been nice if, again, we could have maybe had the opportunity to see something about that in Bill 3.

One of the other questions that's kind of popped up in my mind, because I know this now provides access to the justice system . . . [interjection] Actually, I see a member across looking for an intervention. I'm very excited to let you speak up. Please.

3:40

**Mr. Hanson:** I just wanted to comment. You said that you wanted to see something added into this bill. I think one of the things that I heard as part of that committee was the need to keep this adverse possession as a single, stand-alone bill. It's been introduced many, many times over the years in the province as part of an omnibus bill, and it has always failed. The number of times that it was put forward as a single, stand-alone bill by a private member, it ended up falling off the Order Paper. I would hate to see that happen again. I'd just like you to comment. I'm sure you heard that same thing from the previous MLAs that came and spoke to us at those meetings, that they were just concerned about: please, just make it a stand-alone and get it through.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. Great comment. Maybe I'll take that opportunity to make that plug, you know, for: maybe we could find some way to extend the ability for the House to consider more time for private members' business and hearing all private members' bills, not necessarily kind of pushing them to the bottom of the Order Paper.

You're right, yeah. We did hear, again, that focus on adverse possession, how many times, you know, it was tried and died on the Order Paper, which was unfortunate. Obviously, with a government bill we're able to address that a little bit more.

Again, as a government bill, you know, I've seen bills with not a lot of pages. I've seen bills with a huge amount of pages. Just, I guess, an opinion, maybe a missed opportunity, maybe not: at least we are dealing with, as the chair said, the one that did rise to the top of the list, which is the adverse possession. There are just opportunities, I think, where we could have expanded that.

The other thought I had was around people being able to access the court system in terms of trying to seek restitution. Hopefully, that never, you know, happens too often. We know it can be a little bit of a costly endeavour, going through the court systems, trying to get a decision.

I guess one of the questions I would have to the Justice minister is around, you know: should we see a rise in these cases heading to the justice system, what kind of pressures might that put on our courtrooms? We do know that they are a little bit strained at the moment, trying to get through things. Albertans are excited that they're finally going to be able to seek justice, to be able to get some compensation, and then it gets bogged down in the courts, and eventually we get to it, and there's yet more waiting. We want to try to reduce that waiting period. I'd be interested to see what the Justice minister has heard on that from our fantastic folks in His Majesty's court system and how, potentially, that caseload could be affected.

I think that covers most of the stuff I'm hoping to cover at this moment. Again . . . [interjections] Oh, I've never had so many intervention opportunities, Madam Speaker. I'm beside myself here. I think I saw two. Maybe I'll take advantage of both of them.

To my friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague from Edmonton-Decore. I appreciate what he's added to the record on this debate, particularly given his role as a member of that Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights. I appreciate that we've heard from the chair. We heard from the Member for Edmonton-Manning. Reviewing Bill 3 in conjunction with the report on the committee, it seems clear that the committee received presentations from a number of different stakeholders, both written submissions, oral presentations from stakeholders who were particularly invited to give their perspective and also oral presentations from members of the public at public meetings. Having listened to the comments, I just was curious to know more about the member's experience travelling in Alberta and hearing from members of the public on these issues and how well canvassed they were, what people came in to stress most.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Yeah. Thank you for that. Certainly, there were some diverse stories that were brought forward. Some had mentioned adverse possession coming up, damage to property, you know, with some hunters, certainly not all of them, but there were cases where damage was occurring. That kind of came up a little bit.

Potential gravel pit locations: like I said, I believe I heard that at the Eckville meeting. There was concern from a property owner around the location of a gravel pit. When they first bought the property, they were under the understanding that nothing like that was going to be close by, let alone I believe it was literally across the street from them.

My comments around water. They were concerned about water contamination. I know we heard some comments around – I'm trying to remember which section it was. Maybe it was Edson. I believe we heard some comments down in that area, some of the same things again, with adverse possession and whatnot coming up.

I think we had the ability to take in those comments, and had we expanded maybe the list a little bit, it would have provided the committee a bit of an ability to be able to consider more of the

comments. You know, as was discussed earlier, the attempts at trying to fix adverse possession over the course of the years failed because it was private members' business and the constraints that we have around that. It's good to see. Like I said, could we have maybe had the opportunity to add some other stuff or maybe even introduce another bill that also included some of the things that the committee heard, I think it would have been an opportunity to address the concerns of Albertans that we heard.

I'm looking forward to further debate, getting a chance maybe in Committee of the Whole. As we know, second reading is not that good for being able to jump back and forth with questions and comments. Hopefully, the minister will get a chance to also join us during Committee of the Whole, answer some of those questions, provide some of the comments, feedback, perhaps some secondary consultation.

Like I said, the committee wasn't able to consult with First Nations, Indigenous, Métis, I think, as fulsome as we could have. Perhaps the minister has had the opportunity to be able to speak with all of those communities. What kind of comments did he hear back around that? You know, are some of those addressed in Bill 3 to make sure that treaty rights aren't being either bypassed or stomped on in any way? What was the feedback, potentially, from those communities around Bill 3 and what we could have seen further had we had the opportunity to be able to hear in person from those communities?

Again, you know, with just the circumstances at the time and the situation, the committee had to ask for an extension because of the health restrictions that were in place and the concerns there. We weren't able to meet as soon as we had really hoped. That's nobody's fault. It was just the situation at the time. Hopefully, we've managed to maybe make up for some of those.

I look forward to more of the comments from members through discussion. Likely I'll jump back up as I remember things from our tour and what Albertans were looking for in terms of changes to property rights.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:50

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for your comments. It was quite enjoyable to be part of that committee and get out and meet some people and get to travel the province. We do have a beautiful province, and we did manage to get all over, I think, to just about every corner of it. I thank the chair for, you know, doing a great job. I stood in for him, I think, at Edson at one point.

I'd also like to thank all the security team that came with us to all these events and the staff that made all this possible. When you talk about attendance at these things, there's a lot that goes into organizing these town halls all over the province, and you never really know who's coming. You get a few submissions from folks that are going to show up, and then, you know, there were times where 10 minutes before the meeting was supposed to start, there was the committee and security and staff, and then finally people would start trickling in. So they were quite well attended.

But I think one of the big things about it was that we did hear quite clearly that this had to be a stand-alone bill, so I hope that the opposition understands that. The people that attended the meetings and put submissions forward to the committee understand that we're not ignoring all the other things that came up there and the importance of making sure that this was a government bill, not a private member's bill. It was a stand-alone bill so that it didn't get

lost in the shuffle of a whole bunch of things. Those were the important things.

With that, you know, just some brief comments. A real property report is something where, if you bought or sold a piece of property lately, part of the process is getting a real property report. Sometimes it can be a fence that's been there for 40 years. When they do the survey, it's, like: uh-oh, this fence is out of place. Even if it's a foot or two feet, a 150-foot lot in Edmonton – some lots can be up to \$100 a square foot. Now, who owns that \$15,000 piece of land? That's not really of any value to anybody, but it is part of the real property report. Those are the things that happen quite often. That's why this is important, to get this thing straightened out.

It happens quite a bit out in the country, too, where even municipalities used to, you know, to the best of their abilities, build the roads on the grid line. Now they've found that some of them are maybe six metres onto a private person's property, in the wrong place, and now they've got to go back and purchase that land off them. So it is very important that we recognize those things and give municipalities, especially, and property owners as well some way of remedying those situations.

I just had those brief comments to make, and with that, Madam Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to move second reading of Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this bill. There are approximately 11,000 physicians in Alberta, who work hard each and every day to improve the lives of Albertans. Their tireless work and selfless commitment are truly appreciated. Now, since becoming Minister of Health, a top priority for me has been to focus on a collaborative relationship with physicians, looking at partnership and innovation. I have listened to physicians. I acknowledge the challenges the health system is facing and have committed to doing something about those challenges.

I was honoured to be at the negotiating table with the Alberta Medical Association, and I'm very pleased that 70 per cent of voting physicians supported the new agreement back in September. Madam Speaker, part of the new agreement outlines the government's commitment to repeal section 40.2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. This section of the act allows the government to terminate compensation-related agreements, and the bill before us proposes repealing this section, thereby revoking the government's ability to terminate its agreement with the Alberta Medical Association. This legislation is no longer required given the terms of the new agreement with the AMA. Repealing this clause follows through on our promise to the AMA and to physicians and is a further step forward in building our relationship.

Now, the government's new agreement with the AMA will help stabilize our health care system, target the areas of concern, and support Albertans' health care needs. With its significant investments this agreement provides a path forward to address the current challenges and issues brought forward by physicians during our conversations, and I want to take a few moments to go over some of the highlights of this very important agreement.

Now, the agreement covers four fiscal years: April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2026. Alberta physicians will continue to be among the highest compensated in Canada, with an average increase of 4 per

cent over the four-year term. The new agreement puts a strong priority on primary health care, including a sliding scale of rate increases, with the highest increases for family physicians at approximately 5.2 per cent. Lump-sum increases will be given to primary care networks of \$20 million in each of 2022-23 and 2023-24, and this is to provide additional support for primary care while modernizing Alberta's primary care health system work takes place.

With additional targeted spending, including new supports for rural physician recruitment, spending on family medicine overall will increase by approximately 8 per cent over three years. About \$750 million in new funding over four years is being invested to stabilize the health care system, including \$260 million in targeted funding. This targeted funding is going towards physician recruitment and retention, incentives for a physician to work in rural and remote northern communities, physician support programs, and funding to assist physicians with rising business costs.

There will also be 1 per cent rate increases for physicians in each of the next three years and a 1 per cent recognition lump-sum payment for the exceptional contribution physicians have made during the pandemic. Now, this lump-sum payment is worth approximately \$45 million, or roughly \$4,000 per physician. It will go to the AMA by the end of the year for distribution to their members. Now, we are also working with the AMA to implement the 1 per cent rate increase for 2022-23. This increase applies to fee-for-service and alternative relationship plan rates, providing an additional \$46 million to physicians. As outlined in the new agreement, the rate increase is heavily weighted to specialties facing the greatest pressure such as family medicine. We are working with the AMA to distribute these increases across and within specialties. Again, they will be effective April 1, 2022, retroactively and are expected to be finalized and be able to be paid out by March 31, 2023.

Now, the first three years of the agreement provide rate stability, with no market corrections for above or below market rates. Year 4 will see implementation of results from a comprehensive market rate review based on comparisons with Ontario-west jurisdictions. There will also be a global rate adjustment to reflect general economic and fiscal conditions at that time. There is a potential for binding arbitration for both the market rate review and the global rate adjustment should the parties not be able to agree on what's appropriate.

Additionally, there will be gainsharing in years 3 or 4, where the AMA can receive 50 per cent of any savings achieved by keeping cost growth below population and complexity. Physicians will have a shared responsibility to review compensation rates relative to market and help bring them into alignment with peer provinces. We'll be working closely with the AMA during the review process as well as during the global rate adjustment through joint committees, and we'll be working together as partners to address other key issues related to physician compensation.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to say that our partnership even goes beyond this new agreement. We are working collaboratively with physicians on modernizing Alberta's primary health care system initiative, also known as MAPS, where Alberta's primary health care leaders and national and global experts are being brought together to identify immediate and long-term improvements to strengthen Alberta's primary care system. MAPS is about building on the strong primary health care foundation that exists in Alberta to create a system where everyone has access to a family physician or primary health care provider no matter where they live in the province. Modernizing primary health care will also help to ease pressures on our hospitals. Working closely with the Alberta Medical Association, primary care networks, and other primary care leaders across the province, three advisory panels are

addressing major issues, identifying key areas for improvement, and recommending both new opportunities and ways to ramp up existing strengths in our primary health care system.

Madam Speaker, we are also working with physicians as we implement the AHS reform plan. This work includes improving EMS response times, decreasing ER wait times and wait times for surgeries, and developing long-term reforms through consultations with front-line workers, pushing down decision-making within AHS. Decision-making will be restored to the local level and local health professionals. Regional innovation will be incentivized to provide more medical services, and more health care professionals will be attracted to Alberta.

4:00

As we look to the future, Madam Speaker, Alberta's government is committed to working with physicians as partners in improving our health care system. Physicians have faced significant difficulties in the past few years, so today I especially want them to know that Alberta's government is deeply appreciative of their critical role. Their voices and leadership are crucial to our health care system, and we look forward to standing side by side with physicians in the weeks, months, and years ahead in order to provide the health care services that Albertans deserve and Albertans need.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 4, and I ask all members of this Chamber to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and respond to the minister's moving of second reading of Bill 2 – or Bill 4. Pardon me; I can't count. Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022, an innocuous name for a bill that is a sign of the failure of this government, a significant failure that has done significant harm to the Alberta health care system and Albertans' ability to access care.

I join the minister in thanking the 11,000 physicians who serve Albertans. I absolutely agree that a collaborative relationship with those physicians should be a top priority. However, it was not this government's priority when they passed Bill 21 in the fall of 2020 and awarded themselves the sweeping power to tear up the master agreement between the Alberta Medical Association and the government of Alberta.

The minister has said that he is bringing forward this bill today because that legislation that they passed that fall is no longer required. Madam Speaker, I would contend that it was never required. The government did not need that nuclear option, particularly given that the master agreement that this minister just congratulated himself and his government for signing could have easily been negotiated at the table in 2020-2021. It did not require the government tearing up a master agreement and embarking on a two-year campaign of attack against physicians in the province of Alberta, one that, again, has done significant harm to our public health care system and has hurt Albertans' ability to access care.

This government chose to press forward with an aggressive plan that certainly, to all appearances, appeared to be an attempt to break the Alberta Medical Association and pit physicians against each other, a cynical ploy, Madam Speaker, part of an overall aggressive posture which this government struck at that time and continued throughout the pandemic against health care workers and particularly the individuals that those health care workers elect to negotiate on their behalf and represent their interests.

Let's talk about how this came about, Madam Speaker. Let's look at a little bit of the history. As I said, in the fall of 2020 this government passed Bill 21, awarding themselves the power to tear up the master

agreement with physicians. Shortly after that or around the same time, the then Minister of Health, now Minister of Justice, put forward 10 proposals to the Alberta Medical Association for changes that he insisted were essential to cut costs and save dollars in the health care system.

That included things like making changes to the complex care codes that allow doctors to spend more time with their patients and ending the practice of good-faith billing, which allows physicians to be able to bill for looking after a patient even if that patient does not have their Alberta health care insurance card with them or have their number. That is something that is used significantly by physicians, for example, say, at the Royal Alex hospital here in my constituency when they are dealing with individuals who are living houseless and do not have ID. They insisted they had to impose a cap on the number of services a doctor could provide a day, also known as a visit cap. They insisted that they had to end coverage for drivers' medicals for seniors.

Doctors reached out to me. They expressed a lot of concerns, particularly family doctors, Madam Speaker, about the impacts this would have on their ability to continue to provide care. Particularly, rural physicians had deep concerns with some of the other things that this government was trying to force through around charging them for facility fees and other things that would make it harder for them to be able to practise in the community and in hospital, but these were things that the government insisted were so essential that they had to pass legislation awarding themselves the power to tear up the master agreement and went ahead and did so in February of 2020.

I apologize. I've been speaking of 2020, fall of 2020, with Bill 21. It was fall of 2019. In February of 2020 they tore up the master agreement. I apologize, Madam Speaker. This was a long war, so it's easy to get confused on the dates.

They proceeded after tearing up that agreement to go on an aggressive campaign against doctors on social media, accused them of being greedy, accused them of being entitled, skated right up to the line of accusing them of engaging in fraud on their billing. There was a government website under Alberta Health making these contentions, many tweets from the then Minister of Health, who now serves as the Minister of Justice, this as we found ourselves going into a global pandemic.

As we went into the pandemic, the minister talked about how happy he was about supporting primary care and the steps he's taking. Well, you know, going into that pandemic, family doctors in Alberta were begging this government to take action on providing them with a code to be able to provide virtual care because we were locking down and individuals were not able to go and see their family doctor in person. We were at the first wave. We did not know what the parameters were. That was the situation.

So this government said, "Sure, no problem; we will give you \$20 for a visit," which is half, approximately, Madam Speaker, of what doctors normally earned in-clinic. Other provinces were stepping up and providing fully funded virtual codes. This government told doctors: you can have half of what you normally make. They let that sit for weeks at the same time as they had just signed an agreement with Telus for their Babylon phone service for people to be paid full – doctors on Babylon were paid the full amount, \$37 for a visit, while this government was grinding Alberta family doctors down at half that rate for the same provision, the actual doctors of the patients, who knew their histories, as opposed to an anonymous walk-in doctor through an app.

That is what we had from this government towards physicians in the province of Alberta. We had a minister that went to yell at a doctor in his driveway. The push-back was bad enough that when this government forced its new physician funding framework through in

April, they ended up having to walk back portions of it on April 24 because their own MLAs pushed back so hard against their minister's wrong-headed approach and because of the feedback, the blowback they were getting from their rural constituents and rural leaders.

Multiple physicians across the province were threatening to withdraw service. You know what? A number of those physicians did end up picking up and leaving, Madam Speaker. We lost a number of family doctors across the province as this government continued with its war on physicians. They threatened the funding for physicians' benefits and support programs. They seized control of them from the Alberta Medical Association and then threatened the continuance of funding. These are for things like mental health supports for physicians in the midst of a pandemic. That is the position this government took and pushed for months, all empowered by what they passed in Bill 21 in the section that they are repealing today.

As physicians began to say, "Well, forget it; I am not going to work under these conditions," the Minister of Health, now the Minister of Justice, went to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to demand that they change their rules to make it harder for physicians to be able to leave an abusive relationship. That is the context for the bill that we are looking at today. It's not just family physicians, Madam Speaker. This government continued up until this year to put pressure on Alberta Health Services to force contract changes on hospitals that on more than one occasion, to my understanding, led to near job action that would have impacted the ability for Albertans to access surgeries and required the direct intervention of this Minister of Health to prevent.

Hospitals like the Red Deer regional hospital are still not able to regain the surgical capacity they had before the pandemic due to a shortage of anaesthesiologists. You know, in March 2021 I spoke with physicians at the Red Deer regional hospital. They told me they'd lost about six anaesthesiologists in the previous three months. I spoke with another anaesthesiologist here in Edmonton. Just this past June he noted that we currently have, in his estimation, about 350 FTE anaesthesiologists, so about 450 actual but some of those are part-time. He said that's about 15 per cent short of what we'd need to get back to pre-COVID capacity.

#### 4:10

He noted that, in fact, we have continued to lose anaesthesiologists from Alberta to jurisdictions like B.C., Vancouver, Victoria. He said that it's about 12 anaesthesiologists in the previous year to year and a half. Other jurisdictions are actively headhunting those positions from Alberta, and they were leaving in part due to the chaos created by this government, by their decision to pass that element of Bill 21 and go on their extended war against physicians. Indeed, I've even heard reports that the Royal Alexandra hospital here in my constituency will be short about two anaesthesiologists through till next September.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that the deal that this minister signed – now, I will give the minister credit. This minister did work hard. He had to because he inherited a mess. He inherited a flaming Dumpster left behind by the now Minister of Justice, former Minister of Health. This minister indeed had to spend those two years undoing that damage, and it was significant damage. I would say that that damage is yet to be fully repaired either in terms of the damage it has done to our health care system, Albertans' ability to access care, and indeed trust with physicians in this province.

To be clear, the minister talked about how happy he was about the level of support he got for this agreement. Let's not forget the agreement that was brought forward by the previous minister and was soundly rejected by physicians because they did not trust this government. Indeed, this minister was left with that mess to have to clean up. I will give him credit for getting to that 70 per cent support of the physicians that signed.

Certainly, I am happy for physicians that they are in a better position. That lump-sum payment for family doctors is certainly welcome, Madam Speaker, but it does not make up for this government grinding them down throughout the midst of a pandemic, refusing to provide them with the proper virtual code, which again was another step that I will say that this minister did move forward on and did put through on January 1 of this year, but again he was undoing the damage that his own government had done.

Now, we know we have tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of Albertans who are struggling to access a family doctor. The minister rose and spoke about bringing family doctors into Lethbridge today. That's wonderful. I look forward to seeing those doctors actually getting out and working in the community, but it would have been far better if they'd never been driven out in the first place.

The minister has talked about the work that he is doing with Alberta Health Services to recruit anaesthesiologists to the province of Alberta. I believe him. I believe they are in fact doing that work. Now, talking with a local anaesthesiologist, that work has been incredibly difficult and continues to be incredibly difficult, and it is because of the damage this minister and his government did before.

Again, I'm not discrediting the work that the minister is putting in. Absolutely, I believe he is working hard, and again, pretty much he has to. This government is simply making up the deficit, filling in the hole that they dug. That has cost Albertans.

Currently in the Bow Valley there is not a single doctor that is accepting new patients. We're still waiting for those physicians to get in and fill that significant, gaping deficit in Lethbridge. There are still clinics that have closed and have not reopened. We have significant challenges across our system.

Of course, we are seeing those impacts now as we see these surges in ERs across the province. We're continuing to see the challenge now because Albertans can't get to a family doctor, so then they turn to their local emergency room. Unfortunately, that leaves us in a position, then, where those emergency rooms are overcrowded. They're overflowing. We do not have the capacity because, of course, this government, through its policies during COVID-19, exhausted the health care workforce, not just doctors, nurses, and many others throughout the system, and we have a critical staffing shortage in pretty much every area.

Now, the minister, again, I'm sure if he were to rise now, would point out that this is the case in every jurisdiction across Canada, that there are critical staffing shortages, but that does not excuse the fact, Madam Speaker, that at every step this government made it worse.

The fact that other jurisdictions are also struggling to find doctors does not give this government a good reason to go on a war against them and take all of the steps that I have outlined today, that aggressive posturing, that attempt at what could be colloquially called union-busting although, of course, the Alberta Medical Association is not actually a union, though certainly the government tried to paint them that way. The fact is that, yes, other jurisdictions are struggling, but Alberta is the only jurisdiction where the government has consistently been at war with physicians and has consistently attacked other health care workers over the course of the pandemic and, indeed, the majority of its term.

The minister can stand now, and he can offer thanks. He can talk about how much he appreciates what physicians are doing. You know what, Madam Speaker? I don't even doubt that the minister means it. My understanding and certainly from what I've seen of this minister and what I've heard from his work in the negotiations is he is a decent man. He is personable. He is genuine. But he was part of the government that voted at every single step to take each of these steps that occurred. He continues to sit directly beside the minister who

undertook so many of these detrimental actions, and I've never heard that minister offer any apology or acknowledgement of any of the actions that I've listed today.

They are not hyperbole, Madam Speaker. They are not political drama. They are not theatre. They are fact. You can ask any physician in the province of Alberta about that. It was a wrong-headed strategy. It was a cheap tactic, one that this government could have chosen to abandon at any point during the pandemic. Instead, they chose to press on. They chose to continue to fight. They chose to continue to belittle and pressure physicians and then have to force this minister to spend nearly two years cleaning up that mess to get us back to where we are today, where we find ourselves in the midst of a health care crisis.

Madam Speaker, you know what? Some of the steps this minister has taken on primary care I don't disagree with. Sitting down at the table, having committees of actual front-line health care workers, actual family physicians to provide recommendations on making the system better: an excellent idea. It would have been an even better idea three years ago. It would have been an even better idea to have done that before they chose to tear up the agreement with physicians in order to force through changes.

You know what, Madam Speaker? Every one of those changes I noted except for one, all of those things that they declared were absolutely essential, that they had to tear up that agreement on: the new agreement with physicians walks back every single one except they're still charging seniors for drivers' medicals. They are still happy to sort of force seniors to pay for that. Aside from that, the visit cap? Gone. Virtual codes? Addressed as of January of this year. Changes to complex care codes? Well, those got killed fairly early on because their own members rebelled so hard against their health care ministry.

There was nothing gained for two years of attacks on physicians, grinding family physicians down, forcing closures, stress and anxiety on them, their staff, their families, and not only family physicians, physicians of all types and stripes, Madam Speaker. Not a single thing gained for this government. Not a dollar saved. Not a single benefit for Albertans. It didn't help them get any better care. Nothing gained.

So will I support Bill 4? Absolutely. I will support Bill 4 because this is the right thing to do. It would have been far better if the government had never done it in the first place. I will support undoing what is, frankly, an embarrassing and ghastly mistake on the behalf of this government, one that has done incredible damage to our public health care system and to the ability of Albertans to access care. It is a black spot on the history of government relations with health care workers in this province, so I will absolutely support a bill undoing it, but I will not give this government any credit for doing so. I owe that much, I think, to all of the Albertans who've been impacted and certainly to all of the many physicians I spoke with over the last three years who've suffered – and I do mean that literally – suffered under this government, under the most difficult of circumstances and people that are absolutely essential to getting us out of the hole that we are now in with our health care system.

I certainly hope that all members – and I'm sure they will – are going to support Bill 4, and I certainly hope that this marks a shift in this government's approach. I don't trust that's necessarily the case given a lot of what I've heard from this Premier about her thoughts on primary care, but we have an election next May. I'm sure this is not going to be far from the minds of an awful lot of Albertans, the legacy and behaviour of this government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 4 in second reading? The hon. Minister of Health cannot speak again or it will close the bill, and I'm sure that the opposition will have



something to say about that, so the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

**Ms Hoffman:** But, Madam Speaker, if he's so inclined and I'm so inclined, there could be an opportunity for a few one-minute interjections, so I will thank the House for giving us that opportunity through standing order changes that we collectively agreed on.

I want to begin by addressing my remarks here in second reading of Bill 4, which is currently titled the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. Certainly, we've seen some colourful titles in the past for bills, and I would say that one that might be fitting for this could be a bill to try to undo some of the harm that we just caused not too long ago to try to hope that people will forget that we really, really, really messed with health care during this term. Because we're, of course, in a period that government and political observers refer to as the red zone, sort of that period in the runway up to the election, and we've seen significant evidence over the last three and a half years that the current government, the UCP, is not trusted with public health care in the province of Alberta and for good reason, Madam Speaker.

Maybe I'll start most recently and then work backwards. Most recently, Madam Speaker, we know that the current Premier was elected by only about 1 per cent of Albertans; 99 per cent did not vote for this Premier to be in her current role. In the six years leading up to that time, the Premier had a very, very public platform both with the radio, wrote a lot online, and participated in many blogs and other podcasts and such, and was very clear in a number of things. The biggest one is that she does not support public health care, does not support medicare in its current form in the province of Alberta. She has regularly made many comments and just in the last few months, to be precise. It's not like we're talking about decades ago. Like, she was very public in having all of these musings just over the last six years.

Some of the things that she's talked about are creating a health spending account. I have to say that the concept of a health spending account, I think, most people would probably say is good, but the way that she wants to get that money she's talked about is to take it out of the AHS allocation, the money that is given to operators of hospitals and long-term care centres, things that are covered under medicare, to take the money out of those essential urgent health care systems that we have for people in times of crisis or significant need and then to create this account that, then, individual Albertans would need to use to pay for personal visits to go and see primary care physicians, which, of course, wouldn't be sufficient.

There are many years where many Albertans might not need to see a primary care physician more than once or twice in that year, and then there are other times in your life when you would need significantly more care. That's one of the reasons why we as Canadians have pooled our resources and created medicare in its current form, to ensure that – you know, it's not your fault when you have a health crisis – we've got each other's backs. We believe in the collective nature of helping your neighbours as Canadians and as Albertans and that we will make sure that we have this social safety net of public health care, medicare, to be there for Albertans in general.

The current Premier definitely has had very different remarks in that regard, including significant remarks related to personal responsibility and as they relate to – even to go as far as to criticize cancer patients for resulting it. I will paraphrase: those who end up with stage 4 cancer could have done things in stage 1, 2, or 3 to prevent that, generally, was the statement. [interjection] Pardon me?

**Mr. Madu:** That's a lie.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this crosstalk is probably not helpful. The only one who has the floor right now, unless an intervention is accepted, is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. I'd say that unparliamentary language is not super helpful either. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I will continue by saying that those remarks in blaming individuals for their health consequences definitely aren't helpful when it comes to those who are dealing with a very personal hurt that they felt. Many cancer patients who are at various stages in their cancer journeys feel like they were being criticized for ending up in such a horrific state. I know that there probably isn't a member in this House who hasn't experienced cancer either personally for themselves or for somebody that they care deeply about, and I know that that's the case generally across Alberta. So it's very concerning when we see this as sort of the background narrative that's been at play in and around the current Premier.

This bill, as was stated – I appreciate that the Health minister talked a great deal about the actual amending agreement, but this bill essentially is just to strike sections that the government chose to put in unilaterally without actually engaging in any consultation or getting any support from the health care providers that we rely on to ensure that we all have one of the most prized Canadian services. When you interview people globally about the differences between Canada and the United States, one of the main things that we talk about as Canadians and that others know about us as Canadians is that we have universal public health care, a very different model than what many Conservative leaders and Conservative Health ministers in this province have tried to push through at various times.

What we had in 2020 was the current government under slightly different formation of the front bench but not significantly different, to be very frank. I think many were surprised that when the current Premier took her role, there weren't more signals of change among the folks who are making leadership decisions, in fact ministers in very key roles – Education, Health, Justice – staying in exactly the same portfolios. I think many people who voted for change, the 1 per cent who did actually vote for the Premier, were expecting far greater signals of change and reflection and that the government was going to set a different course, but, no, no, they haven't.

What we do have is a bill – and I think that most Albertans, if they heard the Legislature is debating a health bill, would think: “Oh. Thank goodness. We're going to be doing something about emerg wait times. We're going to do something about EMS. We're going to do something about women's health and the lack of reproductive support services throughout our province, including obstetrics and gynecology.” I think those are the kinds of things that Albertans would be hoping that we're debating today. [interjection] I'd be happy to welcome the interjection.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Member. You know, as soon you started to say that, her comment around the fact that this government really – I think what she was trying to say before I rudely interjected was that this government had an opportunity to really put forward some substantial legislation that could address, as she noted, the crisis in obstetrics. We heard from the Member for Lethbridge-West this morning just how bad it is. I've spoken about it multiple times. My colleague from Edmonton-City Centre and I have sent out multiple letters to this Health minister urging him to take action on the crisis in particular with women's and reproductive health. So, you know, we saw this as well.

I'm getting déjà vu from, for instance, I believe it was the long-term care act, where, again, we thought: “Okay. You know what?”

This government is finally taking steps to address the crisis in long-term care.” No. If you’ll recall that bill, it was a few administrative sort of changes and very little substance. So I’m hopeful, like the member mentioned earlier, that the minister will speak up as well about some of these issues.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was one of the most polite interjections. I know that the member framed it by saying it was rude, but they are the rules that we have, and I appreciate the opportunity to elaborate slightly on this.

Yesterday we had an opportunity to consider health legislation that could have probably even been considered as a replacement bill for the health bill we’re considering here today, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. That bill was brought forward as a private member’s bill, and it would have addressed a number of areas, including primary care, EMS, surgeries, reliable, timely access. These are the things that most Albertans are talking to us about when they say that health care is one of their number one issues, and I’m sure they’re talking to members on the other side of the House as well. We know that reliably, poll after poll after poll, when people are asked to rank the number one issue that they have, in the top three is health care. It’s usually number one or number two and it has been under the UCP leadership simultaneously as we are continuing to live through the impacts of COVID-19, now also RSV and influenza.

4:30

I was relieved today when in question period the Minister of Health did talk about the benefits of getting a flu vaccine. I’ve had mine. I imagine he’s had his, and I hope many others of this House have as well, but our numbers for immunization for influenza this year in the province of Alberta are not anywhere near where we need them to be.

Consequential to that are the impacts on our health care system and on individual families. I know I’ve been watching the reports of children in other parts of the country, even some so horrific as a child dying in British Columbia of influenza not that long ago. I think it might have even been the second child in this flu season. I don’t want us to have to deal with those types of consequences here, and I think that we could be doing far more to speak to the benefits of using evidence-based, science-driven medical decision-making, including promoting, through public awareness campaigns, the benefits of getting a flu vaccine.

I was relieved, pleasantly, on the first day of the fall sitting, or maybe it was even the throne speech day. A push notification came through to my phone, because I’ve signed up for a bunch of health notifications, to say that on behalf of the government of Alberta we’re encouraging everyone to get the flu vaccine; it’s safe; it’s scientific. I’m grateful that we’ve heard it from the Health minister. I’m grateful that I got a notification from the CPE informing me of that. I wish we would see that same kind of leadership from the chief politician currently, the Premier for the province of Alberta. I think it would go a long way to increasing awareness and reducing some of the most severe outcomes that we’re seeing as they relate to children’s health.

What we’ve seen instead is silence on these issues, and I also want to be very clear that when I was a Health minister – I know some will try to fearmonger. When I was a Health minister, we made it really clear that we weren’t going to require mandatory vaccines for children to attend school. We were going to share information, and I imagine it’s been used significantly, that when there is an outbreak at the school, the school’s list of who’s enrolled in that school gets shared with public health so public health can reach out to families and work to protect children, to either do public awareness around ways that they can protect themselves and

others in their families, pull children when it’s required to do so because they don’t have the full immunization to be able to keep themselves in a congregated site safely.

At that time it was driven by the fact that there were some measles outbreaks in some pockets within Alberta. We know that MMR vaccines and education around them in the province of Alberta has not been as effective as we would like to see in terms of the collective benefits.

I do have to say that undoing some of the harm that was done not that long ago by the same government that’s still in place: I guess that’s better than some health bills that we’ve seen them bring forward to this place before, but this simply is An Act to Undo Some of the Harm that They Just Caused Two Years Ago. That is what the title should probably be. To my whip: maybe we can work on an amendment in that regard.

It definitely isn’t something that is going to resolve the issues that we’re facing currently in primary care with EMS, with surgeries, with timely access. These are areas that the government should be focused on, that we as members of this Assembly, I would hope, are focused on. Instead, what we are doing is considering repealing some of the harm that the government just imposed.

It definitely is not a step backwards, and therefore I’m inclined to support it. If there are things that I don’t think are harmful, typically I want to be a team player and get onside and try to speak and vote in support. This certainly isn’t, you know, a flagship piece of legislation. Under a new Premier the fourth priority, you would think, would be something that would address the significant issues that Albertans are saying they’re facing. Certainly, health care is one, but again this bill does nothing to actually address the root issues. [interjection] I see another interjection from my colleague, and I welcome it.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. This is exactly it. You know, again, I’m hopeful, always the optimist, that the Health minister will weigh in a bit more. I know he’s introduced the bill, but he certainly has an opportunity to intervene. Even just right now I’m seeing my inbox, the absolutely heartbreaking stories from health care workers and what they’re going through, hearing from an ER nurse who’s just talking about what absolute chaos it is in the pediatrics, in the peds, unit. I would love – and perhaps even the Premier will speak to some of the priorities. I know she talked about the importance of children’s health this morning, yet we’re not seeing it in the legislation that we’re seeing. We’re seeing a lot of, like I said, administrative pieces and... [Member Irwin’s speaking time expired] Oh.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What this morning’s announcement did highlight, though, is the fact that – and we saw that earlier in the pandemic as well – when we have one collective purchasing power, when we have one health authority that is the largest health authority of any jurisdiction anywhere in Canada, we have more significant purchasing power. I want to recognize that the Premier did acknowledge today that the AHS procurement team led the charge to make sure that we could acquire some additional capacity in terms of medications that are desperately needed right now, so hats off to that procurement team for AHS, which has been recognized as being a global leader over and over and over again. They did it earlier in the pandemic, when it came to acquiring masks and other PPE to support health care workers and other citizens. I know that we were in a position, because, again, we have that large collective purchasing power, to be able to support even other provinces. [interjection] I see a third interjection and welcome it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just wondering. Of course, we know the Member for Edmonton-Glenora previously served as the Minister of Health. She was just noting the excellent work that's been done by AHS on this procurement and certainly was done in many respects during the pandemic, but we know that certainly AHS has been significantly attacked by this Premier, who has talked down about many of the folks that do the very work that allowed her to make that announcement today, much in the same way as we saw this government talk down physicians and others. I was just wondering: for this member, as she has served as Minister of Health, what is her reflection of how the behaviour of government can affect the morale and the ability of these folks to be able to do this important work on our behalf?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to my colleague the critic for Health for the Official Opposition, for the NDP caucus, and the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre. I do want to speak a little bit to the morale piece, because I know that even though the minister is still the same and the CEO is still the same, under the Premier's leadership the big, revolutionary thing right out the gate that she initiated as it relates to services of health care was to fire the chief medical officer of health and subsequently or simultaneously fire the board for AHS. It's not often that I'll stand in this place and say, "You know, those really amazing, super conservative people on that board deserve to be there," but what I am going to say is that by firing a board – I believe that when we have many minds working together, we can make better collective decisions than when we try to put one person in charge of something.

This certainly does relate to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, because those insured services that are operating within AHS: the vast majority of billing would be direct to Alberta Health. Those services within AHS, to say: "Okay. We're going to get rid of a board of 11 people working collectively. We're going to replace them with one person who thinks that he knows best or that the Premier thinks that that one person knows best."

We saw what happened when the most recent Premier decided to do that with Chris Champion when it came to curriculum. We have had a hugely discredited curriculum that clearly was driven ideologically, especially as it relates to the social studies area, driven by one person who thought that he knew best, that there was going to be, you know, this downloading of European and American knowledge that wasn't evidence based, that wasn't collaborative, that didn't engage with teachers. We were going to bring in an expert, somebody who thought he was an expert, that the Premier thought was expert, to make these decisions that would impact everybody, and they certainly have impacted everybody.

We're seeing that again now with health care. We've decided that instead of having a collective team of people who are even, for example, trained in public health there to give advice – and certainly we can ask many questions about the advice and if it was proper, but to instead say: we're going to bring in a volunteer. And I've worked with Dr. Joffe. I think Dr. Joffe brings a lot to the table. He's not an expert in public health. That's not his area of specialization. It would be like putting somebody in charge of cardiac care who was an oncologist and asking them to volunteer and do it off the side of their desk when they already have more than a full-time job to keep them busy. I will tell you: Dr. Joffe's current job is more than a full-time job.

**4:40**

There used to be three, a chief medical officer of health and two deputies, that collectively would advise on public health matters. As we understand, those positions are not filled; there is a volunteer assignment given to Dr. Joffe. I hope that the minister will make those public health officials available if there are any working in

that area. It is so important and not just because of COVID-19, not just because of RSV, not just because of influenza but because other disasters happen that require public health expertise as well, like the Fort McMurray wildfires.

Public health played a key role in ensuring the evacuation happened but also the safe return, because many of the chemicals that were used to hamper the fire, to put the fire out, could have had negative health consequences if people went back before that was remediated. Public health had to be advising the government about re-entry plans to ensure that the residents of Fort McMurray didn't get other negative health consequences, including various types of cancer.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join in on the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 4, Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. Just, you know, thinking about going back to 2019, when we were debating this bill, this omnibus bill actually, I think it was really important at the time to think about all of the things that were thrown into this bill. There were all kinds of things that were jammed into this bill not long after the election of the UCP. They formed government.

I can remember that at the time we spent a lot of time talking about this piece of legislation, Bill 21 at the time, and trying our best to warn the government of the day what some of their decisions would do. I can remember many of my colleagues talking about the dangers that lay ahead. None of us could predict that we would have experienced the kind of pandemic that we did. We just knew that this was not how you treat a group of people, particularly physicians. This is just not how you move forward in a positive, collaborative way for such an important group of people that provide such an important service.

Now, I also want to add that this was the same piece of legislation that deindexed benefits for seniors, for low-income Albertans, and for disabled Albertans. Again, at the same time, it was jammed into this omnibus bill. We tried our best to warn of the danger that would come or the harm that would be caused. Once again, just the arrogance from the government at the time, saying: "No, no; we know best; it'll be fine. They're not going to have a problem with it. Everything is cool. It's the most generous in the country," which it is not.

You know, it's really sad that this much time has elapsed and here we are debating a piece of legislation, another – I imagine this will not be the first one that will change the disastrous work that this government has done over the last few years. [interjection] Oh, go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Well, thank you to the Member for St. Albert. You know, you just started to talk a little bit about sort of our perspective, and we've talked a lot about what we've heard from our constituents when it comes to protecting public health. I know that you knock on a lot of doors in your riding. You do a lot of door-knocking in Morinville-St. Albert, and I appreciate that. I'm curious: are you hearing health care as one of the top concerns at the doors? If so, is it health care workers? Is it the general degradation of the health care system? I'll be honest: I've too knocked on many, many doors, and the issues I hear about the health care system are many, but I'm not hearing much about what Bill 4 addresses, which is a concern to me when, again, this government had an incredible opportunity to do a whole lot more.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you for that. Yes, we do knock on a lot of doors, and we run into a lot of health care workers in St. Albert. You know, recently it's been fairly cold, the weather hasn't been lovely, so the

lovely constituents of St. Albert will regularly invite us in if we're really shivering quite a bit, and then we often will have time for a deeper conversation.

I would say the theme – it's primarily nurses that I've had a chance to communicate with, but I think about the one physician that I did speak to. What sticks in my mind – and this goes back, you know, a few weeks, some a few months – the biggest thing that I heard from the constituents in St. Albert was just the lack of trust. Certainly, they felt that there has been enough push-back on a few issues, whether it's from the physicians themselves, from their patients, just from Albertans in general that the UCP has backtracked a little bit on a few things throughout COVID. Now, obviously, as we get closer to an election, they're trying to clean up a few messes. [interjection] Oh, go ahead.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for accepting the interjection. I know that many health care workers live in St. Albert. I've had the opportunity to visit with many of them, and many of them work in St. Albert, but also many work in Edmonton facilities or offices. Access to an actual family physician or primary care provider: we used to say – and it used to be true – that we had way more primary care physicians per capita than any other province in the country. But I fear that we've fallen significantly off that track and also in the larger urban centres. It was Edmonton and Calgary where there were the most, but now we know that regularly people contact our offices saying that they can't get a primary care provider even in Edmonton and Calgary. I'm wondering if the Member for St. Albert can maybe talk about that and what this bill could have done instead to help address some of the crisis and the priority that could be placed on ensuring that people have access to primary care.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Just like the member just said, you know, our office gets calls, actually primarily e-mails, about this. We get e-mails talking about: I can't find a doctor. Whether it's "My doctor has retired" or "My doctor has left," people just can't find another physician. I have heard that some residents of St. Albert have had to go, sadly, because it's going to cause problems in other communities – but they have said, "I've found somebody that is accepting patients in Spruce Grove" or Sherwood Park or another smaller community where they've managed to find someone, which is terrific for them. I'm happy that they've been able to find a physician that can take them. But they're adding pressure to those communities, and I know those communities are struggling as well.

So we have to address the problem, and sadly I've heard this government say a number of times that doctors aren't leaving, it's not a problem, it's not a crisis. Well, it is. We know it is. I just had a quick look to remind myself because I wasn't sure of the numbers, but it was reported: March 24, 2022, CTV reported – and I'm sure this is coming from a report, but this is just the first news article that I found – that the number of doctors who left Alberta last year was almost equal to the number who left in the prior two years. Now, that's reporting from 2022, the two years combined, and this is according to the college. So we had 140 physicians leave in 2021. [interjection] Sure.

**Mr. Copping:** Madam Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** You can make an intervention.

**Mr. Copping:** Okay. Thank you very much to the hon. member for allowing me to intervene. First of all, I just wanted to comment: thank you for supporting the bill, to the members of the Official Opposition. That's greatly appreciated, and hopefully we can move it forward quickly.

I did want to comment because the hon. Member for St. Albert was making a comment about the loss of doctors. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, that isn't the case. We have more doctors than ever before in the province. There always is churn, and I appreciate that doctors leave and doctors come. But, you know, if we compare this year, September 30, to last year, we have 176 more doctors in the province. We have 11,346 doctors registered, the most ever.

Madam Speaker, I just would provide a comment. While I appreciate the Official Opposition supporting the bill and I thank them for that, I don't necessarily agree with their characterization of the statements that they're making, that strains faced by the system are due to government policy. The reality is that it's due to COVID, and we are moving forward to address it.

I'll speak more.

**Ms Renaud:** Well, it's very timely that I said that government continues to say, "Doctors aren't leaving; it's not a problem," and the Health minister stood up and sort of said that very same thing. When we know cities like Lethbridge – we know there's a crisis. We know that you probably hear it. It's anecdotal, for sure. We hear it from all of our constituencies, that people cannot find physicians. We know there are problems. We know that emergency departments are closing. We know that people can't have their babies in their communities. There is a problem. There is a large problem. Doctors have left. Physicians have left.

What I hear from health providers, the ones that I speak to in my constituency, what they very, very clearly say is that not only was it the master agreement and all of those things and potential changes that were proposed at the time – it's not just that. It seems to be that the lingering problem I still hear about is trust, that there is zero trust in this government. You can shift, you know, chairs on the *Titanic* kind of thing. You can shift ministers. You can shift deputy ministers. You can shift all kinds of people and make all of those changes. You can fire boards. You can do whatever you like, but the fact remains that Albertans don't have faith. They watched this government do all kinds of things through COVID.

I actually went through, like my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre did – he sort of gave you a bit of a timeline of the activities that happened. You know, it's been a wild sort of few years with COVID. There's been so much happening that I went back to remind myself what this timeline was like.

Madam Speaker, can I get a time check?

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have 11 minutes.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you.

I used actually a really terrific article. It was really concise, and I remember reading it at the time. I thought it was quite good. It's from September 2020. Sorry; I got that date wrong. I'm going to have to go back and correct that. They gave us a bit of a timeline about what happened, so it's a bit of a stroll down memory lane.

They talked a little bit about – and I love the way this article set up what was coming in that omnibus bill and what was coming in the changes that we saw. We know that early in September there was the MacKinnon report. We all said at the time that, you know, the UCP is going to use this report as cover. They're going to do all kinds of things, from looking at physicians' pay to nurses' duties and roles. The entire system needed to be overhauled according to this report and according to the UCP government members that stood up and defended that. Clearly, what that told us at that time is that they were on a path. They had a path, they had a goal – they were not going to reverse that goal – and then we saw them continue to do that.

We then saw that Ernst & Young released their report in February. They went a little further, talked about 70 ways to save \$2 billion. You look at that report, and you can see, literally see, some of the decisions and some of the damage that was done as a result.

We know that tensions came to a head in February 2020. That was a really bad time for the then Health minister. That was the time he announced that he was ripping up the contract with doctors. You can remember. I think my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre talked about the minister sort of yelling at another physician, which was horrible. I think we've talked about that enough.

Still, the government members – I can recall at the time that nobody was sort of giving an inch. They were still saying, “No; we're right; we have to do this; we're on the right path, blah blah blah, MacKinnon panel, blah blah blah, Ernst & Young” when people were saying, “We have a blossoming problem; there is a problem; there is this pandemic that none of us really understand the parameters of.” I don't know, still, that we understand a lot of what happened, because we haven't had a chance to even go back and really examine what was happening and what we did as a result.

Then the pandemic hit full force. We had some of the proposed changes to the physicians' contracts. You know, I want to touch on the one thing, and that was with the extra long visits. I know my colleague touched on that earlier. What I heard from physicians at that time: they were saying that this is going to really cause problems for people that are complex. As you can imagine, Madam Speaker, there are a number of people in this province that have complex health issues, health concerns, not to mention coupled with disabilities or mental illnesses or whatever the case may be. But it is only because they have found physicians that can actually work with them and support them – they should be paid appropriately for it. This change was going to change that, and we heard that directly from physicians. This isn't something that we made up; this was actually from physicians.

Once again we could see that the path was outlined by the MacKinnon report, the Ernst & Young report, yet we had this pandemic coming, all of these unknown variables that none of us could know at the time, and still this government was focused on doing things that I have to think they inherently knew were going to disrupt a health care system at a time when there were a lot of unknowns coming at us. That makes me think. For an elected group of people to think that was a good decision is still, years later, an absolute head-scratcher to me. I don't get it. I do not get why they would gamble with the health care system, the wellness of Albertans, at a time when there were so many unknowns here at home, in Alberta and Canada, and around the world.

April 9. Let's not forget this: the AMA sued the province over changes to the way that doctors could bill for service. Now, that's pretty serious, when you have the AMA suing the government. You know, I would hope that the government of the day has a healthy enough relationship with the AMA, that is such a vital organization, that they would have a good enough relationship that it wouldn't come to this place, particularly when we're struggling with an unprecedented challenge in terms of a pandemic. But, no.

A little later in that very same month, on April 24, we had the Health minister announce that rural doctors would be exempt from overhead billing, for changes when seeing patients outside the clinic. Now, I don't know a lot of rural health care providers, actually, because I don't live in rural Alberta. I have met one. But what we heard at the time – we relied on social media, sadly, to hear what people were saying, and I think that rural doctors, rural physicians, were very clear about what this was going to do to them. They very clearly said, “We are going to shut down our clinic,” and I believe some did. Some physicians said, “We are going to leave this province,” and they proceeded to leave. And this government

still was on this path, that had been identified in 2019, knowing what was happening. They could see all around them what was happening, and still they focused on this path.

I would say that there are a lot of people speculating: is this the ultimate goal, Madam Speaker, just to crash this health care system so that the solution is “let's privatize,” because privatizing is always the answer? Well, we know that's incorrect. I mean, let's just look at long-term care. That is not the answer.

This is a government that has continuously just surprised me to an extent that it's almost hard to describe. All of these horrible things were happening in our province. All of these professionals that work in health care, that are the front lines, that knew exactly what was going to happen, were predicting disaster. What we did see was disaster. What we continue to see is disaster. Let's remember, at the time that all of this was going on, what was happening here in Alberta. We were already approaching 100 deaths, so we already knew that it was a problem. We already knew. We saw it. Our hospitals were starting to fill, we were starting to understand the different pressures on people, and still this government continued.

July 10: AMA released a survey that found 40 per cent of all physicians were eyeing a move. They were either thinking about moving or planning on moving, and sadly many did leave. I'm sure some left for completely innocent reasons that were personal, that were not related to this government's mismanagement. But many left because there was no trust and they felt that – you know what? – there was no point in staying if they were working in a province where they could not be respected by the government of the day. They were not being respected, and they just moved elsewhere. They had that ability, and who suffers? It was Albertans.

A little later that very same month, July 29, they released a referendum of physicians, residents, and medical students. They were asked a question. I don't know the exact phrasing of the question, but the question was something along the lines of: how much faith or trust do you have in the Health minister? I think we all remember that number, very close to what the ATA had for the Education minister in terms of trust, that about 98 per cent said they had no faith, no trust. Now, I'm not saying that the current Health minister is in the same league as the last one at all, because I think he's actually quite reasonable and quite lovely to speak to.

I hope that he's hearing some of the concerns, that we're really not just standing up here to hear ourselves speak, that we actually are trying to relay. This is what I hear from people. This is the kind of e-mail that I get. These are the phone calls that I get. When I door-knock, that's what I hear. These are the problems, and we've been hearing this for years. I mean, this isn't new. This isn't new at all.

I don't think any government ever gets it right. I think that really good leadership requires people to listen and do the awkward thing sometimes and to admit mistakes – “You know what? We made a mistake, kind of screwed up, so we're going to fix it, and here's how we're going to fix it” – instead of just defending a bad bill or defending a bad decision. I don't think anyone in here is particularly more guilty than others. I think that we all in our lives can do better. But the sad reality is that the decisions that we make in this place, the decisions that this government makes in this place – let me be clear about that, the decisions that they make – the bills they pass, the regulations that they make impact people's lives directly, and we've seen that. We see it in the state of our health care system right now. It's a disaster. It's a disaster.

5:00

When I have paramedics and firefighters, even the firefighters from St. Albert, telling me about different instances when they've had to respond – one example they gave me this morning. They responded to a young boy that was drowning. He was drowning.

They intubated him. They did all of the things that, you know, EMS responders would do, advanced life support. They're an integrated service, so they can do that. They have that equipment on their truck. They did that. They had the patient stabilized for – I don't know – it was maybe an hour, 45 minutes, and then the ambulance showed up.

That's not normal. That's dangerous, and more people are going to lose their lives as a result. You know, doing health care in a parking lot or in a bay is not okay. Women not being able to give birth in their communities and having to drive long distances: that's not okay. The extraordinary wait times – I understand that there's pressure right now with influenza and all of the things that we're dealing with, but we had a weakened system after years and years of really awful decisions and years of a government literally with earplugs in their ears, not hearing from their own constituents. I'm quite sure that they heard the same thing that we did.

So here we are in 2022, in December 2022, and the government is undoing another mess that they created in 2019 with that piece of legislation, Bill 21, that did so much damage in so many areas. This is just one from this giant bill that was just, like, slash and burn.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 4 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pleased to rise this afternoon on Bill 4 to bring some comments forward from my end of the world, Edmonton-McClung, and speak about some thoughts that I have with regard to Bill 4, which is an attempt to undo some of the harm that was done when the government decided to pass the omnibus Bill 21, that some of my colleagues have alluded to.

Of course, what I sense when I'm talking to constituents and seeing media reports and looking at social media as well is that the population has really lost trust. The government was told that this would happen before they implemented the omnibus bill which brought forward the ability for the government to tear up the contract, the master agreement between doctors and the government, and they failed to heed that warning and went ahead and did tear up that contract. It is very unfortunate that the government never did heed that warning because the damage that was caused is long term, Madam Speaker. It's intergenerational, in my view. To have all of the doctors, 11,000 doctors, in this province go through a process where the government actually just unilaterally tore up their contract is a shocking thing in a democracy to witness, and I can't imagine this healing any time soon.

The government has reached an agreement with doctors, a master agreement, ultimately, under the leadership of a new minister, who managed to bring some semblance of respect back to that relationship, but the harm has been done, Madam Speaker, by the omnibus Bill 21, that included a clause to tear up the contract with the doctors.

It was a little bit surprising to hear that the justification for this tearing up of the contract was that if we're bringing forward Bill 4 now, I should say, it was no longer required given the terms of the agreement with the AMA that has now been reached.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre so eloquently posited earlier today, in my view as well it was never required, never mind no longer required, and my constituents and Albertans wonder aloud to themselves, when I talk to them at the door, as to why indeed the government chose to go forward with it. [interjection] My colleague from Edmonton-City Centre wishes to intervene. Mr. Speaker, I'll accept an intervention.

**The Speaker:** Please do.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the thoughts the member was sharing about the process of negotiation involved here. Of course, I'd note that the Member for Edmonton-McClung spent many years working as a realtor, and of course that is a job where you have to know how to negotiate a deal. So I was wondering, you know, from his experience working as a realtor, helping so many different people to achieve their goals and, of course, negotiating things like pricing on houses, what thoughts he has on the process and the approach that the government brought to the table in trying to negotiate a fair agreement with doctors.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, thank you very much, Member. It's actually very interesting that you would bring up the word "negotiating," because it's on page 3 of my notes that I made to myself. The note attached to that is that this government is not very good at negotiating. Unfortunately, they have the lack of institutional knowledge that was passed down from one Premier to the next. The decision to go ahead and seek control rather than negotiate is seemingly a lesson unlearned from one Premier to another. I'm unfortunately seeing the new Premier deciding that negotiations are not her primary mode of achieving agreement and that she's looking at imposing things. You know, Bill 1, that we have before us still in the House, is another example of that, where we're looking at the House being circumvented, never mind a government contract. [interjection] I have another intervention. Go ahead.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you. You know, my friend from Edmonton-McClung has spent some time not only before becoming an elected official but, of course, during his time talking to the constituents of Edmonton-McClung, getting their feedback, and I'm just kind of curious. Thinking back to when the contract was first torn up, during your years knocking on doors, talking with constituents, hearing their feedback – what they would like to see before you were an elected official, what kind of changes they were hoping for – did tearing up the doctors' contract even make it onto the list? I know that in my time door-knocking from 2013 in Edmonton-Decore, I certainly didn't hear: gosh, I wish a Health minister would go in there, tear up that contract, and create all kinds of chaos. I'm just wondering if perhaps you might have heard those kinds of things. I didn't hear them in Edmonton-Decore. Maybe it's just simply my riding that had that lack of enthusiasm.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for that question and insight about the activity of his constituents and his riding. I can certainly attest that in Edmonton-McClung there was no hue and cry for the then Minister of Health to tear up the doctors' contract. I think most Albertans right across the province were pretty shocked because that's not the way we've had our previous governments operate. In fact, there's been a history of respect between governments and our professional bodies, including the Medical Association, over time, and to see the contract torn up was a pretty big shock.

Now, of course, Bill 4, an attempt to plug that hole, that breach in the trust and respect between the AMA and the provincial government, is just simply trying to undo some harm that they did. While certainly I'm going to support the bill that undoes the ability of the provincial government to tear up a contract, the fact remains that the trust has been broken. Our Medical Association and Albertans as well know now that at the stroke of a pen and the decision of the government they may revisit this once again and see that they'll take unto themselves the same power once again.

The institutional damage we've done, Mr. Speaker, is something that we'll be recording for decades to come. We'll always be referencing

back to this omnibus Bill 21, that is now trying to be repaired by Bill 4, that's before us. It will be the hallmark of a failure by a government that saw fit to tear up a legitimate, bona fide contract and direct to doctors that they would control what they were paid unilaterally. I think it's fair to say that the Medical Association and other professional bodies will always have it in the back of their minds historically whether or not a future Conservative government will do this once again. It poisons the atmosphere. It is not helpful.

5:10

I know that in my past career, as other members have alluded to, negotiations that I've been through with house transactions, probably at my count about 800 of them, were not always easy. They were difficult in many cases, and they took quite a bit of time, sometimes over the course of a number of days. Certainly, I never had the option to stand up and impose a contract upon one party or the other, Mr. Speaker. That was something that needed to be done between the parties to negotiate a settlement between the two.

Thankfully, with this Bill 4 we'll be back to that, but indeed the tenets of conservatism, as far as I have studied them – and I've studied them – would say that laissez-faire would be the rule of the day. Let things be rather than taking control unto oneself. It did shock a lot of Albertans that the original Bill 21 measure to tear up the contract was something that would even be contemplated by a provincial government here in Alberta. People in my constituency really couldn't believe what they were hearing. It's something that I'm sure they'll be glad to see disappearing, but we'll always be fearful that it could potentially be returning once again. I know that the 11,000 physicians in the province are definitely fearful that it might be something that does happen.

Now, I know that the provincial response to the pandemic over time is something that the province has been very critical of. I know that today I think the Premier said in response to questions about the desperate pleas for meaningful, comprehensive leadership in terms of caring for children in respite care, respite care which is no longer there – her response was that Tylenol is on the way, that we have a sufficient amount of Tylenol coming to hopefully prevent this disease. Indeed, that's not what the question was all about. It was asking about care for children, pediatric care for children, and the desperate situation that children are in and their families with respite care. [interjection] I see the Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising to intervene.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the member was just speaking about the Premier essentially dodging a question today about preventative measures to keep children from getting sick as opposed to just sort of chasing the problem after the fact with medication and, of course, the effects that that's having on the access to care for children at the Stollery here in Edmonton, the Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary.

It does strike me that that says a lot about what the UCP's approach has been with physicians. Indeed, where they could have acted in a way that might have been preventative of a lot of issues, they instead chose to barrel ahead and go with what they tried to do in terms of a cosmetic public approach while, in fact, making the problem so much worse. I'm just wondering what the member's thoughts on that might be.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, thank you, Member for Edmonton-City Centre, for that intervention. It brings to mind the recent conversations I've had with doctors in the local hospital in my riding, the Misericordia. I won't identify them, but the crux of the conversations that I have had with them is that the local hospitals are beyond the breaking

point. I asked the question: what would be the straw that broke the camel's back? The response was: it's already happened; we're beyond crisis point. We are having situations at the Misericordia hospital and, I'm sure, others where people are not receiving the care they need in critical situations, and there are deaths, premature deaths, that are occurring as a result of the situation that we're in.

Pediatric care was the question of the day today that the Premier had broached to her, and the response was that Tylenol is on the way. Respite care for parents of severely ill children has been taken away so that those physicians and nursing staff can go and help people in children's pediatric care. Once again, the Premier avoided the question and said that Tylenol is on the way.

That's not what the public is wanting to hear, Mr. Speaker. They know that there's a lot of room for this government to make up in terms of trust as a result of such things as the Bill 21 decision to tear up doctors' contracts, and the Bill 4 before us today to try to rectify that by removing the ability to do that is something that is a step in the right direction.

But, certainly, the Premier's responses today to avoid dealing directly with the questions of critical care for children in our hospitals, which are overflowing into trailer waiting rooms, is not the type of response that we wanted to hear as Albertans, and it does nothing to build or rebuild a trust that has been really, really broken badly by the UCP government over the last three years and continues to be broken even further by the types of response we keep getting from the Premier regarding the leadership that we expect to see to help address some of the acute problems in our health care system and our hospitals and with the respiratory disease crisis that we've got going on now.

We end up with the situation here, where, first of all, the government in Bill 21, tearing up the doctors' contract, created all kinds of chaos and acrimony, that was not necessary, and people asking: "Why? Why are they doing it?" Now here we are in the Legislature today removing that piece of legislation that gave the ability to tear up the doctors' contract, and instead of focusing on the extreme issues of the day, that are children's health care, in particular, and respiratory diseases that are causing our hospitals to be overflowing in the emergency wards, the response we're getting is an indirect one from the Premier of this province. We're not getting real action plans that are being looked forward to by Albertans.

When we see children dying of the flu or other respiratory diseases, that affects everybody pretty deeply. We expect respectful leadership from the province, and that's not the tone that was set in 2019 with the omnibus Bill 21, that brought in the ability to ride roughshod over doctors' rights to expect that a contract would be a contract and wouldn't be torn up. But that indeed, of course, is what happened, and over the long term, Mr. Speaker, I think that we're going to find that Albertans are going to be deciding that trust is only going to be doled out in small doses to future Alberta governments, and that's a damage to our democracy.

Unfortunately, the threat to democracy is a many-pronged spear in the hands of this government, and it's not only the threat to the bona fide nature of contracts but also to the institutions of government that the current rendition of the government doesn't seem to hold it in high regard. When you see a Premier and a government focus entirely on things that are ideologically driven to control their agenda and to force, in particular in this case, doctors to accept a contract without engaging in respectful negotiations is something that I don't think will be ever a hundred per cent forgiven in this province, and it shouldn't be.

The issues that Albertans are wanting to have our government focus on are something that we are entirely focused on. There's the health care crisis, and we've come up with a plan for that ourselves. The cost of living is something that the province is struggling with. My constituents remind me of that every door I knock on. The ability

of Albertans to have faith in their government, whether it's a decision to decide to go to university here, to start a business here, to engage in a nonprofit organization: all of these decisions are going to be based upon an underlying feeling about how they are able to interact with their government. There's a wound, a scab that has been placed forever on the relationship between the government of Alberta and its citizens by such legislation as Bill 21, which is now, three years later, being reversed but will forever be remembered by the people of this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

5:20

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pausing there slightly because, yeah, it's intriguing to me that on a government bill that, you know, undoubtedly, their members support, they wouldn't be rising to speak to it, other than the illustrious Health minister, who I appreciate weighing in and listening and interjecting. I really do appreciate that, but I am slightly confused because I think most of us, perhaps all of us, would agree that health care is absolutely a priority for our constituents.

You know, I can say that not just from my experience in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which, of course, I've spent many, many hours, particularly in the summer, knocking on doors. Since then I've been spending many, many hours in other ridings to support some of my MLA colleagues and some of our new candidates, including Edmonton-South West, which has been fantastic, knocking on doors there multiple times. A lot of health care workers there. A lot of health care workers there. A lot of teachers.

**Ms Renaud:** Lawyers.

**Member Irwin:** Lawyers. Yeah. Lots of working professionals. Yeah.

I can tell you that I was just knocking on doors there on Saturday – it was cold, but the reception was warm – and, yeah, health care definitely came up a lot at the doors.

As I've said in this Chamber before, you know, I'll often start my conversation with folks just saying: we're out canvassing and just curious what your top issues are. Health care almost always rises to the top, and not just here in Edmonton. I talked about Edmonton-South West, but Medicine Hat is a great example. I was talking to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat earlier about my experiences door-knocking there – we like to shoot the breeze in the back – and I just said that, yeah, it was really, really fascinating.

As many of you may know, our NDP candidate actually won in Medicine Hat proper. I was really blown away by the conversations that I had. I canvassed five times there in Medicine Hat, so, you know, I have a bit of a perspective on what folks there were saying. Certainly, there was concern about Bill 1 and the sovereignty act, education, but health care was right up there. Of course, our Premier was running there at the time, so a lot of concerns about the direction that health care might be taking under this Premier should she have won the seat. Of course, she did win the seat, so I would say to those voters that I met in Medicine Hat that their fears may have come true.

As I noted earlier when I intervened, you know, what an opportunity for this government and this Health minister to really take a lead on responding to their constituents and hearing their concerns about health care issues, that I'll get into here in a moment, but whether it's the crisis in children's health care or – I will first accept an intervention from my colleague from Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for her incredible work on the ground in her riding. Anywhere you go with her in the riding, to any event or even just on the streets meeting folks, she's known by name. That's not just by business owners or schoolchildren; that's by people who are actually on the streets.

What I wanted to ask about was those individuals who are most clearly affected by health care vulnerability and if indeed you found that there was a difficulty in maintaining the doctors who are required to treat those individuals who really don't have a family doctor – I'm talking about at the Boyle Street community centre and others – if indeed they've experienced a really difficult time maintaining staff and doctors at those centres to treat those most vulnerable people, particularly because there's a huge outbreak of a very viral disease right now on top of the pandemic.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. I love that. See, this is the beauty of interventions. You can kind of have your speech sort of mapped out, as I do here very nicely, but – sorry; is that a prop? I've never actually – yeah, it's not a prop. I'm just telling you. I have a little bit of a plan here, but the member, you know, wouldn't have known my plan. I only knew my plan about two minutes ago. He wouldn't have known my plan, but one of my plans was to actually talk just about that, the impact of the crisis in health care on some of my most marginalized constituents, so thank you for that. That would be unhoused folks who I represent, and I do – I don't want to say that I have the honour, because I'll preface this, but I do. I do represent many unhoused folks, perhaps the most in the province. That's not an enviable honour; that's for sure.

Part of that, for folks who know my riding, is that we do have a concentration of social services, including, you know, the Bissell Centre and Hope Mission and Operation Friendship Seniors Society and Boyle McCauley health centre, now known as Radius health, and many, many more. I know I should never start naming because then I will miss folks, and they're all, for any of them watching at home, doing incredible work. In fact, this is my first time debating fully in the House other than intervening, and I always – you'll all recall that I always love to give a shout-out to the folks on the front lines, whether they're in health care or retail or you name it.

I can tell that member that he's exactly right. Unhoused folks in particular are sort of being bombarded from multiple angles right now, you know, and if you are unhoused, you're dealing with a lot of health care issues to begin with. As that member noted, right now in the inner city, which myself and my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre represent, the shigella outbreak has just – we don't even know the half of it, and I know the minister is aware of this crisis as well. I'm certainly no expert, but we know that one of the main reasons why shigella – why its presence increases and why it spreads is because of lack of access to sanitation, lack of access to clean water, and, of course, most predominantly, lack of access to housing, right? So they've got this public health crisis on top of the fact that we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Let us not forget that.

But it's also currently, according to my computer, minus 26. That doesn't tell me the wind chill, and I'm sure it's worse. I can tell you that last night coming home from the Legislature and then a few events in the evening – my typical route is down 96th Street, and I choose that route specifically because that's where Bissell Centre and a lot of the tents are, a lot of the encampments are. Sure enough, last night at, gosh, probably around 8 o'clock it would have been, I think, minus 40 or something like that: folks milling about, sleeping outside in this.

I thought about that this morning, too, because, gosh, I think it was minus 40 or something this morning as well as I'm driving to



the Legislature. I mean, I'm always cold, though; I'll preface that. I'm always cold, but I was frozen in my car. I was shivering in my car and thinking about: holy crow, how is it that people are living in these conditions right now? They are, and I would encourage any of you to – you know, I try to stop and talk to them as much as I can, but you feel hopeless, right? You really do. [interjection] Yes. I will let the Member for Edmonton–City Centre intervene.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to what my colleague was just saying about the challenges we know folks are facing who are living houseless in the city right now. Certainly, this is a concern I've been hearing from many in my constituency as well. Certainly, I know it has a significant impact on a lot of people here.

We have seen some deaths already in the cold here in Edmonton over the last little while, and I was just reflecting that, you know, a lot of these individuals, when they are seeking help, will go to the emergency room at the Royal Alex hospital. They will go there sometimes simply seeking warmth, but they will also go there seeking care because, of course, in many cases these individuals do experience frostbite and other things, and these individuals will not have an Alberta health care insurance card. One of the things that this government pushed through with this tearing up the agreement with physicians was to remove the ability for doctors at the Royal Alex emergency room to be able to bill for services if they treated one of those individuals with frostbite because they did not have their card. I was wondering what the member thought of that.

5:30

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Again, thank you for mentioning that. I mean, it was on my list as well just to talk about what's happening at the RAH, the Royal Alexandra hospital. Of course, it's in my colleague's riding but very close to mine, so we see a heck of a lot of our constituents going there. You know, I can tell you that it's not new that that hospital deals with a lot of marginalized folks, unhoused folks.

I always tell this story. This sounds like a terrible story, but I promise it wasn't that bad. Many years ago, in 2013, I believe, I was biking. In fairness it was before I was a master cyclist, so it was mostly my fault because I was on the sidewalk. I was hit by a car, a silver BMW. We never did find that silver BMW. If you ever see a silver BMW with some damage on the side, let me know. I was hit by a car, and I was okay, but in the immediate aftermath I wasn't. I was in pain, so an ambulance came. Somebody called an ambulance, and I went to the Royal Alex. I still remember being hit by a car but, like, really not knowing if I'd broken my arm or what and having to wait quite a while, like having been low priority. I thought: oh, my goodness, I was hit by a car, and I'm that low priority. My point in saying that is that I know that the strain on that hospital is not new.

However, this is a hospital, and these are health care workers there. Both that Member for Edmonton–City Centre and I know a number of the health care workers there, and they are doing amazing work. I'd give them a shout-out if they're watching, but I know they're not watching because they are incredibly busy.

They have been, again, impacted by a whole number of issues. They're a lot of the ones that are dealing with the shigella outbreak. They're also dealing with the drug poisoning crisis – right? – a drug poisoning crisis that we've seen just skyrocket in the last few years, exacerbated by the pandemic, a drug poisoning crisis where, you know, sadly, we've not seen a lot of action, any action, in fact, from this government to address the immediate pressing issues on the front lines in our area in particular.

Okay. Oh, my goodness, I realize I haven't even got to some of the big things that I want to speak about here. I'll bring it back to

Bill 4 just in case the Speaker is concerned about me going off track. I don't think he would be because he knows I always like to tie up the loose ends there. You know, I mentioned it earlier. This was an opportunity for this government to really take some profound action when it comes to many of the compounding crises we're seeing in health care.

Essentially, what this bill does is that it reverses that absolutely horrific decision that we saw from the UCP regarding tearing up the contract for doctors. I've heard my colleagues talk about this as well, that, you know, because of particularly the previous Health minister, his actions, so many Albertans do not have a family doctor. Family doctors have left this province. Family doctors have retired. Some have retired early. A big part of it is just the way that that minister engaged with them. It's been this ongoing combative approach instead of one that could be collaborative, right? That's what those health care workers in the midst of a pandemic deserved, and they didn't get it. Of course, you know, as we've said on the record here, we're happy to see that they're reversing that decision, but we didn't need to be here. We didn't need to be here when it comes to so many decisions that this UCP government has implemented, particularly when it comes to health care.

I can't stand in this Chamber and talk about health and not talk about the absolute crisis that is children's health care. You know, I've shared this on social media, too. It's hard to believe that we've come to a place where it's almost, like, acceptable that children are being denied care. The members opposite might say: well, they're not being denied care. Well, this is exactly what we see when we see the closing of RFH in Calgary, the moving of respite services. I can tell you that that was Friday night when that news broke, and admittedly I still don't have a whole lot of a social life, so I was following that story closely as it was breaking. I believe it was CBC that broke it first, so immediately I just posted about it and said that this is heartbreaking that children receiving respite services would be moved at a time when their families and them, of course, the patients themselves, are needing those supports so critically. [interjection] I'll let the Member for Edmonton–Mill Woods intervene.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague from Edmonton–Highlands–Norwood, who has been responding on Bill 4 and talking now about what we're seeing in children's hospitals and with our emergency rooms being overwhelmed and tying that into what she was talking about just before that point, the doctors leaving the province and the shortages that we're seeing in health care.

I just wanted to intervene to add my own reflection that it's really, really hard to see the news that's coming in and what's happening. I know that the Member for Edmonton–Highlands–Norwood supported our efforts to have emergency debates about these issues not once but twice in the last several days of sitting, that we were not able to have, specifically because of the urgency of what is currently happening when it comes to children's health care and particularly emergency care in light of what's happening across the province when it comes to the flu, COVID, RSV that are happening. I think it ties in really nicely to this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. You're absolutely right. The Member for Edmonton–Mill Woods is absolutely right.

You know, that was a hard thing to see yesterday. I'll take you back. I just had to double-check to make sure it was Tuesday today. That was just yesterday. Of course, it was the first opportunity we had since the news broke on Friday about Rotary Flames House. Yesterday was the first opportunity we had to really highlight that as another issue on top of the many factors that make up the crisis in

children's health. Naturally, just yesterday, on Monday, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre did ask for an emergency debate on children's health care, and he was denied, which sends a pretty clear message.

Then not longer after that, moments later, in fact – moments later, in fact – our Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the leader, was denied an opportunity to debate her bill in this Chamber. In fact, it was moved down the priority list by this UCP government, that, you know, claims to want to prioritize private members' business. No; only when that private members' business is their private members'. It's about health care, you know? I feel like this Health minister – he may not have had a say in that decision – wants to be collaborative and wants to hear our ideas, like the ideas we've outlined in Bill 201, which didn't just materialize out of nowhere. Those ideas in Bill 201 came from a whole heck of a lot of consultation from our side of the House.

In the span of just a few minutes yesterday this government told us exactly what they think about health care. And let me tell you that we will continue to remind Albertans about how this government refuses to prioritize health care and children's health care every moment.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

The Opposition House Leader has the call.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, is that one over there?

**The Speaker:** I think he was just rising.

The hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to address second reading of Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022, a bill that, when you look at the contents of the bill, appears very straightforward. It is updating, based on the change in title of one of our ministries, Justice and Solicitor General, throughout the bill where that needs to happen. Then the real crux of this piece of legislation is the repealing of section 40.2, which referred to, essentially:

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by order, terminate . . .

(b) the AMA Agreement, or [agreements].

It's laid out with a bit more language.

5:40

I'm not going to read that into the record, Mr. Speaker, but essentially the entirety of Bill 4 is removing from government an ability that they gave themselves in 2019 that has been incredibly controversial since the first time that it was introduced following through to when it was used in February of 2020, and now here we are in December of 2022 removing this ability because it was deemed to be so problematic and caused so many issues that moving forward, when it comes to the relationship with doctors, the absolute best thing that they could do would be to remove that and make assurances that similar powers would not be granted again in the future.

This has to do a lot with this government negotiating, bargaining with important front-line health care providers, and we've seen this government's tactics when it comes to bargaining. In the case of these powers to tear up agreements legislatively by order in council, by cabinet behind closed doors, and for cabinet behind closed doors to make those decisions, it really created a loss of trust when it came to the doctors and a toxic relationship. It was certainly characterized as bargaining in bad faith for the government not only to grant itself these powers in an attempt to strong-arm and then to use these powers.

As we debate Bill 4, I think the history of these mechanisms and why they're being repealed now are really salient and really important to the conversation that we're having, and I want to thank all of my colleagues who have spoken and reminded us, Albertans, other legislators here in the Chamber who are listening to the debate about why this happened and the history and the negative impact. I think that in the context of the Official Opposition supporting Bill 4 and supporting the removal of these powers, we need to acknowledge and put on the record the damage that was done by the creation of these powers through Bill 21 and then the use of these powers in February of 2020, because it's been a multiyear campaign against doctors that's had incredibly negative results here in our province.

I believe my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre noted that the minister used the language "no longer required" and suggested that it was never required, and I would have to agree. It would have been better for Alberta had we never gone down this path when it comes to what became quite a toxic relationship with doctors.

**Member Irwin:** Member?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, my colleague.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. You know, I just started listening to your remarks, but I wanted to get this one out there. I know that you, like me, have knocked on a lot of doors. I've seen you door-knocking a lot in beautiful Edmonton-Mill Woods. It is beautiful. It's a long drive for me, but it is beautiful.

You know, I'm curious: when you're door-knocking, is it similar to what I've heard, that, obviously, health care is a priority? You mentioned the content here in Bill 4 about the reversal of the ridiculous decision to tear up doctors' contracts. Is that something you've heard about at the doors, or are you hearing a lot more about the crisis in health care, including the crisis in pediatric health care, the crisis that we've talked about with the impact on health care workers, which I didn't even get to in my remarks, particularly the morale issues, the burnout, the stress? Hopefully, I'll get another chance to talk about that because I have a lot of stories that I sure would like to get on the record. I imagine that in Mill Woods you talk to a lot of health care workers as well, so I'd love to hear a little bit about that from you, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Yes, when out knocking on the doors, I have heard from health care professionals as well as doctors. [An electronic device sounded]

**Member Irwin:** Can we just pause for a second?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly have heard on the doors. When door-knocking ever since Bill 21 was first introduced in 2019, every now and then I would run across health care workers or doctors who are really attuned to this and aware of it, so I've had some good conversations about that.

But generally speaking, in Mill Woods – Mill Woods is a community designed in the '70s, and in the heart of Mill Woods is the Grey Nuns community hospital. In fact, I see it every day as I drive in and out of my own home in Mill Woods. We have so many health care workers and others who support the hospital who live in the surrounding communities. Absolutely, health care is an urgent

priority for the constituents of Mill Woods and something I hear about often, particularly because in Edmonton the Grey Nuns community hospital, which is 40-plus years old, is the newest hospital in the city of Edmonton. I think that's always something really important to remember as well, because health care needs have grown and changed and population size has grown quite a bit since Mill Woods was first designed and built, beginning in the '70s, and the Grey Nuns hospital was originally created.

So, yes, I would say that there was incredibly high awareness of what was happening through Bill 21 and the dispute with doctors. The highly publicized incident of the previous Minister of Health engaging with a doctor on his driveway really hit a lot of people's radars. That story was spread far and wide because it was emblematic of the toxic relationship and the back and forth that was happening, the threatening of funding and support when it comes to doctors' ability to bill. I know I saw it characterized in many ways in places, that the AMA was of the strong opinion that they had approached the table for negotiating these agreements wanting to be productive. [interjection] Yes. Thank you.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thanks. Having a very long time ago had the opportunity to live in the Mill Woods area, actually a couple of blocks from the Grey Nuns, I know, of course, that a lot of support workers do live in the area because they work there. Again, you know, I'm always a person of kudos where it's due: the Health minister trying to repair that relationship with doctors. But I'm wondering if you've had the opportunity to speak to some of the support workers, the folks that clean the hospital, things like that, because we know that that relationship did not go well. It's affected people in their jobs. During your time door-knocking in Edmonton-Mill Woods, have you heard anything about the current Health minister's work trying to repair that relationship with support workers? Is there any success, or has it gotten it worse? Has nothing happened? I'm wondering if you might be able to fill in some comments around that.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague, who I did not realize was a former resident of Mill Woods. I'd be curious to know which neighbourhoods you were in, my friend.

Certainly, the hospital is itself like a small city, the variety of people and tasks required to keep a hospital running and to provide that care. Certainly, we know we often hear the phrase "doctors and nurses," but when it comes to front-line health care, the team is so much broader and deeper than just those very front-facing roles: everyone from the cleaning staff, laundry services, the team that operates in the morgue, the teams that hand out the medications, the porters, on and on and on. Of course, during the pandemic we saw a wildcat strike, not at the Mill Woods community hospital but at other locations here in the city. So that toxic, controversial relationship has really had a negative impact in so many different ways. It's been frustrating to watch.

I realize that we're getting close to 6 p.m., Mr. Speaker, so our time to talk about Bill 4 is going to move fairly quickly on us. I want to make a few of my priority points, and one of them is around the conversation about: Bill 21, the tearing up of doctors, the very aggressive bargaining that was taking place over the last several years, which we are now backing away from, which I appreciate, have led to doctors leaving Alberta.

Now, it's certainly a matter of debate in this place as to whether there is an issue here or not, but CPSA put out updated stats for 2021 that, in my mind, show very clearly that there is an issue. It's not because doctors just started leaving Alberta this year, Mr. Speaker. Doctors have always had an influx and an outflux, but

what we've seen is a trend where in 2018 there were 52 doctors who left . . . [interjection] Oh, please. Happy to.

5:50

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for allowing me to stand and speak. I want to speak to this one issue just for clarity in terms of doctors. My comments that I made earlier – and there's a recognition that we do have not enough doctors, right? We have more doctors than we've ever had before. The number of doctors is increasing, but we don't have enough doctors, and we don't have enough doctors in the right places. We fully appreciate that, and quite frankly we're working on this.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that I was very pleased to reach an agreement with the AMA which will assist us in addressing that issue, providing stability, partnership, innovation, ability to attract and retain. I'd like to point out that although the hon. member across the way was talking about history, that's also part of the history, our reaching an agreement that was accepted by over 70 per cent of doctors. Again I'd like to thank you for your support in moving forward. This was part of the agreement in terms of doing it, and we're looking forward, again, to passing this and continuing to focus on getting more doctors here in Alberta.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Minister. Yes, I think it is incredibly important that an agreement has now been reached. Removing the ability to tear up that agreement, through Bill 4, is a very positive step, and I think that's quite good.

Your comments around "We need more doctors," I think, are really true, but I also really just want to emphasize that many, many experts and many in the medical field feel that this government's aggressive tactics through Bill 21 and entering into what many characterized as a war on doctors, which I have seen escalate from when it began in 2019 and continue through a pandemic, which, frankly, is ridiculous, have now led to the highest number of physicians leaving Alberta that we've seen in the last five years, almost three times as many as we saw in 2018 and 2019.

When it comes to growth in the Alberta physician workforce, the minister rightly points out that the number of physicians has increased, but this year it increased only by 45. Last year it increased by 161, the year before that by 262. The number of physicians we're growing by is shrinking, and the trend line is such that it's going to be in the negatives next year if these trends continue. That's particularly concerning given where we find ourselves in the need to find doctors.

The word the minister used, "stability": agreed, incredibly important. I think that's something that we should value and continue to try to protect. Counter to that the behaviour we saw from the UCP government in 2019, 2020, carrying into 2021, when they were characterizing doctors as greedy and self-serving, when they were running public campaigns to vilify doctors in this battle that was happening between the government, when they were working to force agreements and force proposals, including the 10 proposals that the previous Minister of Health deemed essential, essentially none of which are in practice now. I think that's a record that we need to be aware of and to move away from because it's contributed to putting us in the position that we're in now, and it really has been a bit of a mess.

Kudos to the current minister. I'm glad that an agreement has been reached and that we've backed away from that extremely toxic, adversarial negotiating style, the bargaining in bad faith that we previously saw. But the issue we have today continues to exist in that we need more doctors, we need to recruit doctors, and trust has been broken. Certainly, we need to be helping people to find doctors and trying to recover from the care deficit that has been put in place.

Now, in preparing for my remarks for Bill 4, I was briefing myself up on the current state of how someone goes about to find doctors, and I was reminded. Seven and a half years ago, before I was elected, Mr. Speaker, I worked as a software consultant, an IT project manager, and one of the projects that I helped with was the [albertafindadoctor.ca](http://albertafindadoctor.ca) website, which still seems to be running and looks similar. I'm sure it's completely different in the back end and in many features from when I worked on it seven years ago – IT moves at a pretty quick pace – but being able to, as I prepared for my remarks, see that previous work brought forward really reminded me of how important it is that people be able to access that public health care and to have that doctor.

As we debate Bill 4, one of the things I mentioned briefly when my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood spoke was that when we're talking about health care in this House, the current crisis that we see in children's health care, the current crisis that we see in emergency rooms being overwhelmed, we need to find some time to make sure we're having those conversations as well. There have been some attempts to have emergency debates around that.

The other piece that I think is interesting to consider when we're talking about health care changes in second reading was the private member's bill measuring service standards, Bill 201, because when we're talking about our health care system and how it's performing, whether we're seeing what we expect out of that system, it's incredibly important that we have at our fingertips good data about what is happening, and I think that the private member's bill that was introduced but not debated is really important.

When considering Bill 4 as well as what we're seeing here today, I just want . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** There have already been three interventions. I'm sorry.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, we already had three? Okay.

**Ms Gray:** Yeah. We've had three.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. Sorry.

**Ms Gray:** No. That's okay. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** No problem.

**Ms Gray:** One of the challenges when I reflect on the debate that happened for Bill 21 back in 2019 – if I recall correctly, one of the

government's arguments was that they were clarifying and codifying in legislation a power they believed they already had. We've seen the government make this kind of argument on multiple pieces of legislation, including Bill 10, where they were giving themselves new powers under the Public Health Act. We see that happening again, in some ways, when we talk about Bill 1 of this session, the sovereignty act. Throughout so many of these issues . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Bill 4 is before the Assembly. Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Sorry.

**Mr. Jones:** Oh, he just said it.

**Member Irwin:** It's your own bill. Why aren't you speaking to it?

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

I will say that it's a very late arrival to the feet by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, but I'll give it to him on this occasion.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I know we're coming in under the wire here. You know, as I'd mentioned a little bit earlier during an intervention, always willing to give kudos where it's due, and I thank the Minister of Health for bringing Bill 4 forward to fix a very serious problem that, in my opinion, was the result of – let's be frank. It was kind of a childish tirade, you know, going into negotiations, not really getting the way they wanted, and: well, let's just rip it up. That's not how negotiations work, and I'm glad that the current Minister of Health is trying to do a little better and showing a better way to negotiate. Obviously, by getting the doctors to agree, there was obviously something there that allowed them to feel like they were getting a good deal out of it.

You know, as I was listening to the course of the debate, jotting down many, many, many notes – hopefully, I'll get a chance to talk about those later in Committee of the Whole.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt but see the time for this item has expired. It is now 6 o'clock, and the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 6, 2022

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated. As you were.

### Government Motions

#### Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner

12. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
- concur in the report of the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee tabled on December 5, 2022 (Sessional Paper 17/2022); and
  - recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Kevin Brezinski be appointed as Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing on December 30, 2022.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 12. It is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to allow the hon. the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waived.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

#### Time Allocation on Bill 1

13. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we've quite a lot of debate on Bill 1 thus far. We've heard cries from the members opposite on how Bill 1 is unconstitutional and how they don't believe it rings true for what Albertans want. As you know, our government seeks to reflect the voices of everyday Albertans, and the men and women of Alberta who elected us to represent them in government expect us to do our best possible.

We have heard feedback, and on Monday our government caucus met to discuss and propose clarifying amendments to this bill. Proposed amendments include clarifying that any legislative change to existing Alberta statutes outlined in a resolution and introduced and passed by the Legislative Assembly under the act must also be introduced and passed separately through the regular legislative process. These proposed amendments reflect feedback we have received from Albertans who want to see aspects of Bill 1 clarified and ensure it gets across the finish line. I'm pleased the voices of our MLAs and Albertans are being heard and respected, and I look forward to making sure those changes are made this evening. We've debated Bill 1 now for nine hours. That's plenty of

time to discuss and debate on things that are important to Albertans, but it's time to get to the conversation about amendments.

Just as a reminder, NDP members took an unprecedented step in voting against Bill 1 in first reading, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to read from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which has the following to say about first reading:

First reading allows a bill to be formally brought before the House, printed and made available publicly. [At this point] it is assigned a specific bill number. Passage of the motion for first reading involves no commitment on the part of the House beyond [agreeing] that the bill be made generally available for the information of Parliament and the public.

For the public, Mr. Speaker. We work for Albertans. It is in their best interests that they see the legislation that we are proposing.

Sadly, the members opposite chose that that was not the best course. Every single member of the NDP decided that they felt that they knew better and that no member of the public deserved to see a copy of this bill, so I think it's rich for members opposite now to embark on a process of delaying this bill. They made amply clear, Mr. Speaker – amply clear – that they had no interest in even seeing it printed, no interest in reading the bill before even voting against it. Here the members opposite say that nine hours isn't a delay tactic or a filibuster, yet we're on the second reasoned amendment. To anyone with an ounce of parliamentary experience it smacks of delaying tactics on a bill that they have no intention of allowing to get to a vote. While I encourage healthy debate, their actions since the introduction of Bill 1 have been slightly disingenuous. There has been plenty of time for members to speak.

While I do believe debate by the opposition is important, in fact essential, Albertans have already told this government what they want to see changed, and nearly nine hours of discussion for Bill 1 is more than enough time to discuss those requests. It's time the government did what it promised Albertans it would do this fall and get things done with Bill 1. I encourage and quite enjoy healthy debate in this Chamber, but when time is used to simply delay the democratic process of passing legislation, I encourage all members of the Chamber to listen to the feedback from the voices of everyday Albertans, the people that we serve, the men and women that elected us to represent them, and move forward with the process this evening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 21(3) a member of the opposition may respond for up to five minutes. I see the Official Opposition whip has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this motion this evening. Just a number of points, the first being that with this bill, it's not just any bill; it's the flagship bill of this new Premier, of this new cabinet, and so forth. There was a lot of expectation, I think, amongst the public, considering all of the issues that needed to be dealt with here in the province of Alberta with affordability, the health care crisis, and so forth. So when this Bill 1 did come forward, everybody's jaws literally dropped, not just figuratively, because here within a scant few pages was this hopeless jumble of rhetoric around freedom and so forth, you know, directly brought from some fringe element and very poorly executed – right? – with plenty of error built within it.

The very short time that we've had with the bill thus far – both the Official Opposition and the general public at large have found plenty of problems with Bill 1. Probably the best way which we could air those issues was through the debate here in the Legislature, so for the House leader to get up and suggest that, you know, delaying somehow this bill – really, what he's doing here

this evening is delaying the debate that needs to take place to clear the air around Bill 1, right? Every day we learn more things about the implications of this bill on funding at different levels, its effect on the relationship with First Nations peoples, and so forth. I think that it would be wise to reconsider having closure at this juncture on Bill 1.

Again, the House leader opposite talks about first reading and how uncommon it is for someone to perhaps vote against something on first reading. I would suggest, number one, that I saw this same UCP caucus do the very same thing when we were in government not so long ago. I mean, certainly, don't talk out both sides of your mouth, as they say, Mr. Speaker. Number two, the very existence of a sovereignty act, as it sits, is enough to send disquiet amongst the markets, amongst the economy, amongst relationships with First Nations, relationships between different levels of government. Those two words are enough to trigger all kinds of concern. We've seen that in the parallels from other jurisdictions that have done this in the past. It's caused absolute chaos, so I think it's very well to set the stage, you know, to have some people voting against this bill in first reading, and we stand by it. In fact, I think it started a very strong analysis of Bill 1 that took place in the public here right across the province, and people are still, as I say, picking up their jaws off the desk as to the astounding ineptitude of this bill.

Humbly and persuasively, hopefully, I would suggest all members vote against closure here this evening. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 13 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Savage
Fir	McIver	Schow
Horner	Milliken	Schulz
Hunter	Nally	Singh
Issik	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Jean	Nicolaides	Stephan
Jones	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Loewen	Orr	Turton
Long	Rutherford	Yao

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Schmidt
Eggen	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 7
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[Government Motion 13 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

Ms Goehring moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks this bill

presents to federal funding for their projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 5: Ms Sigurdson]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has no time remaining, so we will proceed to the next speaker on amendment RA2. As I mentioned on a number of occasions last night, it is important that members are speaking to the amendment and not to the main motion.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer my thoughts on the amendment to the job-killing sovereignty act, which states that

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the potential risks this bill presents to federal funding for their projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have to say that it is a tremendous privilege to be able to speak in this House, especially considering that Bill 1, if passed in its current form, will essentially render us completely redundant. We won't even get the opportunity to speak to legislation or even propose amendments because the bill as it's currently written condenses all of that power into the executive branch of government, bypasses the contributions of private members of the Legislature completely. We will have nothing to say. We won't even be allowed to say our piece or represent our constituents on matters of legislation because the legislation won't even have to come to the floor of the Legislature anymore for it to be created, amended, repealed. None of that will happen. So I'm very pleased to be able to speak, maybe for the last time, on a piece of legislation that comes before the House here today.

Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, recognizing your guidance, this amendment really focuses on the threat that Bill 1 poses to funding for projects, including critical infrastructure and housing initiatives, because we know that the government is, through Bill 1, giving itself the power to completely disregard the federal government and any initiative or even proposed initiative that it seems to think would be harmful to the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** I might just briefly interrupt the hon. member. My apologies for doing such. I hear a number of private conversations happening around the Chamber this evening. There's lots of space for those to happen in the lounges, in your offices. I ask that you provide, even if it's not your attention, at least your quiet to the hon. member.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that probably all of the private members are as equally concerned about their ability to speak to bills disappearing as I am, so they're getting all of their speaking in right now, all at the same time, before that power is taken away from them completely by Bill 1.

8:00

The point I was trying to make was that I'm in favour of this amendment because it threatens federal funding. I know that my colleagues here in the Official Opposition have made a lot of arguments supporting this, but I would just like to raise one issue in particular that's very important to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar certainly but to the francophone population in Alberta broadly speaking, and that's the issue of federal funding for Campus Saint-Jean, part of the University of Alberta.

Now, Campus Saint-Jean, of course, is a faculty of the University of Alberta that provides the only French-language postsecondary instruction in western Canada. It's done so for over a century, and

it's been a part of the University of Alberta for many decades. The Faculté Saint-Jean has gone through its ups and downs, but the future of that faculty has never been more at threat than it has been during the time that this government has been in power. In fact, it was only a couple of years ago that the Francophone association of Alberta launched a lawsuit against this government to get it to uphold its obligations that the government made, back when the faculty became a part of the University of Alberta, to continue to support the Faculté Saint-Jean and its operation here in the province of Alberta.

Now, that lawsuit, of course, continues to hang over the government, but in the meantime the federal government as well as the provincial government and the University of Alberta itself have come to an agreement to keep the lights on at Faculté Saint-Jean with the federal government announcing a \$10 million injection of funding over the next three years. Now, this is not unusual, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long-standing practice of the federal government to fund francophone education in provinces all across the country. It, of course, is an important part of making sure that Canadians from coast to coast can exercise their constitutional rights to speak either English or French and to learn in the language of their parents. Funding the University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean is an important piece of allowing francophones in Alberta to live and work and get educated in French, which is often their first language.

Now, this funding offered by the federal government has long come with the expectation that the province would match funds, but this government has decided that it wanted to leave money on the table for quite some time until it was dragged kicking and screaming to sign an agreement with the federal government in which the federal government would provide \$10 million to the Faculté Saint-Jean over the next three years and then the provincial government would provide a paltry 2 and a half million dollars and the University of Alberta would kick in \$500,000 of its own money.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason that this is – I'm pleased to see that Faculté Saint-Jean has at least had a three-year reprieve from the assaults that this government has launched against that faculty. I'm pleased to see that the government has decided to take a pause on attacking French postsecondary education here in the province of Alberta. But I am concerned that with Bill 1 they will give themselves the ability to completely negate those sections of the Constitution which may deal with French-language education here in the province of Alberta, because under Bill 1, of course, any federal initiative that, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the House, is harmful to the people of Alberta would be subject to cabinet's decision to suspend the operation of those provisions and provide any enactment to counteract those provisions.

So if Bill 1 is passed, what would that mean for federal funding of an institution like Faculté Saint-Jean, and what would that mean for the future of francophone education here in the province of Alberta? I can tell you that francophones here in Alberta are terrified of what this might mean for the future of French-language education in this province. They have no idea what the government's intention is with respect to respecting the constitutional right to education in the French language here in the province of Alberta. We know that this government has been hostile to French-language learners during its tenure, and they have no reason to believe that it will change its course.

I mean, on the issue of hostility towards francophone education, it was only this spring when I brought parents from Gabrielle-Roy school in my riding to come to the gallery and be introduced and observe question period, wherein I asked the Education minister why she's failing to meet the government's constitutional obligations to fund the francophone education system at a level that's equivalent

to that provided to the English education system. Not only did she refuse to make the commitment to meet her constitutional obligation to fund the francophone education system appropriately; she wouldn't even take a meeting with the parents when I asked her to. She flat out refused to meet with them. It's no wonder that francophones in Alberta are terrified at what passing Bill 1 will mean.

Federal funding is an important piece of that language rights protection. [interjection] I see my friend from Edmonton-North West is rising on an intervention.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. You know, when we talk about the province interfering with a co-operative relationship between the federal government and the provincial government, I mean, you have to wonder what the purpose is, but there's quite often a dollar amount associated with that, too, right? It's one thing to try and make a political point about what have you, but, for example, with francophone education you literally end up leaving money on the table that is meant to serve the people of Alberta. When you go further down that same line of thought, it seems clear that not just this current UCP government, Mr. Speaker, but a long line of Conservative governments here in the province of Alberta have refused to openly accept French as an official second language here in the province of Alberta. They always say an "other languages" sort of thing, again, maybe making some political point but otherwise undermining French education here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to my friend from Edmonton-North West for that intervention. He knows full well how important it is to fund and support the francophone education system here in Alberta because he did a marvellous job at that when he was the Minister of Education. Our government has a track record of expanding and actively protecting the rights of French speakers here in the province of Alberta. We were the first government in the history of this province to create a French-language policy, a policy that has been incredibly important to francophones here in Alberta and continues to do so, but it has not lived up to its full potential, shall we say, under the current UCP government. Certainly, Bill 1 as currently written threatens to throw all of that out the window. It's completely unconstitutional and is therefore a severe threat to French-language rights here in the province of Alberta.

**8:10**

You know, it's incredibly frustrating to me that other critical infrastructure initiatives have continued to be unfunded because the government refuses to play ball with the federal government. I have two supportive housing units in my riding, one in Mill Creek and one in the Capilano neighbourhood, that up until very recently sat empty because the government refused to work with – the federal government had already come to the table with the city of Edmonton to provide money to make sure that those facilities were built and could operate to provide supportive housing for people in desperate need of supportive housing in the city of Edmonton. What did this provincial government do? They sat on their wallets and refused to come to the table with any money until the very last minute, and that's had significant negative results, negative impacts on people in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, my riding borders Mill Creek as well as the North Saskatchewan River, and those have turned into veritable tent cities under this government's tenure. The homelessness numbers in Edmonton have skyrocketed over the last three years, and you only

need to take a quick walk through either Mill Creek ravine or the North Saskatchewan River valley to come across dozens and dozens of people living in tents, freezing to death in tents, tonight. I have no doubt that there is going to be somebody who wakes up dead tomorrow because they cannot find a house right now, and this government bears the lion's share of the blame because they haven't come to the table with money for supportive housing.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is raised. The hon. the Government House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically the portion about using language that causes disruption within this Chamber. I recognize that there are tent cities in this city and that there are those who are going without homes, but to place the blame for the deaths of those who may be outside this evening, tragically, on this government squarely is totally inappropriate.

That kind of language is not appropriate or should be used in this Chamber. I know that member knows better; this is not his first term as an MLA, a former minister of the Crown. I would appreciate if he kept his remarks in line with the decorum of this Chamber, not making such statements that the death of homeless people on the streets this evening is the fault of the government.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of debate. This is not a point of order. I think it is a fact that all orders of government bear a certain level of responsibility as far as taking care of its citizens, and so as far as the degree to which one order of government bears that responsibility or not, that's what we debate in this Chamber all the time through budget estimates, et cetera. Although I appreciate the fact that the Government House Leader feels this is a point of order, this is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Without the benefit of previous rulings, because I know from experience that Speaker Wanner had much to say about this particular issue and some members, perhaps of the opposition, making accusations about the government being responsible for the death of Albertans – and certainly he had much to say on this particular issue – I will provide caution to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that making statements as he's made certainly has the potential of being disruptive, and I hope that he will endeavour to keep them more broad or on the amendment at hand.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your guidance. I just want to stress that the number of people who are living rough in this city is as high as it has ever been, and those numbers have by all estimates at least doubled over the last three years. There's no question that provincial government policy has caused the number of people living outside to skyrocket. When those people experience negative effects, like I mentioned before, there is no doubt that it is policy decisions made by the government that have led to those outcomes. There is also no doubt in my mind that if the government had met with the federal government's financial commitments, we wouldn't be in this position.

I urge all members to vote in favour of keeping the federal government at the table, providing funding for these, and vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly is amendment RA2.

I would like to provide some clarity on comments that I made at the beginning of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's speech with respect to relevance. On the amendment RA2, I would just like to say that in light of the passage of Government Motion 13 I am happy to provide a little bit more swath with respect to relevance and the amendment to members who are speaking this evening.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment, which, of course, contemplates that Bill 1 be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has failed to adequately consult with nonprofit organizations and municipalities on the . . . risks this bill presents to federal funding for their projects.

Now, it's useful to go and have a look at what the bill actually says. It doesn't take that long to read it. What it says here is that the Legislature will bring a motion if, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the Legislature, a federal initiative is "unconstitutional," "intrudes into an area of provincial . . . jurisdiction," or "violates the rights" under the Charter, or – and this "or" is doing some pretty heavy lifting here in section 3 – "causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans."

What that resolution can do, then, is direct cabinet to identify some measures that they should consider taking, and part of those directions are that the minister can "exercise a power, duty, or function . . . by making a regulation," for example, or "issue directives to a provincial entity and [their] members." Those directives can be in respect of a federal initiative.

Now, what's important here is that those provincial entities – when one goes and has a look at definitions under section 1(e) – are public agencies, Crown corporations, "an entity that carries out a power, duty or function under an enactment." So that could be pretty well anybody. There are lots of delegated authorities within the government of Alberta. "An entity that receives a grant or other public funds from the Government that are contingent on the provision of a public service." There we have contracted service providers, many of which are nonprofits. We have here public postsecondary institutions, school boards, municipal authorities, municipal and regional police services.

Mr. Speaker, what happens here is that the Legislature could take a notion, just simply have some vibes, feelings, that something causes or is anticipated to cause harm. It could be anything. They got vibes. You know, it could be any Canada Proud Facebook meme that stirs the passions and the enthusiasms. A resolution comes in, then people, nonprofits, others, are directed to refuse federal initiatives of any law, program, policy but not even just existing ones. And this is where the vibes come in, Mr. Speaker. Under 1(c): ". . . or a proposed or anticipated federal law, program, policy, agreement or action."

So people could just hear things that might be coming and interfere in the operations of municipalities, nonprofits, anyone who wants to administer a housing program, for example, anyone who wants to administer a joint federal-provincial program of various kinds. And there are many, ranging from those that have an effect on people's daily lives such as in the area of housing, or oftentimes justice programs, Indigenous programs, and so on, to the absolutely anodyne. There are fed-prov initiatives across government, and there are always the big wheels of government

turning and changes perhaps anticipated. There are always nefarious actors out there spinning a yarn, Mr. Speaker, about what might be coming. Those are political determinations, and they certainly have no place in an act that contemplates based on what might happen in the future, a scare tactic, then yanking funding away from nonprofits.

8:20

That is why this bill should not be read a second time. That is why nonprofits were scandalized – and so were municipalities and others – when this bill came out. You know, many people thought – I was among them, Mr. Speaker – that perhaps this government would attenuate this deeply unpopular sovereignty act misadventure.

In fact, we can have a look at the numbers that Leger has just reported out – and, you know, their horse race numbers are probably the least important or interesting part of the polling set. They find, of course, that 29 per cent of Calgarians and 27 per cent of Edmontonians are supportive of the sovereignty act, meaning it's within the margin of error for Calgary and Edmonton. Even the rest of Alberta, the support there is only at 39 per cent; still, 61 per cent of their sample for the entire rest of Alberta outside of the municipal census districts of Edmonton and Calgary are not supportive of this legislation. And no wonder, Mr. Speaker, given the expansive nature of this piece of legislation.

It is not that any action has been taken towards anyone outside of our borders. What this piece of legislation is and why it has provoked such strong backlash from all aspects of Alberta society is that it is a war on ourselves. We're not teaching anyone a lesson; we're not standing up to anyone. We've just enumerated that we can interfere in the affairs of every nonprofit society, every municipality, postsecondary institution, police services, Crown agencies, anybody who does business with the federal and provincial governments, and not just based on existing programs or initiatives but based on rumours, based on feelings, emotional reactions.

There is no question that this is extremely ill-conceived on constitutionality. That is why it has been variously described as written in crayon, the worst legislation in Canadian history, and so on and so forth, in modern constitutional history, anyway. That is why it should not be read a second time. This introduces a level of uncertainty, particularly at a point that my hon. friend would say, describing around housing and homelessness, we need everyone to be pulling in the same direction on this issue. It is minus 30 out there tonight, and it's minus 20-something down in Lethbridge, where we, too, have tent cities. This is an urgent, urgent issue that requires a short-, medium-, and long-term solution at all orders of government: municipal, provincial, and federal.

It also requires, Mr. Speaker, very careful and thoughtful policy from municipalities and the province on how to ensure that the private sector will also invest in housing stock and expanding that housing stock, and in the affordable and accessible in particular. The province has a duty that they have entirely abrogated around accessible housing, certainly, and social housing, certainly, but there is a whole category of affordable housing where the private sector then works with other orders of government to ensure that we have that housing stock available. They cannot do this if there is so much uncertainty in how housing policy and how housing arrangements between federal and provincial levels of government and nonprofit organizations are, in fact, rolling out in this province.

So, too, this affects municipalities. There are a number of initiatives that rely, planning decisions and so on in municipalities, on federal funding. I'll just give a really small and otherwise perhaps insignificant and unremarkable example of some more active transportation grants that have come from the federal government.

I noticed the other day that there was some federal bike path funding that came through for Lethbridge and area and for the county as well. This makes people safer, and unlike Edmonton, you know, in southern Alberta and Lethbridge in particular we actually have nice weather down there and we can ride our bikes quite often. These are the kinds of arrangements that, then, communities are planned around. Oftentimes communities are planned around recreational infrastructure, community infrastructure, schools, and so on. So it goes to our property values, it goes to our decisions that developers are making, decisions that municipalities are making around their property assessment and their capital investments, all the rest of it.

Why would we be putting all of this at risk because the Legislature takes a notion that they don't like a particular anticipated federal decision? Not even one that's been made, but maybe they heard tell of something and they don't like it. That is not how we plan a province and how we build a province for more than 4 million people in the kind of sophisticated economy that we have here in Alberta.

It is utterly unnecessary. It is deeply unpopular. No one asked for this. Like, literally no one asked for this. They may have asked for some other, you know, statement of purpose or some other statement of principles, which is actually what I thought that the government might deliver, not this unconstitutional hot garbage that essentially directs any nonprofit that they cannot take federal funds anymore.

Nonprofits don't have time to navigate the morass of what the majority of the MLAs on the other side of the House might be thinking on any given day on federal programming and whether they should bother trying to seek out those funds or if they're going to be putting their provincial supports at risk when they do so. They don't have time for that. They don't have time for lengthy court battles. They don't have time for knowing the ins and outs of, you know, whether this legislation, as we have learned today, is a complete overstep on section 96 and the role of the courts. That's not nonprofits' jobs. That's not municipalities' jobs. That's why this amendment contemplates ensuring that this bill is not read a second time, on those grounds.

This bill does not address the problem that the government has laid out. It targets vast swaths of Alberta society with uncertainty, with chaos, with conflict, and ultimately what it does is that it takes all of our attention away from where it should be. We have municipalities, we have nonprofits all across this province who are saying that we have deep and worsening health care crises; that is to say, access to EMS, access to primary care. We have a nonprofit sector that has been saying to the government across the way that they need increases for their contracted social services agencies of various kinds: women's shelters, family supports, child and youth intervention services, disability supports. They're being squeezed by inflation and the cost of living. Their caseloads are higher. Issues and problems that they face and challenges that they are working through with their clients or those that they are contracted to support in some way, shape, or form: all of those issues have become more complex for whatever reason, and there are many over the last two and a half years of the pandemic.

Life has gotten a lot more difficult for people, and that's why Albertans are begging this government to focus on those issues, on the real priorities, not this. Municipalities have been begging for this. They've been saying: "Look, we have issues with attracting and retaining health care professionals. We have issues with respect to ensuring that we've got good EMS response times." The last thing that municipalities need to be in is some sort of bunfight with the provincial government over their municipal funding

because they're also party to a federal initiative that may change sometime in the future. That's what this legislation forces them to do. So there is no question that it needs to be rejected. There is no question that this deeply unpopular government has brought forward a deeply unpopular piece of legislation because it opens up a front of, essentially, conflict with every aspect of Alberta society.

8:30

The French in I think it was World War I built the Maginot line, which was a big trench, and all of their guns were faced east. In World War II the Germans just went around. Turrets were east, and the Germans were west. They were pinned in; their guns were pointed the wrong way. That's a lesson. The fact is that this legislation goes to war with the wrong enemy. It is not a piece of legislation – and it's not advisable to go to war with every aspect of Alberta society, which is what happens with this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On amendment RA2 are there others? The hon. the opposition whip.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the last speaker, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, who brought a very apt comparison, I think, in regard to – I guess there has to be some kind of tactic behind the sovereignty act, but as I said from my earlier comments, it's just so poorly executed that there's no way you could amend your way out of it, quite frankly. There's a structural problem in that it undermines different levels of government – municipal, federal, provincial, and I would include nonprofit entities into that equation – because it creates conflict between each of those levels at every possible juncture when a provincial government wants to choose to pull the trigger to enact that conflict and deem it to be somehow against the sovereign interests of the province.

I guess it has a certain elegance in its trickery – right? – because it dislodges and moves sort of 130 years or more of good governance here in the province of Alberta and suddenly puts everybody on edge. It's like: okay; what's going to happen next? Are they going to invoke a sovereignty challenge against this funding that I'm trying to get for affordable housing for people in Edmonton? Does it undermine the research funding that someone wants to choose to go to do in one of our colleges or polytechnics because it somehow doesn't fit in with the ideology of the government of the province of the day? I mean, all of these things: you don't take them frivolously. You don't think that, oh, you've created such a clever trick. Aren't we clever to make something like this? It literally unravels the fabric of how we make decisions here in the province of Alberta.

Of course, you can make changes to those things, and of course you can have conflict between those things, too, right? Lord knows the federal government needs to be carefully watched at all junctures in regard to their interpretation of the power between provinces and the feds. I mean, that's part of our job, and I think we do a pretty good job here in Alberta generally. But you don't need to have this half-baked sovereignty act to suddenly cause chaos in the way by which we execute our responsibility to fight for the powers that we are entitled to here in the province of Alberta. So that's the problem, I think. Try to amend your way out of that. Good luck, right? There's only one way to do so, and that is to withdraw this bill.

Considering, again, all of the issues that are top of mind of people – and we can look at polls or we can just talk to people on the street or we knock on their door, whatever. They sure as heck are not

going to tell you that, yeah, we've got to build a sovereignty act, and it's got to be a big one like Noah's ark, and we're going to sail it around and throw things at people. I mean, that's not what people want at this point in time, probably any time, really. You know, the affordability crisis has literally blown a hole in people's monthly grocery budgets. It has literally made it unaffordable for many young people to move ahead and to pay for tuition and pursue postsecondary education. The health care crisis has literally given us all pause that our security has been undermined by emergencies and admissions into hospitals that we can't count on from Red Deer to Edmonton and Calgary and all points in between, Boyle, Alberta.

So those are the things we need to deal with, and you need to have all hands on deck in dealing with those things. We can't just say: okay; let's give it a try, and we'll try a little money here and there. We need the municipalities, we need the federal government, we need our nonprofits to all be paddling in the same direction – right? – to meet a crisis head-on. We've done it in the past many times in Alberta. We're very successful in doing so. It's the absolutely worst time to cause any source of division by somehow suggesting that you could review any aspect of any initiative by any level of those governments and have it brought forward to the sovereignty tribunal to see if it meets the standards of their whatever they happen to be thinking about at the time. I mean, that's not the way to run a government. That's not the way to meet an affordability or a health crisis. It's just a recipe for chaos and disaster.

We can do better, right? You know, having a Bill 1 – I guess you've already used that name now, so you're kind of stuck. But you can have a Bill 1(a) or a new and improved Bill 1, I guess – I don't know – that deals with affordability, that deals with things that people are concerned about: the safety and security of families, that's undermined by a health care system that's tottering; safety and security around our roads and schools; making sure that postsecondary is affordable. All of those things are wide open for a beautiful new, refreshed, better Bill 1, and certainly that would be the wisest choice at this juncture for this government to pursue.

I really believe – I was glad that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned the Faculté Saint-Jean as an example of how co-operation can be held or withheld, and you can have success or just frustration, right? In some ways, you know, I'd been thinking about this last night – I had a hard time going to sleep after 1 o'clock in the morning – that this government has been sort of doing practice sovereignty act activities for the last three and a half years by seeing literally federal funding for certain projects land on their desk and just sitting there and staring at it and not using it. People have to sort of even after a while inoculate themselves from the activities of this UCP government over the last three and a half years, not putting up matching funding for critical projects such as child care or funding for Faculté Saint-Jean, of which they have a constitutional responsibility to do so.

You have to take these guys to court and drag them around and bang on their door before they decide to actually do something, right? Two and a half million dollars, I think, was the end product of all of that effort. You know, it's almost like a pattern we've seen with this government without actually having the sovereignty act in their hand, yet they had it in their head with withholding funding for matching grants for initiatives here over the last three and half years.

So here we are. It's written on paper now. Good luck trying to amend it. Quite frankly, I just believe that we all deserve better. We deserve to respect the sanctity and the responsibilities of the division of power and the different levels of government. We deserve to recognize the value of free and open debate here in this Legislative Assembly, and we need more, first and foremost, to



respect the people of Alberta to (a) understand what's really written down in some of these bills and not just think you can pull the wool over their eyes, because you haven't – it's been categorically unsuccessful – and, number two, respect the needs and the responsibilities of governments to ensure the safety and security of Albertans from now and in the future as well.

I would respectfully suggest to everyone to please support this amendment as part of the rejection of Bill 1, the sovereignty act. Thanks a lot.

**The Speaker:** Are there others on amendment RA2?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Schmidt
Carson	Goehring	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Phillips	Sweet

Against the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Savage
Barnes	McIver	Schow
Fir	Milliken	Schulz
Horner	Nally	Singh
Hunter	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Issik	Nicolaides	Stephan
Jean	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Jones	Orr	Turton
Loewen	Rutherford	Yao
Long		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment RA2 lost]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Government Motion 13, Standing Order 21(3), the time for debate on second reading has now concluded. I am required to put all questions to the Assembly to dispose of second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Rutherford
Barnes	McIver	Savage
Fir	Milliken	Schow
Horner	Nally	Schulz
Hunter	Neudorf	Singh
Issik	Nicolaides	Smith, Mark
Jean	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Jones	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Loewen	Orr	Turton
Long	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Schmidt
Carson	Goehring	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Phillips	Sweet

Totals:	For – 30	Against – 9
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[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand today to introduce an amendment to the House, the amendment to Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this is for your records: a two-page amendment. It's three pages for me. This will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. member, please . . . [An electronic device sounded] Is there something we're doing?

Okay. Well, go ahead. See what happens.

**Mr. Smith:** Do you want me to read it or just pass it out or . . .

**The Chair:** I think that it is okay to not read the amendment in its entirety. Just wait until all members have received a copy of the amendment, and then you can proceed with your remarks.

We're good?

Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to amendment A1. When I was a social studies teacher, I used to try to help my students to understand the process by which bills became law, and my students would often start off with a confused understanding of the parliamentary process. They would wonder why there were three readings and what a Committee of the Whole was all about, and I would try to help them to understand that, at least in theory, a bill was to be debated and that while a government bill would originate from the government, the whole Legislature, the backbenchers of the government and the opposition, all, had a vital role to play in the passing of a bill. The goal of this process was to consider the bill, even to consider how to make the bill better, and that during the Committee of the Whole there would be amendments placed before the House by either the government or the opposition with that end in mind.

The goal was, or at least it should have been, for all elected members to consider how to make a bill better, and tonight I have placed an amendment before this House which I believe will clarify this bill, Bill 1, and the intent of this bill. The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, or Bill 1, has on the government side of the House had a great deal of discussion. The Premier has listened carefully to her caucus, and the amendments set out before the House are a reflection of these conversations. The amendment before this House tonight is to help clarify that any changes to

existing Alberta statutes that are outlined in a motion and introduced and passed by the Legislative Assembly under the act, under Bill 1, must also be introduced and passed separately through the regular Legislative Assembly process – that is, upon passage of a motion under Bill 1 by the Legislature – and should government determine that an enactment needs to be amended, then that amendment would be introduced into the Legislature, undergo first reading, second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading.

9:20

The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act has been accused of being undemocratic and unconstitutional, and often these accusations were levied before the act was even available to read. As we've debated Bill 1, we've seen many significant legal professionals identify that indeed the bill is not unconstitutional and that it is clearly democratic, for when we read within the bill, it is the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly that are debating and passing a motion that is then sent to the Executive Council.

The amendment before us tonight is simply ensuring what was the intent of the bill all along, that if a law needs to be amended in order to protect the constitutional powers or rights of Albertans . . . [An electronic device sounded] My goodness. Are we going to get control of that? I'm going to start again here. The amendment before us tonight is simply ensuring what was the intent of the bill all along, that if a law needs to be amended in order to protect the constitutional powers or rights of Albertans from a federal bill, then any amendments to a piece of legislation coming from Bill 1 would be done as part of the full democratic practice of this House.

Section 4(4) and (5) have been introduced for clarity.

(4) For greater certainty, a regulation as referred to in this section does not include an Act of the Legislative Assembly.

(5) Nothing in this Act abrogates any authority or power vested in the Legislative Assembly or the Lieutenant Governor in Council by any other enactment or by operation of law, including any authority or power of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to take action with respect to the federal initiative.

This amendment now addresses, perhaps, one of the concerns that has been expressed by some of my constituents as well as some of the people in this House. This amendment does what every good amendment should do. It helps to clarify the meaning of the bill, thereby making the bill a better bill, a bill that will better serve the people of Alberta.

The second major change in this amendment would also clarify that the harms addressed by the act are limited to federal initiatives that, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly, are unconstitutional, affect or interfere with constitutional areas of provincial jurisdiction, or interfere or violate the Charter rights of Albertans. This is found in section 3 of the amendment when it says:

- (ii) causes or is anticipated to cause harm to Albertans on the basis that it
  - (A) affects or interferes with an area of provincial legislative jurisdiction under the Constitution of Canada, or
  - (B) interferes with the rights and freedoms of one or more Albertans under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This amendment, like many amendments to any bill, is the result of listening and careful consideration. These amendments are the result of much discussion amongst the government caucus as they listen to constituents and stakeholders across Alberta. These amendments are exactly the kind of amendments that as a teacher I helped my students to understand would be part of the passage of a bill. This amendment meets the criteria of what a good amendment

should do. It is the result of listening and feedback from Albertans through their elected representatives, and it strengthens the bill.

I would encourage the House to support these amendments. I would encourage the opposition to carefully consider the wisdom of these amendments and to support these amendments and, in the process, fulfill their duty as His Majesty's Official Opposition, for their duty is not simply to oppose for the sake of opposing but to help strengthen the bill, to make it better for the people of Alberta. That is what this amendment does, so it is deserving of the support of the members of this Legislature.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. I appreciate the previous member's words as far as the role of the Official Opposition. One of our roles is to hold the government accountable for their actions. I will speak about the fact that for Bill 1, a flagship bill of the Premier that she campaigned on to win leadership of the UCP – to bring in a bill that gave the government broad, sweeping powers, in fact the most undemocratic powers that a government could give in this history of this province, and then try to claim a mulligan is absurd.

I can speak from a position of having sat around the cabinet table. I brought forward bills through the cabinet process. I'm well acquainted with that cabinet process. Madam Chair, I find it very difficult to believe that the Premier wasn't aware of the broad, sweeping powers of the bill that was tabled and that cabinet was unaware. We have incredible men and women who serve in the civil service, who do the province great justice, who take their jobs seriously. They have chosen the life of service within the civil service, and their job is to provide the best possible advice. I find it very hard to believe that at no point in the process, where the bill was first a concept to the first draft, second draft, multiple drafts, this was not flagged to the Premier and cabinet, that there weren't a number of times where civil servants stood up and said: Premier and cabinet, what this bill does is give you broad, sweeping powers to change legislation, statutes, and regulations behind closed doors. That part: I just don't find it believable, having sat as a cabinet minister and having been a part and chaired a number of cabinet committees, that that is even possible.

You know, regardless, whether this is a case of the fact that the Premier got caught with her hand in the cookie jar and the opposition and Albertans caught this government trying to give itself, quite frankly, undemocratic powers – point being: today we have an amendment that will curb some of the powers that the Premier has given herself. Madam Chair, one of the roles of the opposition is not just to make amendments. That is true, and the previous speaker is correct in that the opposition can try to amend bills and legislation to improve them, but my position currently is that this bill, whether amended or not, has impacted and had a negative impact on international investment and the reputation of Alberta. Part of my job is to act in the best interest of Albertans and of our province. I believe, from what I've been told by international investors, that this bill is not in the best interest of the province and has put a chill on international investment.

Now, I've said this before. I spoke at a seniors' home this morning and said that I agree with the government that when the federal government overreaches into provincial jurisdiction, there needs to be a process and Alberta needs to stand up for ourselves and push back on the federal government. In areas of the development of our natural resources that is provincial jurisdiction, similar to our education or our health care system. In fact, Madam

Chair, these are the exact reasons that I decided to run for provincial politics. I never ran as a municipal councillor. I never ran in federal politics. The reason is that I believe our provinces have significant authority and jurisdiction and those three areas – the development of our natural resources, the delivery of our health care system, and the delivery of our education system – are three priorities for me, and that’s why I’m an MLA.

I agree that when the federal government overreaches, we not only need to slap their hand; there needs to be swift action. I can point to numerous examples in Alberta’s history when the government of Alberta has taken action. We have tools at our disposal, including taking the federal government to court. We have a court system, which is arm’s length from our political system, where they will make these decisions, and I trust in our judicial system. I have faith in it, that we have set up the right processes for that.

9:30

The challenge with this act, regardless of what amendments are brought forward: we still have an act that in title is the sovereignty act. Madam Chair, I have worked with international investors for a number of years now and know for a fact that they will look at this bill, and this will cause them trepidation. They will hit pause. They will look at other jurisdictions within Canada if they are looking at Canada and Canada makes their top-five list of potential areas to invest in globally. If there is a perception that the province has a different set of rules from the federal government, that immediately puts uncertainty into the decision of whether or not they should invest in Alberta. That in and of itself has already happened. It has happened since the Premier started talking about the sovereignty act.

This amendment, although within the walls of this Chamber – Albertans understand that the government is attempting to amend the unilateral powers that they granted themselves in this bill. For the international investment community you still have a piece of legislation that causes them to question the stability of investing in Alberta. That, for me, Madam Chair, is a big enough red flag. Despite this amendment addressing some real issues that the opposition and members of the public and the chambers have raised, it still doesn’t address the fact that we have a bill that is called the sovereignty act, that not only causes doubt but signals that there are different sets of rules between the province or the state and the federal government or a national body.

I know that members in this Chamber on both sides of the House understand that business is looking for not only predictability and stability but also a little regulations navigating as possible, and when there is a misalignment between the federal government, the provincial government, and municipal governments, it means layers of complexity. When a business goes back to their board of directors to advocate on which jurisdiction should get the next investment, this is a critical input to that decision.

As we’ve seen, this has already had negative consequences for Alberta’s reputation, and that’s my biggest concern. Yes, it frustrates me when the federal government sticks its nose where it doesn’t belong. Yes, there should be tools for Alberta to push back on the federal government, a hundred per cent. We are all Albertans in this Chamber first and foremost. We have those tools at our disposal.

I appreciate comments that colleagues of mine have made about the questions that this act will raise about the desperately needed federal dollars that we often leverage when it comes to housing, when it comes to major infrastructure projects. That’s a concern of mine as well. We need to work with the federal government because

we want their dollars. Well, they’re our dollars that we want back to be invested in our province.

The other major concern I have with this bill, despite this amendment, is the argument that if every province brought forward a bill like this, the Trans Mountain pipeline would be killed immediately and would not move forward. Other major projects would also be at risk. Alberta is an export province. We rely on trade. We rely on exports. Putting up walls around our province is going to not only create uncertainty but potentially jeopardize future projects that we desperately need.

I appreciate that the government has brought up examples of Quebec and what they’ve done. I can tell you that for 50 years Quebec went backwards when they brought in legislation. Quebec and Montreal used to be the home to all the headquarters for major financial institutions. Montreal was the headquarters in Canada. When Quebec brought in a bill like this to declare Quebec sovereignty, all of those headquarters moved out of Montreal. Where are they? All in Toronto. Will they ever move back? Nope. I mean, I don’t know. I haven’t spoken to the CEOs, but I’m going to wager a guess that they’re unlikely.

**Mr. McIver:** Because they’re going to come to Alberta.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, here’s the challenge. I appreciate that the minister just said: well, they’ll come to Alberta. Calgary is home – the second-largest city of headquarters of financial institutions. This bill is potentially jeopardizing that, that these institutions . . .

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Bilous:** Members cannot say no unless they’ve spoken to the CEOs of all the major banks, and I don’t think – no offence to members in this Chamber – that they’ve spoken to the CEOs of the five majors. This could jeopardize – this has the potential.

Let’s talk about, in business, risk-reward. The risk of driving major financial headquarters out of our province is not worth appealing .5 per cent of Alberta’s population. That’s who this is appealing. I can tell you that when I talk to businesses, they’re not clamouring for a sovereignty act. Do they get frustrated when the federal government overreaches? A hundred per cent. Do they want to see the province stand up for Alberta? A hundred per cent. So do we. This is not the tool to do it. This is going to have significant unintended consequences.

I was asked this morning at a seniors’ residence: should the NDP form government in the spring, will you repeal this bill if the government continues with this? One hundred per cent we will, but the problem is: what damage will already be caused between today and that day? Now, we’ll have the numbers by then. We’ll know how much damage was caused. Now, I appreciate that members of the government could say, “Well, you don’t know what that number is,” and you are right. But, again, when we do a risk analysis, I don’t think the rewards of having a bill that is essentially not going to do what the government wishes it to do – but the downside of this bill is that we could see significant companies relocating their headquarters out of Alberta. We could see companies choose not to invest in Alberta.

I’m in the process of speaking to my network, that I’ve developed internationally, of investors and the impact that this bill is already having. I can tell you that companies are not translating this bill in its entirety to try to understand what it means. What they see is that Alberta has tabled some act called the sovereignty act that means that they will have a different set of rules than the federal government, and that – that – is causing concern.

For those reasons, hon. members, I struggle to support an amendment that I get addresses some of the issues that were raised within this Chamber. [interjection] We're in committee, so to the minister – well, as soon as I sit down, sir, through you, Madam Chair, the minister is welcome to get up and speak. Friends, we will be debating this bill for some time this evening and tomorrow and the next day and the next day.

9:40

It's for those reasons, I mean this in all sincerity, that – and I appreciate the opportunity to debate the amendment and this bill. My hope is that members in this Chamber will stick to debating this and not resort to name-calling and all the rest. I mean, we're talking about an act, and I'm trying to raise genuinely the concerns that I have with the act as it's currently written and the fact that Alberta has tabled a sovereignty act.

I'll bring my comments to a close, Madam Chair, but you know I'm sure that my colleagues will highlight the fact that the amendment does not address the fact of treaty rights and that our friends in treaties 6, 7, and 8 have not been consulted. Again, it's disingenuous when a bill is tabled to say: now we're going to go out and consult. I mean, if the bill is tabled, then the bill has already been written and decisions were made, and consultation is an afterthought. I know my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is constantly in contact with the treaty chiefs, and they are not happy to be an afterthought in this government's mind on this government's flagship bill, Bill 1.

You know, I'm happy to continue the conversation as far as: what is the best mechanism or mechanisms to ensure that we're standing up for Alberta first and foremost? But the conversations I'm having with the international business community are that this is not the right vehicle, and this is going to have negative consequences for the province.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is always a pleasure to stand and speak in this Chamber. I rise to express my support to the amendment to Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. I would like to commend the Premier for introducing this remarkable bill, that reaffirms provincial exclusive powers vested by Canada's Constitution and protects Albertans from federal legislations and policies that do not abide by the Constitution or would interfere in provincial jurisdiction, that will cause detrimental effects to Alberta and violate the Charter rights and freedoms of Albertans.

The amendment will settle the confusion regarding the cabinet's ability for introducing, amending, or repealing an enactment. It is not the intention of the bill to provide the law-making power to cabinet. This amendment, Madam Chair, will clarify that any legislative changes to existing Alberta statutes that are outlined in a resolution and introduced and passed by the Legislative Assembly under the act must also be introduced and passed separately through the regular Legislative Assembly process, thereby undergoing first reading, second reading, Committee of the Whole, and the third reading.

The amendment also seeks to clarify that the harms addressed by the act are limited to federal initiatives that, in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly, are unconstitutional, affect or interfere with Alberta's constitutional areas of provincial jurisdiction, or interfere or violate the Charter rights of Albertans.

I read some discussions and comments that the bill will be likely challenged, particularly on constitutionality. Madam Chair, anybody can raise that concern to any federal or provincial legislation, but

they cannot just assert the constitutionality of the bill based on their own perception alone. In fact, the bill promotes and respects the Constitution Act, 1867, the Constitution Act, 1930, and the Constitution Act, 1982, as the foundational documents that establish the rights and freedoms of Albertans and the relationship between the provincial and federal orders of government, including the legislative powers between them.

It also provides in section 2(a), Madam Chair:

Nothing in this Act is to be construed as

- (a) authorizing any order that would be contrary to the Constitution of Canada.

This will prove that this bill does not permit any order that is against the Constitution. That makes me support the bill as it respects the Constitution. Likewise, the resulting orders, resolutions, or measures are needed to be constitutional, and it upholds and respects our foundational and supreme law.

Madam Chair, I immigrated to Canada with a view in mind that I will raise and support my family better and provide a healthier future to my children. Canada's respect of the rule of law and higher regard of human rights makes this nation and its citizenry prosper and live a better life as compared to some jurisdictions. I stayed for a while in Ontario until I came to participate in and attend a family event in Calgary, which made me see the great opportunity that awaits the people who work hard.

Alberta has a diverse and unique culture, surrounded by extraordinary natural creations and resources. Alberta is home to five national parks, including Canada's first national park in Banff, with amazing Rocky Mountains peaks, turquoise glacial lakes, elegant mountain towns and villages, great wildlife, and scenic drives, and it is considered the flagship of the country's park system. Canada is also third in the world for oil reserves, which are mostly located in Alberta, and the oil and gas industry is Canada's top export product. I have many things to speak of Alberta, but I don't want to go away from the amendment, Madam Chair.

These great things I just mentioned about Alberta, Madam Chair, are only a few of the reasons that make a lot of Albertans stay here, work hard, and live a happy life. However, with disturbing federal government legislation and policies Alberta has been put into a disadvantageous position, causing hundreds of billions of dollars to flee the province to other jurisdictions over the past decade.

Madam Chair, Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, will enforce the Canadian Constitution's division of powers in recognition of both the federal and provincial governments' respective, exclusive, and sovereign areas of constitutional jurisdiction. It will create opportunities for building national awareness of federal intrusion into provincial areas of exclusive jurisdiction.

9:50

We have seen the hard work of the provincial government in the recent months as we recover from the pandemic, economic stagnation, job-killing policies of the previous provincial government and their mismanagement of funds, causing the province to incur multibillion dollars of debt. Alberta's government, with a great vision and determination to recover and progress, was able to bring back more than 200,000 jobs, open new opportunities, diversify our economy, balance our provincial budget, and brought in multibillion dollars of investments with the lowering of corporate tax to 8 per cent and a lot more initiatives.

After many challenging years of economic and pandemic hardship Alberta is finally moving forward once again. The government's focused, responsible fiscal management and relentless pursuit of economic growth has put the province on a more sustainable fiscal trajectory, creating expanded financial capacity, resulting in

additional government revenues. The job-creating corporate tax cut introduced by Alberta's government, Madam Chair, is proving to be the more sensible approach than the increasing of taxes imposed by the previous government. These works prove that Alberta's government's approach is working, but I know that there's more to be done.

I hear of some concerns from my constituents, including improvement on the health care system by reducing emergency wait times, making EMS response faster, and lowering surgical wait times. As we head into the recent weeks, the government appointed an administrator that will be working full-time and will be delivering the needed improvements in the health care system, both in the short and long term, so that the health services needed by Albertans are prompt and unhampered while maintaining the same high quality of care.

Madam Chair, as the provincial government continues these initiatives and works that will improve the lives of Albertans, we also know that the federal government will continue to overreach on the provincial rights and powers, as we have seen in the past, that would unfairly prejudice Albertans. It seems that the federal government has no concern and couldn't care less about the prosperity of our province by its legislation and policies that were sure to regulate and control Alberta's natural resources and economic development, like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48.

They also want to penalize our province's energy and agricultural sectors by the implementation of mandatory fertilizer cuts and arbitrary emissions reductions initiatives that would devastate Alberta's economy, not to mention the control on the delivery of health care, education, and other programs by providing so many strings attached on funding and other controlling federal policies and the confiscation of legally owned firearms, which interferes with our private property rights. The Liberal-NDP alliance would aim to raise the bars of penalizing Albertans as they heat their homes and workplaces this winter by a tremendous increase of the federal carbon tax. These are only some of the upfront attacks by the federal government on Canadian federalism, our Constitution, and Alberta's economy and Albertans.

Like I mentioned a while ago, Madam Chair, the approach of Alberta's government is working, and it's getting more Albertans working and bringing our finances back in the black. Through many provincial government initiatives we are experiencing broad-based investment, economic diversification in our province.

Amazon Web Services announced its plan to establish a second cloud computing hub in Calgary, amounting to \$4.3 billion, while Infosys has recently opened its Digital Centre in Calgary and is committed to create a thousand jobs. Mphasis also opened their Canadian headquarters this year in Calgary with 200 jobs and will expand to create a thousand tech jobs. RBC has also opened a tech hub in Calgary, which will create about 300 jobs, while EY, impressed with the talented workforce, opened in September this year a new finance hub that will create about 200 jobs in Calgary.

Northern Petrochemical also announced a \$2.5 billion project in the municipal district of Greenview, and Dow Chemical plans to work on a project that would be the world's first net-zero carbon emissions petrochemical plant, which is predicted to cost about \$10 billion.

Another huge investment that has landed in Alberta is Lynx Air. Madam Chair, Canada's newest low-cost airline joins Flair and WestJet as Alberta-based airlines.

These are just some of many investments creating jobs in Alberta, boosting our economy, Madam Chair. As we saw the unemployment rate dip down to 5.2 per cent in October, we are also seeing the continuous entry of job creators in our province. Whether new

businesses or business expansions, Alberta's government is helping employers create exciting futures for Albertans.

Madam Chair, we do not want to be stopped or pushed back by federal government legislation and policies as we continue to bring more prosperity to Alberta's economy. This bill will work to re-establish the rule of constitutional law back into the Canadian legal system and create more stability and credibility for businesses over both the short and long term. Bill 1 will help protect Alberta's freedoms, interests, economic growth, and prosperity from intrusive federal policies and legislation that have caused hundreds of billions of dollars to flee Alberta to other jurisdictions over the past decade. Furthermore, Bill 1 is intended to solidify Alberta's position in the federation. It will not cause separation from it. It is aimed to restore and respect the constitutional rights of our creative and diverse provinces, including Alberta.

The distribution of legislative power between the Parliament of Canada and provincial legislators under the Constitution is clear, but the federal government could not resist to go beyond what has been provided for them. Bill 1 proposes a legislative framework that shifts the burden to the federal government to legally challenge Alberta's refusal to enforce unconstitutional or harmful federal laws or policies instead of Alberta having to initiate legal challenges and wait years for a decision while those same federal laws or policies harm Alberta day in and day out.

Saskatchewan introduced the Saskatchewan First Act in their Legislature, Madam Chair, and it is aimed to confirm its exclusive provincial authority over its natural resources by setting up a tribunal independent from government to review whether or not a federal measure is harmful, unconstitutional, and provides recommendation to cabinet. What Bill 1 does provide is that instead of creating the same tribunal, that authority is provided to the democratically elected Members of this Legislative Assembly to determine and review federal government legislation and policies and debate recommendations for cabinet consideration.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, let me just express that the government has a clear mandate to stand for Albertans, promote their interests, and protect them from continued economic and harmful policies from the federal government. I encourage all the members of this House to support this bill as it promotes respect of our Constitution and enforces and recognizes the division of legislative powers between the federal and provincial governments.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:00

**The Chair:** Others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to my hon. colleague who spoke before me. Today, first of all, I rise to offer a subamendment for the amendment the government just presented to Bill 1. I have 95 copies.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Just wait until I get a copy, and then we will proceed. Do you have the original?

**Mr. Barnes:** I'm sorry. I have the original here.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I'm just confirming: was this approved by Parliamentary Counsel?

**Mr. Barnes:** Yes, it was.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will proceed with this amendment. This will be known as amendment SA1. Copies will be distributed to all members. It's about a page and a half amendment.

I don't require you to read it into the record, but just give us a few moments so that every member in here has a copy before you proceed. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. To start with, I wish to be clear that the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, Bill 1, is a bill that I personally support, as do most Albertans and many, many of the good folks of Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Now, Madam Chair, this is a relatively simple and straightforward subamendment to the government's amendment, and it is designed to clear up some of the public misconceptions regarding this proposed legislation and some of the legitimate concerns. Allow me, first, to preface my remarks by reminding this Assembly that my support for strengthening Alberta's autonomy is absolute.

I was proud to serve on the government's Fair Deal Panel, starting in 2019, and, Madam Chair, when I felt that the panel's recommendations didn't go far enough to reflect the public concerns, I publicly offered additional recommendations directly to the Premier to enhance Alberta's autonomy and to make Alberta the freest and most prosperous place.

I will also remind everyone here that I personally campaigned on the winning side of the equalization referendum even when some UCP members withheld or were quiet with their support.

Madam Chair, I then brought forward Motion 505, which was adopted by this Assembly, unanimously I believe, calling on the government to "deploy every legal, economic, and constitutional tool at the province's disposal to . . . [win] a fair deal for Alberta" and, of course, Alberta families.

In addition, in the past six months I personally supported and publicly argued in favour of a proposed sovereignty act in interviews with national media, including the CBC. My support for strengthening Alberta's autonomy has never wavered even when some members of our current cabinet attempted to play politics with this issue.

The bottom line, Madam Chair, is that I want Bill 1 to be approved by this Assembly, but more importantly I want this legislation to work for Albertans, and for that to happen, Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, needs to be widely accepted and deeply supported by the public. This will ensure that it remains in place no matter which party forms government in the future.

With all of that being said, by far – by far – the most common concern I've heard about Bill 1 is that it will grant cabinet too much power to unilaterally alter existing legislation, too much power in the hands of cabinet. While this concern may be inconvenient for the government, the fact is that this concern is not limited to just supporters of the Official Opposition. In fact, I've repeatedly heard this concern from voters that I would personally describe as lifelong conservatives, and given the events of the past three years this should not come as a surprise to anyone. Conservatives, more than any other group of Albertans, have grave concerns about the centralization of power by government within our democratic system.

To its credit this current government is committed to limiting government overreach in a number of areas. However, when it comes to this bill, so far the message has been muddled. The government has claimed that under Bill 1 no legislative changes can be made without clear direction being given by the Assembly. That is technically true – technically – but the fact is that when it comes to raising the bar on proper democratic representation, we can do much better and much better than the amendment the government just presented, which is why I presented a subamendment.

My subamendment is designed to ensure that any legislative changes proposed by cabinet, even when they are made at the

Assembly's request, must ultimately be ratified again by the Assembly with a majority vote. By making this one small change, I believe we can put to rest the largest concern that most nonpartisan Albertans have about this legislation. Not only does this clear the air on some rather muddled messaging, but it will also significantly strengthen this legislation, and ultimately the purpose of the bill is to make a strong statement to Albertans, to the federal government, to Ottawa, and to all Canadians that Alberta is done with being pushed around.

So I ask you, my fellow members of the Assembly, what ultimately makes a stronger statement: an order delivered by cabinet following a closed-door meeting or the democratically expressed wishes of the people's representatives delivered in this Chamber for the whole world to see? For the whole world to see.

**10:10**

Madam Chair, democracy doesn't matter less when you're dealing with difficult issues like Alberta's autonomy. In fact, it matters more. So let's give the public more democracy, let's accept my subamendment to the government's amendment, and let's continue to fight for Alberta families and making Alberta the freest and most prosperous place.

Madam Chair and colleagues, my concern with the government amendment is that it left two key areas out: where for ratification, for actually using the sovereignty act, cabinet does not have to come back to the Legislature for a majority vote, majority ratification. So my subamendment in, of course, 4(a)(1) and then over to (1.1) states that

a Minister may not make an order under subsection (1)(a) until each of the following occurs in successive order:

- (a) the Minister tables a copy of the order, as proposed, in the Legislative Assembly;
- (b) within 7 calendar days of the tabling made under clause (a), the Legislative Assembly approves a resolution that confirms that the proposed order is consistent with the resolution approved under section 3 to which it relates;
- (c) the Lieutenant Governor in Council approves the making of the proposed order.

The minister has oversight when it comes to implementation of the sovereignty act from the 87 representatives of Alberta. Section 4(b)(1.2):

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may not make an order under subsection (1) to direct a Minister under clause (b) or issue a directive under clause (c) until each of the following occurs in successive order:

again,

- (a) a member of the Executive Council tables a copy of the order, as proposed . . .
- (b) within 7 calendar days . . .

to this Legislature, to the 87 of us,

That's in (1.2)(b). And we have our opportunity to ratify it.

That one, Madam Chair, I feel is especially important because a directive to one of Alberta's agencies, when it comes to the sovereignty act, needs the eyes and the oversight of the 87 elected MLAs, who are tasked with speaking on behalf of Albertans. A ministerial directive to ATB, to AIMCo, to Alberta petroleum, to AFSC: I feel it's essential under the sovereignty act that that comes back to this Legislature for all the eyes of Albertans to have their final say on it before it's approved.

Madam Chair, in closing, I will just resubmit that I've been a consistent, steady supporter of Alberta being the freest and most prosperous place in Canada. To do that, we have to strive for a fair deal. Nothing moves unless it's pushed. The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act is a mechanism and a step towards that, but let's enhance democracy. Let's shine sunlight on this for

all Albertans to get behind this law and make it as strong as possible for years going forward.

Thank you, all. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Premier on subamendment SA1.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It is a privilege for me to speak to the subamendment SA1 that has just been tabled by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I want to begin by thanking the member for taking a hard look at Bill 1 before this Assembly and for his interest in making sure that we get the bill right. I think that is something that all of us can agree with. But I think, if you take a careful look at the subamendment proposed by the member and his concerns, that is exactly what the amendment that we put forward seeks to address.

The concern that we heard from government caucus members and the concerns that we heard from Albertans, the confusion, with all due respect to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, is a confusion that lies in the understanding between the role of the Executive Council and that of the Legislative Assembly.

Before any act is taken pursuant to Bill 1, there is going to be a resolution passed in this Assembly. That resolution will spell out what it is that the members of Executive Council might act on or direct a cabinet minister or the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in which case the cabinet, to make an order or to deal with either by a ministerial order or by an order in council.

I think that is where the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has got it wrong. We can never confuse the role of Executive Council and the role of the Legislative Assembly. We have three branches of government. We have the Legislature, we have the executive branch, and we have the judiciary. Our system, our Constitution, our parliamentary system envisions that those distinct bodies work in a certain way. So what the member is proposing, in a nutshell, is to say . . .

**Ms Sweet:** That you can't just make it up and do whatever you want.

**Mr. Madu:** I can hear the Member for Edmonton-Manning. She had an opportunity. The members opposite had an opportunity to put forward an amendment. They chose not to.

Madam Chair, this subamendment, while I value the good intention behind it, is mistaken and misplaced because what you are seeking to do with this amendment is to say that, one, a copy of the order that is made by the Executive Council has to be then brought back to the Assembly when that particular order is made pursuant to a resolution of the Legislative Assembly, and that resolution will spell out the nature of what cabinet is to act on.

That really is the intention of your amendment. That responsibility is that of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. That power, that role, is reserved under our system to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is cabinet. The role of the Assembly is (a) under our system and under how Bill 1 is designed. Number one is to say that any resolution pursuant to Bill 1 has to be made by the Assembly. Number two, pursuant to the amendment we've made, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may not amend a statute that is meant to come before this Assembly as a bill. I think, to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the amendment that we have made and the difference between the roles of Executive Council and the Assembly have taken care of the intentions behind the amendment we have put forward.

On that particular basis, I will urge the members of this Assembly to vote against subamendment SA1. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there other members that wish to join the debate on this subamendment? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, and thanks to the hon. minister for weighing in. I guess some concerns that I have are that I don't see this as a situation where the Legislature is interfering with a cabinet decision. We're just ratifying it. In my remarks I talked a lot and the Official Opposition has been quite clear that many, many Albertans either don't support this yet or don't understand it.

**10:20**

To me, one of the best ways to gain support, especially five years, 10 years, 20 years from now, is to give a greater opportunity to shine some light on this, so I'm wondering why cabinet would be concerned about saying: here's the mechanism that we've decided to put in place; ratify that for us. I mean, Ottawa, the Constitution: this is a hundred-year-and-more situation, and it's a continual situation where we are consistently going to have to fight and have Albertans strive for a better deal for Alberta within a united Canada. So why would we minimize that?

When I especially think of the situation where cabinet may direct a minister to send a directive to an Alberta agency – you know, my goodness, look at how many strong, good agencies we have with hard-working people that their fingers are in every day of our lives. I mean, AFSC, ATB, Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission were just three that I mentioned when I spoke. If cabinet got part of that wrong, it could very, very much tie us up into litigation. It could cost hardship and income and careers for Albertans. So again, to the government and to you, Mr. Minister: I'm surprised why you wouldn't want that extra ratification of the 87 of us, who are in the coffee shops of Alberta, who are talking to Albertans.

Rest assured that when the sovereignty act is enacted and instructed on one part of Ottawa's overreach, all the eyes of Canada are going to be on this, so why not give Albertans, those that built this great province, those that pay taxes, those that raise the family – why not give them, through the 87 of us, the extra opportunity to do that? Why not have that extra oversight? I guess I'd say that I disagree with your remarks in the sense that I'm not suggesting that I should interfere with a cabinet decision and cabinet discussion, but I should have the opportunity to stand up and put in my yes or no and have my vote, as should all my colleagues.

I'm sorry. I'm going to ask all the MLAs and my colleagues to support my subamendment. I'm also going to ask them to support your amendment with my subamendment and the sovereignty act. Let's make Alberta the freest and most prosperous place.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on subamendment SA1 as moved by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on amendment A1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on the amendments that the government has brought forward to its job-killing sovereignty act. The amendments seek to clarify the powers of Executive Council with respect to the powers of the Legislature but, in fact, do very little to clarify anything that's in the bill. I don't think that anybody should trust this Premier or this government to do what they say they're going to do with respect to this piece of legislation. More importantly, this

amendment doesn't address some of the significant concerns that the bill has created.

On the issue of the power of Executive Council with respect to the power of the Legislature it's interesting, Madam Chair, to have heard the Deputy Premier give the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat a lecture on separation of powers and division of powers in the Canadian federal system while supporting a bill that upends all of those things. It boggles the mind that the Deputy Premier seems so confident in his understanding of how the Canadian democratic system works that he can lecture at length the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who, in his defence, is trying to get this government back on the rails when it comes to Bill 1, yet his own cabinet is bringing forward this bill, that seeks to completely throw all of that out the window and consolidate judicial, legislative, and executive power as well as federal, municipal, and provincial power in the hands of the Premier and this cabinet.

This bill doesn't really address any of those concerns. Now, I've heard the government members stand up and say: well, now we've backed away from this attempt to seize legislative power and put that in the hands of the cabinet, and now we're only going to clarify that it's only regulatory power that we can exercise, which the government already has. One wonders why this section of the bill is even necessary if it's amended to reflect this wording when that is the role of Executive Council.

I want everyone watching tonight and every Albertan who has concerns about the sovereignty act to make sure that they do not rest easy because the government has passed this amendment, because we know that this government has tried and failed a couple of times to give itself unprecedented powers. We saw that in Bill 10 a couple of sessions ago. We saw it here with the original form of Bill 1, and I have no reason to believe, Madam Chair, that that's the end of it. What I think will happen: well, now we will see that instead of Executive Council being able to create, modify, or suspend any enactment, they'll just create enabling legislation here in the Legislature that's so vaguely worded, give itself all of the powers that should belong to the Legislature to itself through regulations, and subvert the power of the Legislature that way.

Imagine, if you will, the government bringing forward an act to override the federal government, and it says: this act gives the regulatory powers to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations on whatever it chooses with respect to federal legislation. That's theoretically possible. This bill won't change that possibility from happening, and no one can trust this government to not try again to consolidate legislative power in the executive branch; it's just not going to happen tonight. No one should rest easy that this government's attempts to tear down the pillars of democracy that are built upon the concept of the separation of powers are through.

What this amendment doesn't address is the consolidation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers. This amendment does nothing to remove the government's ability to act as if it were a court interpreting the constitutionality of federal legislation. It still says clear as day here in the amendment that the Legislature can pass a motion stating that any federal initiative – so widely defined that, as my friend from Lethbridge-West said, it doesn't even have to exist. It can exist only in the minds of the provincial government. If, in the opinion of a majority of the members of this Assembly, that initiative is unconstitutional, well, we'll just vote on it and it is thus. That's outrageous. That is not the role of the Legislative Assembly, nor is it the role of Executive Council to interpret federal legislation. That is properly the role of the courts.

**10:30**

I had to laugh when I heard the Member for Calgary-East talking about shifting the burden from the province to the federal

government to take one another to court over laws that they thought were unconstitutional. Well, that's not the intent of the bill. Firstly, the intent of the bill is to circumvent the courts completely and just declare some federal initiative unconstitutional for reasons. What was also hilarious, Madam Chair, was that he suggested that that would somehow speed up the court process, that rather than going through the lengthy process of a province taking the federal government to court when they believe that something that the federal government did was unconstitutional, well, the reverse would happen. The federal government would take the province to court, and somehow that would be done more quickly. It boggles the mind, the extent to which we hear government members either misunderstand or spin what this does, what this act and this amendment do.

This issue of consolidating executive, legislative, and judicial power into the legislative branch is still an issue that remains unresolved and will cause incredible uncertainty and chaos in our economy because how is anybody in business going to know which federal laws will apply to them here in the province of Alberta? All it takes is a majority vote of the Legislative Assembly to suspend or attempt to suspend or overturn any federal initiative. That's the opposite of creating certainty.

The other part of the bill still remains, that the government is giving itself the power to direct any provincial entity broadly defined here in the act. The regulatory powers give cabinet even more ability, even broader ability to spell out who is considered a provincial entity and who isn't. It can direct those provincial entities "and its members, officers and agents, [as well as] the Crown and its Ministers and agents, in respect of the federal initiative" to disobey the federal law. Well, that goes against the concept of federalism, Madam Chair. We need to know that the federal laws will apply in Alberta just as they apply everywhere else, and more importantly, businesses and investors need to know that.

Let me remind the House about the federal laws that could be suspended, modified, or provincial agencies will be directed not to enforce. The federal government has wide powers over a whole host of areas that have significant impacts on the operation of our economy. Taxation. Will businesses working in Alberta be required to pay federal taxes? Well, we don't know because the Legislature could decide that, just by a motion of the members, those don't apply.

What currency we will use is potentially at threat. We've heard time and again members of the government caucus go on about the wonders of cryptocurrency. Could you imagine, Madam Chair – you probably can – government bringing forward a motion declaring that Bitcoin is now the official currency of the province of Alberta? [interjections] They're laughing. It's ridiculous, but that's exactly what this bill would do. The former Member for Calgary-Elbow was touting the development of an office of FTX in June this year, and then that outfit went bankrupt here just a few weeks ago. We know that this government has unbridled enthusiasm for cryptocurrency, and we can't put it past them that they would use this bill to do something as ridiculous as make it official currency of the province of Alberta.

Bankruptcy laws are the purview of the federal government, but if, in the opinion of a majority of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, bankruptcy laws don't apply here in Alberta, well, then what will businesses do when they need to be protected from their creditors? Nobody knows.

Patents and copyrights: this is incredibly important in the postsecondary sector. Research and development: the creation and protection of intellectual property is of fundamental importance to that sector. That is federal jurisdiction until a majority of members vote by motion to suspend that here in Alberta. Then where will that



leave our universities? Where will that leave our research and development projects? We don't know.

Citizenship and immigration are the purview of the federal government. We keep hearing from members opposite about labour shortages. In the past Conservative governments have turned to temporary foreign workers to fill those vacancies, but those programs are developed at the federal level. Will the government suspend that enforcement of those programs and create its own temporary foreign worker program here in the province of Alberta? We have no idea.

Even something as simple and as basic as the Criminal Code: parts of it would no longer be enforced by the police. Could you imagine what impacts that might have on the business community if, by majority vote of the members of the Legislature, we decided that fraud was no longer a crime here in the province of Alberta? Police would be directed to no longer enforce that provision of the Criminal Code.

It's incredibly concerning, Madam Chair, that the government is still giving itself the power to issue these directives to provincial entities to ignore, refuse to comply with any federal law that it wants, and that's the kind of chaos and uncertainty that is causing incredible concern in the business community. My friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has talked about the concerns that he's hearing from people in the international investment community that he knows. We certainly hear from the Calgary Chamber of commerce that they're very concerned about this. We heard just today the deputy solicitor of the city of Calgary talking about the concerns that they have about this power that the government is giving itself to direct any provincial entity, including municipalities, to ignore or not comply with federal law.

This amendment doesn't do a single thing to address any of those concerns. This amendment doesn't change those sections of Bill 1 that give cabinet the ability to "issue directives to a provincial entity and its members, officers and agents, and the Crown and its Ministers and agents, in respect of the federal initiative." We cannot support this amendment, Madam Chair, as it's written because it doesn't undo the harm that is present in Bill 1. For those reasons, I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote down this amendment and vote down the bill.

Thank you very much.

10:40

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak today to this amendment. I honestly am a little bit flabbergasted by the last statement there by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to just completely dismiss this amendment and an opportunity to address the concerns that we've been hearing from the opposition over the last couple of days. This amendment does just that. Is it perfect? Does it address all the concerns of the opposition? No, but this does address many of the concerns that we've heard from the opposition, and this is an opportunity for us right now to improve this bill.

I think it's important to note – and the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon was talking about this earlier – the obligation of the opposition. At the end of the day, this isn't just the obligation of the opposition; this is the obligation of this House, all of us, everybody here, to work towards improving this bill to make it the best bill it possibly can be. Whether or not you vote for the bill in the end: that's beside the point. We have an amendment in front of us right now to improve this bill, to make this bill better for Albertans. To ignore that, to just say, "Oh, I don't like the overall bill; I'm going

to vote against this amendment," I think is a failure to represent your constituents because, at the end of the day, take a look at the merits of this amendment. We have an obligation right now, Madam Chair, to improve this bill. This amendment does exactly just that.

Now, that just said, I just sat here and listened to all sorts of weird rabbit trails about how we're going to bring in cryptocurrency and all sorts of other nonsense, Madam Chair. Maybe we need to take a step back. It's actually the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that made a statement that resonated with me, and I think that if we can actually get back to a point where we agree on something, then maybe we can move forward from that point. I agreed with the member when he said that there is federal government overreach. There is federal government overreach. If we can agree on that, then maybe let's start there, and let's figure out how we help make this bill a bill that helps protect Albertans from federal government overreach. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for stating that, for making it clear that the federal government has stepped beyond its boundaries. We know that, and Albertans know that. Albertans have an expectation, whether or not they understand or agree with this bill. They have an expectation right now that the members of this Chamber, this Legislature, their representatives, step up and protect us Albertans from federal government overreach. We need to push back on that.

And it's not just Alberta. We are not the only province that's frustrated with federal government overreach. Right across this country provincial governments are pushing back because they're frustrated with the federal government coming in and stepping into provincial jurisdiction. These are constitutionally protected rights of provinces the federal government has started to push back on, so we have an obligation as a Legislature, as representatives of Albertans, to make sure that we are addressing that concern, the concern brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that the federal government has overreached. They have overstepped. They have pushed into provincial jurisdiction, and we members of this Legislature have an obligation to address that concern. Period. Full stop. That's our job.

So if this bill as it is written doesn't do that, then I anxiously await members of the opposition to propose ideas for how we fix this bill, how we make this bill do that, or otherwise to be able to push back on the federal government and get a better deal for Albertans, to make sure that we're standing up for Albertans. I look forward in the next election to door-knocking and telling my constituents that I'm . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** You'd better start now.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Oh, don't you worry. I've already started door-knocking.

I look forward to, and I have been, telling my constituents that this government is going to stand up for Albertans. Last election they sincerely believed, a lot of my constituents, that the NDP was going to stand up for them. The failure right now by the opposition to look at this bill meaningfully, just to completely dismiss it right from reading one, is shameful.

My constituents expect of me, at the very least, to read this and figure out: how do we help make this bill support Albertans as we push back on the federal government for their overreach? Again, let's go back to that point of agreement. I don't know if all the members of the opposition agree on this, but I sincerely thank Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for his stance, his recognition that the federal government has overreached.

So I challenge the opposition right now, challenge them and all government members, if this bill doesn't get it done, then we have

an obligation right now to have a frank conversation, partisan politics aside, because this is too important, to talk about: how do we use this bill? How do we fix this bill? How do we build this bill to make sure that we are standing up for Albertans?

**Mr. Eggen:** You just introduced it. How did you break it so fast?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** So fix it.

You guys – sorry, Madam Chair. There is a general refusal right now by the opposition to even propose sincere amendments or to look at sincere amendments to make this bill better. This is a great amendment. This amendment makes this bill better, and just to simply dismiss it I think is shameful. I think and I hope that the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar consider that as they vote in the next election.

The other thing I wanted to talk about – and the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview brought it up – is our flagship bill, that this is our flagship bill. The flagship bill of this government was Bill 1 to repeal the carbon tax because the carbon tax has been extremely harmful for Albertans, among other things, in regard to just the general increase in costs. A large part of why we are where we are is because of the carbon tax. The carbon tax has increased the cost of everything, not just for Albertans but for Canadians, the ability to fill up your tank, a \$25-a-month increase for Albertans to be able to heat their homes. We're concerned about seniors who can't afford to pay their bills; \$25 a month is a lot of food on the table, Madam Chair.

So again I just want to challenge the opposition at this point and remind them and all government members here that we have an obligation right now to put partisan politics aside, to take a look at this bill, to take a look at this amendment, and sincerely have a conversation right now about how we are going to improve this bill so that we can better represent Albertans, that we can make sure that Albertans' interests are kept in mind, that we can put Ottawa in its lane, because there's an agreement, at least amongst some of the members over there, that Ottawa has overreached, and make sure that Albertans are best represented.

So take a look at it. This amendment is a great amendment. I think it improves the bill, and I'm happy to be able to stand here today and support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise and to speak to the amendment that the government has put forward in regard to their Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. Now, I just do want to follow up with some of the comments that the minister just made, actually, in regard to representation of our constituents and how there is an expectation by the people of Alberta that the government listen, that the government work in collaboration with the opposition and ensure that we are standing up for the people of this province. I don't disagree. I think that there's an opportunity to ensure that we are getting the best opportunities that we can and that the federal government is listening to the expectations from the province.

[Mr. Orr in the chair]

But what I can also say is that when the minister says, "Well, the people of Alberta expect that we listen and expect that we are standing up for them, and they expect that the government is working on their behalf," then this bill shouldn't exist because I can tell you right now, based on the polling, that there are only 30 per cent of Albertans that actually agree with this act. What that tells

you is that the majority of Albertans disagree, and they disagreed with this legislation before it was ever introduced because Albertans don't agree with this tactic. They don't agree with it, Minister. You can argue across the floor with me about the reality of it, but that is what is happening.

**10:50**

Albertans didn't agree with this direction before this legislation was introduced. They understand that there need to be adults at the table being willing to engage in conversations, that there are mechanisms that currently exist within the way that our legislation works, within the court process and the judicial system that work, and they do not agree with a bill like this being introduced into this Chamber and this tactic that the government has decided to use as the tool. Do they agree that we need to have a different relationship with the federal government? Absolutely. I don't think anybody in this Chamber disagrees with that. But the mechanism that this government has chosen to use through the sovereignty act is not the mechanism that Albertans agree with.

So, as the minister clearly said, if we were listening to our constituents in this Chamber, if every member in this Chamber was listening to their constituents, they would say that this bill should not proceed. It should not proceed even as amended, because the reality of it is that Albertans disagreed with it before they even saw it. So what happened was that the opposition listened to Albertans, heard that they did not agree with this move, talked to the majority of Albertans, and said: "You know what? This isn't the tool that Albertans expect us to use."

Only 30 per cent of Albertans agree with this. We know that if the government actually was listening to Albertans, they would know that only 30 per cent of Albertans agree with this. The economy and the people that are trying to invest in our province disagree with this. It is creating economic uncertainty in our province. Not only are the people that are going to vote in the next election saying that this is a bad idea, this should not proceed; investors are saying the same thing within Alberta and outside of Alberta.

I would think that this week would have educated the government to say: "You know what? Well, we definitely need to amend this, but in fact maybe we should just admit we made a mistake and get rid of it." The amendment doesn't fix the concerns, because if the amendment fixed the concerns, then the bill would just not be read. That is what Albertans are telling all of us in this Chamber.

You know, we hear ministers stand up and talk about: well, when I go door-knocking, people talk to me about this. Well, I'm really curious what people are hearing, because when I'm door-knocking, I can tell you right now that people are choked about this piece of legislation. They do not like it. They don't trust this government to be open and transparent with them about what they're doing behind closed doors. That is the fundamental underlying issue related to this piece of legislation but really the government as a whole.

Albertans don't trust this government. They don't trust this Premier. They don't believe that with how this piece of legislation is written, even with the amendments, to be clear, there will be an openness and transparency to Albertans about what this government is choosing to do. What fights are they choosing to pick? How are they going to battle? There are serious questions that are associated with that.

Again, I said this last night, when we were we were speaking in second reading, that there is a substantial amount of money that comes from the federal government to support our local economies. Significant. Agriculture was a prime example that I spoke about last night, and I rattled off a whole bunch of grants, and then I ran out of time because there are that many and there's that amount of

money that is being transferred. It was \$48 million that supports agriculture diversification in this province from the federal government on an annual basis.

Well, let's talk about oil and gas, then, just for fun, because I decided to pull that up, too. I can't give you the full numbers, but I can tell you for sure that the grant programs include: greener home efficiency; green infrastructure phase 2; federal internal energy R and D; Impact Canada; oil spill response challenges; energy innovation programs; critical minerals research development and demonstration program; ecoenergy for renewable power; oil and gas clean tech programs; oil spill response science program; clean tech challenge; clean grown in the natural resource sector program; the office of energy research and development and other federal programs around clean energy funding and incentives; additional partnerships for innovation, technology, collaboration, and partnerships; labour; finance incentives for provinces in relation to database incentive programs; and tax savings for industry, which I think would be the favourite for the members on the opposite side.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

There is significant involvement when it comes to attracting investment into this province and, again, specifically to oil and gas under a variety of different programs. When the government starts to say, "We're going to start putting motions forward because we don't agree and we don't like this," like I said last night, two of the major things that drive investment in any jurisdiction are stable economies and stable democracies. This is not a stable democracy. This legislation does not demonstrate a stable democracy and a relationship between the crossjurisdictions. It just doesn't. [interjections] I mean, the ministers can all laugh across the floor, but the reality of it is that we just clearly heard the minister say that a court ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada wasn't a good enough response for this government, so they're going to be looking at trying to figure out a different way to deal with it. Clearly said it.

Carbon tax: Supreme Court of Canada already decided. Get it, government? You don't like it. But the minister clearly said: well, we've got a plan to get around that. Curious what that's going to be. So you're just going to ignore the Supreme Court of Canada now, create your own piece of legislation under the sovereignty act, create a motion, and then just pretend that nobody knows it happened.

**Mr. Madu:** Keep making stuff up.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Minister, if you want to stand up and speak to me, I'm happy to have that dialogue. Calling across the floor isn't going to help you because the reality is . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I'd just remind you to speak through the chair.

**Ms Sweet:** Sure. I'm happy to do that.

I'm standing up for the majority of Albertans that disagree with this piece of legislation. I don't care; the government can continue to say that it's actually not doing what we say that it's doing, but the majority of Albertans agree that it is. People who are looking at investing in Alberta have come out and spoken against it. There is a significant amount of economic opportunity that is going to be lost when it comes to this piece of legislation.

You know, we really haven't heard a good rationale from this government as to why they do not want to use the current mechanisms that already exist. They've had the opportunity to bring motions into the House. They do it all the time; they used to do it significantly, like, almost weekly last session. There are court challenges that are currently happening in relation to decisions that

the federal government has made that the provinces decided they don't like, yet for some reason the government has decided that that's not good enough.

So if using the tools that exist under our democracy aren't good enough, then what exactly is the plan by this government to supersede those tools? To ignore them? To ignore court rulings? To try to create new regulations that somehow find a way to go around the current court rulings? [interjections] I know it bothers the minister when I speak of these things, but those are the mechanisms that exist. They exist. That's how this bill is written. Even with the changes of this amendment, they don't fix those questions. [interjections] And the reality is that the minister wants to continue to speak over me and yell over me because he doesn't actually like what I'm saying because the truth sometimes hurts. [interjections] So here's the reality, right? We know that when governments start and we hear ministers start heckling across the floor, it's because you've hit the nerve and they don't like it.

Madam Chair, the amendment doesn't work. It doesn't fix the problems that Albertans are talking about. What would fix the problem is: the bill has got to go. Albertans don't want it. Investors don't want it. The polling tells the government this. If they actually believed this was a good bill, they would, one, be standing up and talking about all the great things that it's going to do, which we actually still haven't heard, what kind of motions would be brought forward, how the government would use the tool.

We haven't been walked through that process. If it actually worked and it was open and it was transparent and investors and Albertans could trust it, then we'd be hearing all about how great it's going to be. What's actually happening is that the government is rushing through debate. They're putting time allocation in to make sure we can't talk about it for very long because it's so bad and they're getting such a bad and negative response because of it. They don't want to talk about it anymore. When it's good: let's talk about it forever, right? But the reality of it is that they're hearing the same things that we're hearing on this side.

11:00

**Mr. Nally:** From CAPP.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, I mean, if the minister wants to mock being from CAPP, then I guess that's a problem for the minister. I don't know why that would be a fun heckle. I mean, oil and gas being upset and being concerned about investment opportunity should be a concern.

It's not just CAPP. We're hearing from chambers of commerce that are speaking about this. We're hearing from investors. We're hearing from investment capitalists. We're hearing from people who access grants through federal governments that are concerned about whether or not their grant funding is going to be removed. We're hearing from Indigenous communities that feel like they've been ignored. The government has actually managed to create allies among groups that have never been allies before. I mean, good on you. I appreciate the allyship that is coming and talking to us, but that is the reality.

**Mr. Nally:** Are you talking to CAPP?

**Ms Sweet:** When there is a reality of the fact that – I don't know why they're so fixated on CAPP.

Anyway, the reality of it is that 30 per cent of Albertans support this; the majority don't. If the government doesn't like that and they want to continue to yell over me because they feel that that is the best thing, then I would encourage them to stand up and walk Albertans through why this makes sense, why this is going to be good, because they don't think it is. The government really needs to understand, Madam Chair, that Albertans just don't trust the government. That's

why they don't like this bill, because they actually don't believe that this government has had the capacity to be open and transparent throughout their whole ability as government.

I mean, we saw this under Bill 10, when there were extraordinary powers being brought forward under the health legislation that this government introduced, which was then later repealed because the government realized: oh, we made a mistake; we may have overreached on that. Bill 81 attempted to subvert the democratic process and resulted in numerous UCP caucus members speaking out against the bill and voting against it and then having their voices silenced in the Legislature. Now we've got Bill 1, significant overreach.

**Mr. Nally:** Which you still haven't read.

**Ms Sweet:** You know, we've heard from leadership contestants that spoke about the fact that they didn't like this bill – I continue to hear from one of the ministers across the way that continues to obviously have strong feelings about this piece of legislation – speaking about how it was a bad idea. But, of course, when cabinet grows, voices get quiet, and that's what we've seen happening here.

It's a quick flip-flop, which is a consistent theme that this government does, and Albertans don't believe it. They don't trust it. They don't trust the ministers. They don't trust the Premier. The reality of it is that this bill is going to hurt our economy, and it's going to create havoc and chaos for Albertans. What this government should have been focusing on is dealing with the crisis in health care, making sure our kids are taken care of when they have to go to hospital, and they should have been addressing the issues that Albertans are facing when it comes to trying to pay their bills. That should have been Bill 1, taking care of the priorities that matter to Albertans. This is not a priority. Clearly, everybody knows that. The government clearly does because they've done nothing but heckle me back, so obviously we've hit the nerve.

I would encourage the government not to, one, support the amendment but also to kill the bill.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address this amendment and some of the comments that have been made over the course of this evening. I will clearly be speaking to not to accept this amendment, and the fundamental reason why is that it really does not address the issues that were inherent in the bill itself and it doesn't fix what needs to be fixed. Now, clearly, in reading the amendment, the government has come to accept that which they denied for the first week and a half after introducing this bill; that is, it actually does infringe on constitutionality, and this bill allowed extraordinary powers to the provincial government. Now, I understand that they didn't understand what they were doing and that after being educated by people who do understand the law, they decided that they must come back into the House and get rid of the famously known as the Henry VIII clause that would allow this provincial government to do extraordinary things outside the democratic process.

We know that they clearly didn't understand what they were doing, and they fixed that one piece, but I want to suggest that there are a variety of other things that this does not address; therefore, it's not a successful amendment. There's just too much there, so much so that I know that, in speaking with the representatives of the First Nations who have been calling me in droves over the last little while, they simply are asking this government not to proceed with this bill at all, not saying: could you please make some amendments; would you make some changes? They very clearly

said publicly that they would like to see this bill removed completely from the Legislature, and because this amendment doesn't do that – we offered that to that to the House, but they didn't pick it up – we are in this position now of not being able to proceed with the things that need to actually happen with this bill; that is, put it aside to fix the multiple problems that are in the bill and then consider its return, perhaps after an election in the spring.

Let me talk about some of the particulars that are of concern here. Now, we've already talked about the fact that there is an issue of constitutionality with the bill itself; that is, can a provincial Legislature deny the laws established by a federal Legislature? That's been brought up many times, and of course the vast majority of constitutional lawyers in the country have said that indeed this bill is problematic.

Another analysis has just come out over the last day or so by Olszynski and Bankes that says that – let me just quote a little piece of it here just for our conversation. The article, by the way, is entitled *Running Afoul the Separation, Division, and Delegation of Powers: The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act*, by Olszynski and Bankes. I will submit copies to the House in due course. The piece that I think is very important here is the section where they say:

In an entire legislative scheme that is constitutionally suspect, subsection 2(a) amounts to a constitutional fig leaf, especially when the provision is merely directed at interpretation ("nothing... is to be construed"). Subsection 2(b) is more significant: in our view, this wording clearly does contemplate something more than mere non-enforcement of federal laws and regulations, [for example], a future directive compelling provincial entities to engage in an act that would be contrary to federal law.

That's what we're hearing from the constitutional experts that are out there, that you're just doing so many things that are contrary to the democratic processes that we have established in the Westminster system over the course of hundreds of years. You're subverting democracy as we know it.

They're saying that the fact that you put in a little section that says nothing is to be construed as problematic is, in their words, just "a constitutional fig leaf." In other words, it doesn't mean anything. Just because you say, in your own words, "Well, this doesn't break the law," it doesn't mean it doesn't break the law. It does break the law. It's like when you're having an argument with someone and they say to you: well, I don't want to be insulting, but you're an idiot. You know, they can say they're not insulting you, but they are insulting you. That's exactly what all the constitutional lawyers are saying about this bill, that you're saying one thing at the beginning, but then you go on to defy your own statement for the rest of the bill, and that's why the bill has to be withdrawn.

#### **11:10**

It's not merely one section of the bill; it's multiple sections of the bill that are doing this. I'll go through a few of them here. One of them that I think continues to be of deep concern to the First Nations is this section 2 that I just referred to here. While it says that nothing is to be construed as somehow abrogating Indigenous treaty rights, we know from this interpretation that I've just read to you that that doesn't mean anything because the bill goes on to actually suggest that they will be doing that very thing, that they will be abrogating treaty rights.

I know that First Nations are very concerned about: well, what is the intention of this bill? What are the kinds of things that the federal government might do that this provincial government might suggest are somehow not in the interests of the people of the province of Alberta? The first thing that comes to mind when the First Nations are talking to me is that they're saying: it's going to

be about environmental legislation, isn't it? When the federal government comes forward and says that we want to protect our air, our water, and our lands, this provincial government will take the position that: "Wait a minute. If we have to protect our air, water, and lands, we're going to lose some money, so we don't want to do that. It's not in the interests of the public." The First Nations communities are saying to me: so what you're saying, then, is that if we have interest in protecting the air and water and lands, we don't count as part of the public that you're trying to protect, that you are going to use this as a chance to undermine the environmental legislation that has been brought forward by the federal government in the protection of the lands that we are responsible for?

That's why they're concerned about it. That's why they're saying that you can't proceed with this bill, because it's not just that it's unconstitutional, but even in its intent, even if it does the things that you want it to do, you are going to be subverting the interests of the First Nations communities, and therefore they cannot stand with it. They cannot in any way say that you can modify certain clauses and proceed with this, because the fundamental intent of the bill is a contradiction of the interests of the First Nations people.

They know that you've made statements that somehow you will protect treaty rights, but they understand treaty rights very differently than this government has demonstrated an understanding of treaty rights, that treaty rights extend to the environment, extend to the land, extend to protecting that land for the benefit of future generations. If you are trying to subvert laws that protect that land because you're afraid that you will lose some money if you enact the environmental laws, then you are taking a stance against the First Nations people. They've clearly said to me over and over again that this bill is predicated on a single clause of only taking steps when it's in the public interest, but there is no clarity as to what public interest is or, more importantly, I guess, perhaps, whose public interest is being supported and protected here. They know that you'll be very interested in supporting the public interests of industries, but they do not know that you'll be interested in supporting the public interests of First Nations people.

That's the concern here. I've spoken about that a few times, and I was certainly hoping to see some changes in this amendment that would be able to address or satisfy the concerns from the Indigenous community although they have very clearly said to me: it doesn't matter what they amend; we are fundamentally against this bill, and we believe it's time for it to be withdrawn. Of course, what they're asking for is true and proper consultation, to have a chance to sit down with the government and ensure that the notion of public interest is not going to be used to defeat the collective interests of the Indigenous community. I think that's something that the government has to understand.

We know that sometimes the federal government is going to do things that make us unhappy in the province of Alberta. We get that. Nobody has ever said that that's not true on this side of the House. We know that sometimes you have to stand up to the federal government and say: we do not like what you're doing. But lo and behold, it turns out that we already have a mechanism for doing that. The mechanism is twofold. One of them, of course, is to stand up and say to the federal government: we do not like this, and we expect to be sitting down at a table with you and having a conversation about what's wrong with this bill that you're trying to enact or this regulation that you have and asking you to change that in the constructive way that parliamentarians are supposed to be able to do. Now, that would be the natural first step: you actually sit down with the federal government, and you try to fix things.

Now, we know that there have been concerns by members opposite that they haven't been successful doing that. Okay. They haven't been successful. So what have they done when they were

unsuccessful? They've taken things, issues that they have with the federal government, to the courts. The courts have made decisions, and, lo and behold, sometimes the courts actually decide that the provincial government is wrong and that the federal government is well within their jurisdiction to make these kinds of decisions and has every right to proceed in the way they do.

What this provincial government is saying is that the courts only count if we win. If the courts don't allow us to win, then it doesn't count anymore. You know, I remember playing football with friends when we were in grades 7 and 8, and that's how rules were made back then: well, if I don't get my way, then we can't play; I'm going to take my ball and go home. That's not how a provincial government should be acting.

You should not create legislation merely because you have sour grapes about losing at the highest court in the land. If the highest court has said that this is a legitimate way to go, then you are left with the same process that everybody shares in this country, and that is the democratic process of trying to defeat the federal government in a democratic way, not in an unconstitutional way. The fact that you have sour grapes about having lost in the legitimate legal processes that are established in this country does not give you a right to start to undermine democracy. It's just not an acceptable thing to do, and we can't support it on this side of the House because we cannot support any bill whose actual intent is to destroy the structures of the rule of law that this country is based on, and that's what you're asking us to do.

You know, I wish this amendment had done more. I wish this amendment had been written in such a way that could actually address some of the concerns that I've expressed in my few minutes here in the House and others have expressed, but it doesn't. Furthermore, I'm very deeply concerned that it's going to set up citizens in the province of Alberta to actually engage in behaviours which are contrary to the laws of Canada, that they're actually encouraging people to deny the laws of Canada, to not follow through. In fact, it's suggesting, as in the quote I just read earlier, that it will actually "[compel] provincial entities to engage in an act that would be contrary to federal law." You're actually suggesting that citizens of the province of Alberta engage in illegal activities.

Then you go on in section 8 to say: "Don't worry. We'll protect you. That is, if you do something under this act, you won't be breaking the law in the province of Alberta." That doesn't mean you're not breaking the law in the country of Canada. What it says in section 8 is that the province of Alberta will not charge you and put you in jail, but it has no control over the federal government. The provincial legislation cannot tell the federal government: you're not allowed to charge our citizens. The Canadian law still stands, so it means that if you actually compel people – and it's not just suggest or encourage; it's actually compel – in the province of Alberta to break the law, then you're setting them up to go to jail or to pay a fine, to get a record. You actually have no control over the federal jurisdiction on these laws, and in spite of how much you might support what somebody does, what one of your institutions that you've compelled to act has done, the federal government doesn't have to listen to that. The federal government can charge people. The federal government can enforce their laws.

#### 11:20

We are in a very dangerous place. We're in a place where the province is trying to act outside of the democratic process and the province is trying to encourage citizens to act outside of the legal process. And then they say: well, can you work with us to fix this bill? I can certainly tell you that we tried twice yesterday. Twice we introduced reasoned amendments that would have stopped this bill and go and fix it, and this government denied that. This government

refused to take the time to actually fix this bill and tells me that they are not listening to the criticisms that are out there in the community and certainly not listening to the First Nations in this province, which I think is deeply, deeply problematic.

You know, I have just been kind of flabbergasted by this whole process because the government has been down this road before. With Bill 10 they tried to take on extraordinary powers, and they had to repeal that. They should have learned from that lesson. With Bill 81 they tried to subvert the democratic process, which actually resulted in some of their own people voting against their own bill, something we almost never see in this House. Yet they haven't learned that the people who are trying to overstep the bounds of their authority in this country are not the federal government. It is the provincial government. This provincial government has consistently and routinely tried to overstep its authority with regard to the democratic process and the laws in this province.

Certainly, I agree, sometimes the federal government does stuff that drives me crazy, and I don't like it. But I lived in the province of Alberta under Conservative rule for 44 years. I can tell you that they drove me crazy every single day for 44 years, but I didn't break the law. I worked hard to get myself into a place where I could write new laws through the democratic process and successfully did so. I'm very proud of the laws that we brought in.

That's the process that we have designed in democracy. If you don't like it, you fight it in the ballot box. You do not fight it by ignoring the institution of democracy and the institution of the rule of law. This is what this government is doing, this is why it's problematic, and this is why we stand here saying that you cannot fix this bill. It's not about sort of being misdirected. It's not about just simply one that needs a little tweak or a little fudge along the way. This is a bill that is trying to pervert what we have created in western democratic systems throughout the world, and as such we cannot stand here and play games of move a paragraph, change a comma, add a sentence. We can't do that. It's too fundamentally important.

I want to be able to go back and speak to the First Nations that I've talked to and say to them: look, we've done everything that we possibly can do to stop this bill. That's why we will not be supporting these amendments. That's why we will vote in no way to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to join the debate on amendment A1 regarding Bill 1, the sovereignty act. Certainly, we have, as my colleagues have shared already, heard far and wide from the business community, Indigenous leaders, academics, journalists, and even elected representatives from the governing party that the sovereignty act is legislation that will hurt Alberta. We know that Bill 1 is hurting our business sector by creating significant uncertainty, which has already created fear in investors. Investors like stability. Of course, the UCP likes to say that they're champions for business, but this legislation is not supporting business because it is creating significant uncertainty in the business sector.

This amendment to Bill 1 – of course, we know that this is the leading bill, Bill 1, of the new Premier of the UCP. She campaigned on this bill, saying that it was very important for Alberta to have a sovereignty act. She wanted to challenge the federal government because she believed they had overreached into our province, so she was going to create legislation that indeed did actually challenge the Constitution of our country.

So here it is. We have this bill before us. The Premier said at the outset, after some criticism of the bill that was pretty significant – I'd say nation-wide – and getting national press for all the wrong reasons, that she was not aware of the sweeping powers that Bill 1 gives to Executive Council. She said: no, no, no; we'd always come back to the legislative branch of government and make sure that enactments of new laws and legislation would go through that process. But this amendment says very, very loudly that that was not indeed the case, because it would not have been brought forward if the legislation, you know, did have those checks and balances.

Of course, any healthy democracy has different branches of government that have – we call them checks and balances. It's just not the executive branch – Executive Council, the ministers, the Premier – who make decisions. They must bring that information back to the Legislature for all MLAs to scrutinize and certainly speak to debate. But for some reason – I mean, the Premier herself said very clearly: no, no, no; those checks and balances are in place. But here we are, you know, a week later and we have this amendment before us indicating to us that indeed that was not the case and there was some mistake.

There has been some type of a failure here by the UCP government. It could be a failure that the Premier just didn't read the legislation and didn't understand it or that she wasn't properly briefed by people in the public service or her political staffers, people who are supposed to be obviously supporting the legislation that she wants to bring forward. So it does look like a bit of a shemuzzle, really. It's a big mess.

I mean, this amendment before us today, A1, is living proof that our concerns were valid, as the Official Opposition, that indeed this legislation was dangerous, that it eroded democracy in Alberta. I, for one, am very proud to stand with my caucus colleagues and many other Albertans who have spoken out about this legislation. I myself in my own constituency have received many calls, e-mails from really engaged, concerned constituents that this legislation is creating all sorts of havoc in our province and that it should not go ahead even with this amendment although I will give you that this amendment does make it better because, again, it restores some level of democracy to this legislation.

As the amendment does specify, section 4 of Bill 1, which has been referred to as the Henry VIII clause – of course, that's referring to a 15th-century sovereign . . .

*11:30*

**Mr. Eggen:** Sixteenth century.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Is it 16th century?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Okay. A 16th-century sovereign. Thank you for that correction.

. . . that had, you know, significant sort of dictatorial ways of operating in his rulings or reigning. The amendment changed that section so that Executive Council doesn't have the sweeping powers of enactment, which is an important amendment, giving back legislative accountability to the process, restoring some level of democracy to Alberta.

[Mr. Orr in the chair]

I believe that we in the opposition have every right to really distrust this government because of this type of legislation that they've brought forward and previous ones within this mandate, this mandate that they got in 2019. Not only Bill 1 but other UCP pieces of legislation give excessive powers that we've seen here, so

that's why it's so important, our role as the Official Opposition, that we bring up these concerns. We know that back in 2020 the UCP brought forward Bill 10, the Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020, and this bill gave new power to create laws without Legislative Assembly approval. Bill 10 was pushed through by the UCP in 48 hours – 48 hours; it was just rammed through this Legislature – and the bill gave cabinet ministers unilateral authority, without consultation, to impose new laws on the citizens of Alberta.

Despite the UCP's profession of, you know, wanting to create more democracy, wanting to make sure that citizens of Alberta have involvement and input into the process, this legislation – Bill 10 and Bill 1, which we see before us right now, both sort of fly in the face of that and are absolutely not creating more democracy in our province but really hindering that. Again, as Bill 1 just did, Bill 10 ignored the legislative branch of government and gave all authority to the executive branch, and as we did back then, the Official Opposition stood up against this undemocratic legislation.

It doesn't end there. I mean, there are many pieces of legislation that are really quite egregious. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just talked about Bill 81, which also was, you know, another piece of legislation that did not give full democracy to our citizens.

One I want to talk about now is Bill 78, the Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021, that gave the minister power to define affordable housing. No criteria were specified in the bill. It's so the minister can designate what units are affordable or not. Again, it's just like the sweeping powers given to, well, in this case, one member of the executive branch without any kind of criteria or understanding about what that actually means.

Quite frankly, I mean, one of the things that is extremely disturbing about what is happening in housing – it doesn't really have a ministry anymore; there's no ministry with that name, but it is, I understand, within Seniors, Community and Social Services – is that even before, when it was seniors and housing, so little was done on that file. In fact, one of the major areas that it's really incumbent on the government to get involved in is social housing, and this government has not invested in social housing, really, since they've been elected, and we can see the challenges on our streets everywhere because of that. Is that because the minister is now not defining social housing as affordable housing? Was the previous minister only talking about affordable housing being a little bit below market? I mean, that seems to be the case, so it's very confusing.

This authority given to that one minister is really making it very difficult to see what positive progress is being made in that area. Frankly, there isn't any positive progress in that area. We're in a housing crisis in this province, and it is getting worse every day. You know, we see it on our streets, certainly, in the city of Edmonton. We know so many people are living in horrific conditions considering how cold it is outside, and we know that Albertans are dying. We know that there have been amputations because of being in the cold for long periods of time, and these folks need that social housing. They need that permanent supportive housing, but this government just is not stepping up to support them in that way.

I guess these are just examples of legislation that the UCP government brought in previously that, of course, are not really respecting the democratic process in our province. These are key issues. Of course, the amendment to take back some of this Henry VIII extraordinary power is a step in the right direction. However, it's not enough in terms of making this bill better. This bill still is a deeply flawed piece of legislation, and that's why we voted against it in first reading, which we know is a rare event in this House. It's

not something that we took lightly, but we looked at the legislation, and we saw that this legislation did warrant because it was deeply flawed and it would hurt Albertans. So we stood up, and we're very proud of that. This amendment shows how right we were to do that because this is fundamentally flawed, and as I said, this is only one aspect of the difficulties with this bill.

You know, I think it's important for us to have some perspective on what we do. We're not just focusing on this bill, but there is a whole – well, I mean, the UCP does have a legacy a bit now, about three and a half years of governance. We can call it a legacy maybe. I don't know if that's the right word exactly. But we voted against two other pieces of legislation in first reading as well, and that was Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, and then Bill 22, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019. Just to help some of the members in this Assembly remember why we voted against those in first reading, like we did about Bill 1 – and we do this rarely. I guess it's been three bills in this entire three and a half years of UCP rule, but these are very egregious pieces of legislation, so that's why we decided to vote in first reading against them.

Of course, Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, imposed a delay on wage talks for front-line workers who took pay freezes in the first years of their contracts and then had the right to reopen pay negotiations with arbitration, if needed, in 2019. Of course, this bill stopped all of that. They weren't allowed to open their contracts, and this betrayed many Alberta Union of Provincial Employees' members that were employed at Alberta Health Services, the government of Alberta, postsecondary education boards, and agencies. Of course, we wanted to vote against that, and we did because this is really adding salt to the wound, this betrayal of workers. Here they have an agreement, you know, that the government is supposed to respect, but instead they bring in legislation to wipe that off so that they don't have any kind of integrity in that legislation.

I'll remind members again. There was such an air of arrogance during that debate that Premier Kenney – and I can say his name because he's no longer in the Chamber – walked around and handed out earplugs to his members so they didn't have to listen to the debate. I don't know. That's nothing to be proud of. To me, that's disgusting, but that is incumbent of a government that thinks that they don't have to listen, and they do it literally. I mean, it was, I think, kind of a nightmare for them in terms of communications afterwards because it showed just how cavalier and uncaring they were.

**11:40**

We knew that legislation would hurt workers deeply, just like we know that Bill 1 is hurting Alberta businesses. I know that the UCP purports to say that they do absolutely support business much more than we do. They like to say that we don't care about business, but that's not true, because this legislation does hurt business. It creates much instability in the sector, and we know that businesses want stability, so it doesn't make sort of any logical sense.

But it is, you know, based on a pretty narrow ideological view, I think, of the Premier and her supporters and the 1 or 2 per cent of Albertans that voted for her so that she could become Premier. I think it'll be really interesting to see when we do actually have an election and she faces the whole Alberta electorate and not just a small section of it. This was just a stunning show of disrespect by this UCP government, and again, as we do now, we stood up against that.

I just want to mention, too, the second one just to remind everybody, Bill 22. The key concern we had was that the bill terminated the contract of Alberta's Election Commissioner, Lorne

Gibson. And why was the UCP wanting to do that? Well, they did that because there was an investigation into the allegations of illegal donations in the 2017 UCP leadership race. We were assured that the investigation would continue by Jason Kenney at the time, but what actually happened is that everything went dark, and in fact some members may remember that the Leader of the Official Opposition was even removed from this Chamber because she accused the government of obstructing justice by firing the Election Commissioner.

These are the three bills during this mandate that we have voted against in first reading, and as I explained those three bills to this House, I feel proud of the opposition caucus that we stood up and said: no; it's not all right for these bills to go ahead. You know, the betrayal of workers, stopping an investigation into illegal donations in the UCP leadership race because you're taking away the person who's running that investigation, and now the sovereignty act, which sort of defies any kind of logic that I understand myself about: what's a way to be part of a country and serve the citizens?

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

This is creating quite a bit of instability in many sectors. Of course, we talked a lot about the business community, but I just want to talk a little bit about the nonprofit community, too, because they're very impacted by this legislation because, of course, they do receive federal money. If I talk again about housing, many nonprofits – and again a sad part of what is going on currently with the UCP government is that oftentimes federal governments, municipal governments, and people who are donating to nonprofits are working together to create housing initiatives, to create new housing, and we know that we need much more than we have, and the province is really missing in action. Those federal dollars are so important to the sector of housing, but for some reason the UCP doesn't seem to think that housing is that important.

You know, we know that when we look at their record. When they came into office, back in 2019, they cut the rental supplement by 24 per cent. That's horrific. It's such a program that should actually, really be expanded, but that's one of the first things they did, cut the rent supplement program by 24 per cent. They cut \$53 million in maintenance for housing management bodies over three years, starting in the 2020 budget.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise this evening, almost this morning, to speak to this amendment. I will, like many of my colleagues, not be supporting it, and we'll see how much I can get on the record here. I think that my colleagues in the Official Opposition have done a great job of sharing their concerns and my concerns of why I don't plan on supporting this amendment but, further, why it is not going to fix this bill to any extent to make it something that I or the Official Opposition would be able to support.

As previous members have, I want to take a moment to look at some of the comments that were made by members who are now in cabinet, of course, at this time. Well, some of them were in cabinet, but this member in particular I do not believe was, and that would be the now Deputy Premier, the Member for Lethbridge-East, who at the time of these conversations around the idea of a sovereignty act – and I believe this quote was from when the leadership race was happening. If I'm wrong, then the member can feel free to clarify that, but at the time the Member for Lethbridge-East, now the Deputy Premier, said that no one person should be able to enact regulations without consultation. Even with the amendment that is

before us, that is going to continue to be the case, so it's very interesting to see that member continue to defend this legislation and, by extension, this amendment.

You know, further to that, we again saw another comment from that member more recently, I believe, when the bill had been tabled and people were raising concerns about the King Henry VIII clause and other potentially overreaching clauses within this legislation or sections within this legislation. Again that member took the opportunity to speak to media and say: I believe safeguards are in place for this legislation. And again it was asked if they had actually looked at or read the legislation, and they said: no, I haven't.

So we have a government that continues on this pattern of, first of all, not consulting on the legislation that they're putting forward, not necessarily even reading it, and then standing up to defend it, and we see that again and again from other members of the government caucus and cabinet. It's been put on the record, but the current Finance minister during the leadership debate saying that this was a ticking time bomb, the now jobs minister saying that this legislation was a fairy tale, and I continue to wonder, you know, without seeing it at that point and still being willing to stand up against it at that time even without seeing the legislation – and now that we've seen it, I think in many cases it is worse than most people, the majority of Albertans, might have expected it to be, yet these ministers and these caucus members within the UCP government have completely flip-flopped.

When reflecting on the amendment that is being put forward, I would argue that it really doesn't fix anything within the legislation, Madam Chair, and even if we were to take it at face value, that it is going to potentially add one extra step that the government has to bring forward to the Legislature, the fact is that even with what is being amended or proposed in this amendment, there are ways to circumvent it, and we will continue to see the exact same thing that is originally proposed in the legislation, so I don't think that the issue that it's particularly trying to solve is being solved in itself.

I think the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised a very fair point that all this government needs to do is bring forward a piece of enabling legislation, something very general, you know, sovereignty against the federal government or a federal-government-is-wrong act, and all of a sudden they're able to put forward regulations and add pieces within that act without having to come before the House. So when we look at this amendment, we have to recognize that it is part of a bigger picture, and even if we were to accept this amendment and do what it is asking, even though, further, the government at the time and the Premier when bringing this forward said that there was absolutely nothing wrong with this legislation and the powers that the opposition and many Albertans are bringing forward concerns around is not a power that's actually enabled by the legislation, here we are seeing an amendment by this government.

**11:50**

Unfortunately, even if we were to allow this amendment to go through – of course, with the government having a majority, I would never try to, you know, foreshadow or, I guess, foresee how the government might vote on this. I'm suspecting that the government caucus, with all of the many people who have previously spoken against being able to enact regulation without consultation – I imagine that they are going to vote in favour of this amendment. Unfortunately, I will not because, again, even if this is going to be accepted and were to be accepted, the fact is that there are several other pieces within this legislation that continue to be concerning, and it really doesn't solve some of the main issues within this legislation. Whether it were to come back to the House and be debated or not is somewhat beside the point when we are



talking about potentially putting forward or debating the ideas of constitutionality before this House when, as has been said again and again, that is not our job.

I continue to hear heckling throughout the debate of other speakers when the Official Opposition is speaking from members of the government saying: “Oh, you know, this isn’t unconstitutional. This isn’t how it works. We in the Legislature should have the ability to debate whether something is constitutional or not.” Of course, that is what this government is trying to move forward with here, but the fact is, as I said previously, that just because you write in the legislation that it is following the Constitution or it is not violating or intruding on the Constitution of Canada – just because you wrote it in here doesn’t make it the case.

Now, again, the main concern here, when we are discussing this, is the driving away of investment through this legislation. This amendment by no means fixes the concerns within this legislation that this Premier and this government are potentially trying to overreach.

I think that we’ve heard through the debate and through the decisions of this government yesterday – well, I guess it was today at this point. Very early this morning I had raised a point, the fact that this government has left so many dollars on the table from the federal government around, particularly, wage top-ups through the pandemic, dollars that the federal government had provided to many provinces and, in several cases, to the tune of tens of millions of dollars if not hundreds of millions of dollars. This government left that money on the table. In some situations that was – I guess I can’t speak for the government, nor would I defend their decisions, but it potentially seems like they weren’t willing to match any of that funding from the federal government to provide top-up dollars to the hard-working men and women and the heroes on the front lines of our health care system. Again, tens of millions of dollars were left on the table because of this UCP government’s indifference to either those workers or the federal government willing to try and help.

Now, going back, if this UCP government was concerned about how that money was being used, what it was going to be spent on, that is a right of theirs, and that argument can be made, absolutely. Those conversations need to take place, as I’m sure they did. But just because they aren’t happy with a decision that the federal government has made about how dollars are going to be spent in one province or another doesn’t make it unconstitutional, Madam Chair. But what this UCP government is trying to argue is that they believe they should have the power to make that decision, that the Legislative Assembly should have the ability to make that decision, which is simply not the case. As has been said again and again, we have a court system to make those decisions, and this government has tried to challenge the constitutionality of decisions that the federal government has made in the past.

I have concerns, as I’m sure many Albertans do, and investors across Canada but across all jurisdictions internationally are, I’m sure, concerned about how this legislation is going to infect – affect the investment environment. A bit of a Freudian slip there. Again, this government potentially is trying to use unconstitutional and undemocratic powers to challenge the federal government in places where they simply should not. In many cases – that was sort of a double entendre that they should not be challenging the federal government in this Legislature because, of course, that is very likely going to be unconstitutional or would not hold up in court, but they should be doing that in the courts.

When we talk about a government who is going to try and unilaterally make decisions about the constitutionality of things, you know, it’s very concerning, again, for me as a citizen and as a member of the Legislature and to investors across the world. It kind of reminds me of a situation of something that’s come up in the

past: this idea of freeman on the land, that I can make decisions about whether I’m going to pay taxes or whether I’m going to follow certain rules based on something arbitrary or something that is not actually within the rule of law within the Constitution. It seems that in some cases there are some similarities between what this UCP government is trying to do and the idea of that, again, going back to the idea that just because you say it’s so, that something is constitutional or not constitutional, doesn’t necessarily make it the case.

As previous members have said, we’ve seen this government try to use their majority in this Legislature to pass draconian legislation. We saw it particularly in Bill 10. At that time it was very clear that within the government’s own conservative circles there were people pushing back on the extraordinary powers that this government was giving itself within Bill 10 and eventually came back to repeal that, but we find ourselves in a very similar situation, where this government is trying to give themselves extraordinary power to make decisions that may or may not be constitutional.

Going back to the idea that there are many potentially innocent bystanders in the crosshairs of this legislation – namely, the entities that are listed within the definitions of this legislation and how that’s going to impact their relationship not only with the provincial government but also the federal government if they find themselves in a situation where the federal government is asking them to follow through on certain initiatives and the province is telling them: “Absolutely not. We are not supporting that. In our opinion of the Legislative Assembly, which really shouldn’t be making these decisions at all, we find this to be an unconstitutional decision, that it’s within our, you know, ability to make decisions around this.”

Municipalities, among other entities that are listed here, whether it be postsecondary institutions within the Post-secondary Learning Act, whether it be police forces within the Police Act, the entities that are listed in here, again, anyone that is receiving a grant or other public funds from the government that are contingent on the provision of a public service: the list is long, and so many organizations and municipalities and other government organizations are going to be affected and are affected by the relationship between the provincial and federal government and are going to be forced to make decisions based on the powers that this UCP government is trying to give themselves.

Again, this amendment does not address those concerns by any means. Even if this amendment were to go through, we continue to see a bill that gives this UCP government extraordinary powers and this cabinet extraordinary powers, and again, I just wonder what happened to the many members of caucus in the government that were willing to speak out against this legislation. The fact is that we saw during the leadership contests with the current government and this current Premier that the Premier was barely able to get this idea across the finish line within their own party. So it’s very interesting that – again, we look back on all of the issues within Alberta – Bill 1 is what this government brought forward, because it certainly isn’t a priority for the many members that I’ve spoken to in my community, many members of the public.

**12:00**

Of course, they are concerned about, whether it be the amount of money that’s coming from the federal government, whether it be, you know, how that money is being spent – I think that many members have talked about this issue through this debate, but again going back to the fact that it doesn’t mean that just because we disagree with something, it is unconstitutional. I have grave concerns, and I think the business community has grave concerns that this government is trying to give themselves the power to make those decisions and to pass legislation or motions and directives that

are going to affect so many entities within our community, trying to give those directions even if they may be against federal laws or the Constitution itself.

Just so many pieces within this legislation, whether it be around the judicial review section, changing timelines or changing standard of reviews, or trying to put in immunity for cabinet and for members of the Legislature in case a directive is carried out that actually was against the law. I mean, it's just ridiculous, Madam Chair, that we've gotten to a point where this government, again, with all of the libertarian tendencies that I thought were in that caucus, is willing to give themselves so much power, to create so much uncertainty within the investment environment, within the rule of law.

The list is long for reasons of why we should not be moving forward with this legislation, and of course, again, this amendment does not fix any of that. We've heard about the concerns around treaty rights, that those have not been addressed. We've heard from large organizations across the province that have business interests here that they are concerned about how this might be used and the potential consequences of this government putting forward unconstitutional changes. We have a system in place that, as has been explained again and again – I really don't understand why this government is so unwilling to just face the facts that we have a court system in place for the very issues that they might be concerned about.

All they are doing is creating uncertainty here for a bill that some members of the government profess to not even have read before they were defending it. Before even reading it, through that leadership process, just hearing the name, the idea of a sovereignty act, members of the government were willing to reject it and say that it was going to have grave consequences, yet now, when I stand here to support the points that they had brought forward at that time, they heckle me, Madam Chair. It's really unbelievable how much changes over a couple of months and a couple of cabinet promotions.

Madam Chair, this amendment should not pass. This entire piece of legislation should go back to the drawing board, or just put it in the shredder. I understand the concerns of this government when it comes to wanting to see more action from the federal government, wanting to have a better partnership with them, that potentially the federal government is not listening to their concerns. I know that many Albertans, potentially and very likely the majority of Albertans, want to see a strengthened relationship, want to see a federal government that is going to listen to the concerns of Albertans through the pandemic and through these historic levels of inflation. Unfortunately, this legislation and this amendment are not addressing those concerns and instead are creating uncertainty.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. It's midnight, and here we are continuing this very important and lively debate about where our province is going and what the future of our province looks like. I think an important part of this debate is how we as a province are asserting our authority and how we are asserting our rights over our areas of exclusive jurisdiction and, in particular, over our ability to develop our natural resources and to exercise the powers that are given to us within the Constitution, that are clearly defined and delineated to be areas of provincial power and authority.

Earlier, Madam Chair, I went for a walk – not very far; I have to stay close by – just around the third floor here around the portraits. I found myself taking a look at some of those portraits, primarily

taking a look at the portraits of our former Premiers, in particular some of the first Premiers of the province. It got me thinking and wondering: what were some of the challenges that they faced? What were some of the challenges and policy matters that they had to debate during their time? I was quite intrigued when I did a little bit more homework because I found that, interestingly, not a lot has changed since the early days of Confederation and to where we are today in our debate.

You know, of course, I'm sure as we all know, in 1905 Alberta joined Confederation. Alberta became a province in Confederation, and our first Premier, Alexander Rutherford, of course, inherited some monumental tasks with establishing the foundation of the province of Alberta. Now, I don't think he completely knew or realized at the time, but Premier Rutherford also found himself in the middle of some very challenging and difficult policy debates and questions. As an example, one of the areas where he, I believe, inadvertently realized that there was some significant policy discourse and discussion needed was around the area of the province's authority and rights over natural resources.

Now, many members of the Assembly may know or may not know that when other provinces joined Confederation, in particular British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, they were automatically given exclusive rights to their natural resources. It was automatic, an automatic condition of their entry into Confederation. However, when Alberta and Saskatchewan joined Confederation in 1905, those same rights were not afforded to those two provinces. They did not have, at that time, exclusive rights over their natural resources. So, of course, conversation started very early on about the importance of this new province having control over its natural resources.

In 1910 under Arthur Sifton, the second Premier of Alberta, the conversation heated up, and greater conversation occurred on the topic of Alberta's natural resources. Sifton stated – I'm going to quote here, Madam Chair – as follows, just to give you a window into the conversation that was happening at the time: "We should administer our mines and timber. The question is not . . . whether we would like to control our natural resources, but what is the best way to get them." It's interesting. Of course, these are comments from Premier Sifton, but if we dig a little bit deeper, we can see more comments from other parliamentarians and Members of the Legislative Assembly at the time that show the extent to which this debate was raging within Alberta.

**12:10**

In particular, I want to draw attention to a former Member of the Legislative Assembly, the member elected to the electoral district of Alexandra who served only one term. That's Alwyn Bramley-Moore. As I mentioned, he was elected for just one term. He was elected in 1909 and served until 1913. A year after, of course, he was no longer in the Legislative Assembly. In 1914 we saw the outbreak of World War I, and Bramley-Moore volunteered to serve in the Canadian Forces in World War I, was dispatched overseas into Europe, and unfortunately in 1916 was killed by a German sniper.

That being said, during his time as a Member of the Legislative Assembly he contributed to the debate about Alberta's exclusive right to develop its natural resources, so much so that in 1911 he published a book entitled *Canada and Her Colonies; Or Home Rule for Alberta*. In his book he spoke about the need to end protective tariffs that were designed to build up Canadian industries, most notably in central parts of Canada, in Quebec and Ontario, of course, and in other places. However, what's of more significance: he also called upon the federal government to grant Alberta control over its natural resources and Crown lands.

Now, as I mentioned, shortly after his tenure we saw the outbreak of World War I, and that, of course, shifted public debate not just in Alberta but across the entire country as Canadians from coast to coast took up the call to serve and fight for freedom and liberty in the First World War. Regrettably, the conversation around Alberta's right to develop its natural resources took a back seat for the next few years.

In 1920, though, Madam Chair, at the conclusion of the war, the federal government did indeed commit in principle to give Alberta exclusive rights to its natural resources, but it would take several years until that would actually be developed. It took several years of wrangling and political back and forth until that could finally be accomplished.

It wouldn't be until 1929 that a deal would be reached during the tenure of Premier John Edward Brownlee to have full authority over our natural resources. Brownlee was celebrated as a hero. In fact, when he returned to Alberta, when he arrived back at the rail station in Edmonton, over 3,000 Albertans came to greet him and welcome him and welcomed him as a hero. There are stories of fireworks, of bonfires, of live music to celebrate this important milestone in the development of this great province, the ability for us to have exclusive control and jurisdiction over our natural resources, truly critical to the development of our province and to our prosperity.

But, unfortunately, Madam Chair, as we see here tonight, the conversation continues. Despite the success of so many of these great Albertans, questions around our ability to develop our natural resources continue to remain at the very top of debate, as we're seeing here today, which, of course, is the foundational premise of the bill that we're discussing, which is to assert Alberta's jurisdiction over our ability to develop our natural resources and our exclusive rights on other areas that are outlined in the Constitution.

Now, the conversation has changed a little bit, of course, over these decades, and although today the powers to develop our natural resources are indeed clearly enshrined and delineated within legislation, the federal government, unfortunately, continues to intrude on our ability to develop those resources. What good is it if we have exclusive jurisdiction over our natural resources but cannot get those resources to market, cannot develop them?

The federal government has made it very clear what their intention is and what they would like to see happen in Alberta. The federal government has made it very clear that they want to phase out the oil sands. It wants to phase out and limit our ability to develop our resources, but, Madam Chair, of course, actions always speak louder than words.

So it's important for us to reflect on some of the more recent actions that have taken place over the last few decades, including – for example, we're all aware of the national energy policy in the 1980s under the leadership of Pierre Trudeau, who tried to nationalize our energy sector, intruding on our ability, on our exclusive jurisdiction to develop our resources. We've seen more recent examples with Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines law, again, which restricts our ability to develop our natural resources; other pieces of legislation and federal government policy, including the tanker ban on the west coast; and the recent proposals from the federal government this past summer to impose an emissions cap on Alberta. All of these measures are designed to limit our ability to develop our resources.

Here we are, 117 years later from the beginning of Alberta's entry into Confederation, and we continue to have many of the same conversations that we had back then. I think it's important, Madam Chair, for us to recognize these important historical pieces. I believe it's truly important for us to understand where we've been, where we were in order to understand how we move forward. From its

very inception, as I have just articulated, Alberta, from the very beginning, has had to fight just to be treated equally. While other provinces automatically enjoyed the right to develop their natural resources upon entry into Confederation, those rights weren't granted to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Those rights had to be fought for over the course of several decades just to have equal standing in Confederation.

It's a question that I continue to hear every day from my constituents. They don't believe we are treated fairly in Confederation. They don't believe the equalization rules are fair. They don't believe the interests of Alberta are taken seriously at the national level. So it's critical, Madam Chair, as is represented through the bill, that we continue to defend Alberta's interests, that we not waver in our commitment to defend Alberta's interests, and that we continue to fight for the priorities of our province, which are etched right above the Speaker's chair, the words "Fortis et Liber," strong and free, the true representation of the province of Alberta. We must keep these words alive as we continue to have this debate to ensure that Alberta remains strong and free for all of its citizens, continues to have exclusive control over its resources, continues to have authority to develop those resources and benefit from the prosperity that is provided through those resources.

I'll end because I know the House leader doesn't want me to go on for too long. I'll end quickly here. Madam Chair, perhaps I'll just end with a comment from a member who stood in this very Legislature a hundred years ago. I mentioned earlier the member for the district of Alexandra, MLA Bramley-Moore, who wrote a book. I've just ordered it on Amazon. I'll be happy to give the House an update when it arrives and I've had an opportunity to sit down and read that book from 1911 from cover to cover. Perhaps there may be some more interesting insights, but one of the things that the member said, which I found quite interesting, which I think I'll leave the Assembly with, was a very simple comment, a very simple statement: Alberta first, last, and forever.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to speak to amendment A1 regarding the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

**12:20**

You know, we've been talking about this bill, and Albertans are talking about this bill, and unfortunately it doesn't matter what type of amendments are proposed by this government. The mere introduction of this piece of legislation is signalling to international investors that Alberta has a different set of rules than the rest of Canada. That is very troubling and is chasing away investment, out of Alberta. I'm confused why, when the Official Opposition put forward two amendments, two reasoned amendments in the last two days, they were both voted down. We were speaking on behalf of so many Albertans that are concerned, whether it's business leaders, economists, lawyers, Indigenous communities. There's an amount of resources that we've been able to tap into to talk about the devastating impacts on the economy of this piece of legislation, yet here we are debating a bill with an introduction that, frankly, doesn't do anything. The only clear solution to proceed with this piece of legislation is to kill the bill.

But we're here to talk about amendment A1, so I'm going to do that, Madam Chair. We've been hearing from Albertans that this is a piece of legislation that is quite concerning. We know from a recent poll that it's only 32 per cent of Albertans that support this piece of legislation. Thirty-two per cent. We are sitting in front of a

government where their own members were in disagreement with this legislation before it even came to light.

So I just am puzzled that we're here today debating this government's flagship bill, Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, and it's still moving forward. It's been loud and clear that this piece of legislation creates chaos and instability. It is signalling to investors that Alberta is an unstable economic place and there's uncertainty whether or not they should be investing in Alberta. We know that businesses thrive when there are some simple things, Madam Chair: the rules and regulations are reasonable and transparent. Unfortunately, this piece of legislation has not been transparent.

We have asked the government to provide the legal opinion that was provided by the Minister of Justice, and unfortunately that hasn't been disclosed. We're curious because so many members of this government have spoken out against this piece of legislation, yet all of a sudden they have changed their tune. So we're curious about what's happened to change that. When we look at this amendment, it just is not enough. It is not signalling to business and investors that this is a safe place to invest right now. What's happening is that it is creating absolute chaos. When we look at the potential of funding and grants being left off the table from the federal government, we're talking about things that Albertans need right now, things like affordable housing, things like support for newcomers.

We know that federal funding can support so many things, and we haven't heard that so many Albertan organizations, nonprofits, charities are confident that that's going to remain. We have a province that has people that are struggling, people that are hurting. The health care system is in crisis. This piece of legislation is not going to bring forward a sense of stability. It's going to do the exact opposite. Not only is it going to scare away future investment; we're worried about what people are saying about the current status of what it's doing.

When you have a province that is struggling and the people are hurting and they are pleading for supports and resources, the very first piece of legislation shouldn't be a bill that does the exact opposite to support Albertans. This is not something Albertans want; 32 per cent agree. That's a staggeringly low number to put forward a piece of legislation as the flagship.

We haven't heard who this government has consulted with. Who have they talked to? Who is asking for this piece of legislation? We've heard loud and clear from members of their government, their cabinet what their thoughts were regarding this legislation. I would ask the government, as we're in Committee of the Whole: who did they consult with? Who was it that said that this is what Alberta needs right now, in the middle of this absolute affordability crisis? I think it's a fair question. Who is asking for this?

What is it projecting for our economic impact? Has a study been done? When we're listening to people talk about the economy, they're saying that this is completely disruptive. It is not going to drive investment into the province. So I would like to hear who was saying that this is the right step, that this is what Alberta needs right now to create economic stability, because when we listen to Albertans and we listen to the experts all around the province, this is not it. The only thing that we can do to signal to business, to signal to investment, to signal to nonprofits, to health care is to stop this piece of legislation, to not proceed.

I think business leaders have talked about what their needs are. We've been listening to what they want. They need stability. They need a government that is drawing investment in. What does that government look like? I've said it: stable, transparent. When a company is considering investing in a province, they need to know that where they're investing is going to be a wonderful place not just for their business or their organization but for the people that they employ and are asking to come and move to this province to invest in their dream. When you have a government that is creating absolute chaos, it's going to be a really hard sell for those considering investing here to find employees that want to come and live here.

We have a health care system right now with children's health care absolutely in dire straits. We have children's hospitals setting up trailers, 15- to 20-hour waits for kids. I can't imagine a CEO talking to their potential employees to come and saying: this is what's happening in the province of Alberta. Not only is the economic impact of this piece of legislation frightening, but everything else that this government is simply ignoring is frightening. It's scary. And it's just really concerning that this is what we're here talking about today.

So I will not be supporting this amendment A1, and I would really urge the rest of the members in this Chamber to not support it either.

With that, Madam Chair, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 1.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

12:30

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all the amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've had some wonderful debate this evening. I appreciate everyone's participation, but at this time I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow at 1.30 p.m., Wednesday, December 7, 2022.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:31 a.m. on Wednesday]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 7, 2022

Day 6

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
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Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	



### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Let us pray.

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's my pleasure to introduce two groups of guests to us today: my very good friend and former president of Olds College, the current president of the Red Deer Polytechnic, Stuart Cullum, and he is joined by the vice-president of external relations at Red Deer Polytechnic, Richard Longtin. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I would also like to introduce to all members a group of Legislative Assembly Office employees who have joined the Legislative Assembly Office over the past year and are undergoing their orientation at the Assembly today. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Camrose has a school to introduce.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to introduce to you the amazing teacher Brent Anderson and his hard-working students from the New Norway school. Welcome, everyone.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my three guests from the University of Calgary Students' Union: Mike Brown, external communication; Nicole Schmidt, president; and Mateusz Salmassi, external vice-president. I'm glad that you were able to join us here today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce friends and family of Sebastian Heemskerk, who are here to witness the tabling of a petition and listen to the member's statement that I'm going to be making about him. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly Avalon Heemskerk, Tim Heemskerk, Shaylene Cerezke-Riemer, Sherilee Crawley, Shiloh Skiffington, Hope Johnson, Lorna Thomas, Petra Schult, Jessica Williams, Holly Thomson, Carmen Nicholson, and Mariska Macklin. If they could all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives from Aspen View school board. We're delighted to welcome here

today Neil O'Shea, Aimee Hirtle, Donna Cherniwchan, Anne Karczmarczyk, Elohe Chizawsky, April Bauer, and Dennis MacNeil. On behalf of all members of the Assembly, thank you for being here today, and welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to welcome a number of guests that are here to participate in The Nonprofit Vote coalition's and the Alberta Nonprofit Network's day at the Legislature. These incredible individuals are leaders in the not-for-profit sector, and I would like to thank them for the incredible work that they do in our communities. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**Ms Hoffman:** Please join me in welcoming Patricia Paradis, Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal recipient. Her record of service includes executive director at the Centre for Constitutional Studies at the University of Alberta as well as national chair of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, LEAF. Thank you, Pat, for being here as well as Dana Beresh, your guest. Please rise and receive our warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier has an introduction.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the amazing people from Team Lethbridge. Team Lethbridge is a group of community leaders and organizations raising awareness about the city of Lethbridge's tremendous contributions to the province and how government representatives can work with them to support long-term success for all of Alberta. I ask that everyone please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to welcome provincial representatives from the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta. Many of us know friends and families impacted by schizophrenia. The society operates across Alberta, supporting individuals living with schizophrenia and their families. Please rise and receive a warm welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a statement to make.

#### 100th Birthday of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm proud to rise in the House to celebrate and pay tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His Holiness is a spiritual leader of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha community that brought kindness, leadership, and joy to his community. On behalf of the hon. minister of multiculturalism I would like to read a declaration being passed down from the minister's office in celebration of His Holiness' birthday.

Whereas, Dec. 7th is the 100th birthday of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the spiritual leader and Guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, a worldwide Hindu organization dedicated to promoting harmony between individuals, families and diverse communities; and

whereas, A simple, humble and spiritual personality, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and

whereas, Pramukh Swami Maharaj followed a spiritual path from an early age, seeking purity, renouncing material possessions, and possessing humility, saintliness, and a desire to help the people around him; and

whereas, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread his unique message to the world, saying that “In the joy of others, lies our own”; words that were thoughtful, meaningful and consoling, coming from a depth of profound experience and deep compassion; and . . .

whereas, when individuals who have contributed to the benefit of their community and the people around them in moral, ethical and spiritual matters, and have done it without asking for personal gain . . .

therefore, on behalf of the minister of multiculturalism I hereby declare December 7, 2022, a day in commemoration of the 100th birthday of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Opioid-related Deaths and Treatment

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today and honour the life of Sebastian Heemskerk, who tragically passed away on June 2, 2021, in Grande Prairie due to the drug poisoning crisis. Many of Sebastian’s family, friends, and people supporting his family are in the gallery today because Sebastian’s older sister Avalon has been collecting signatures for a petition to urge the government to declare a state of public health emergency in response to the ongoing opioid crisis and to seek possible solutions through increased Alberta health and social programs assistance along with a public awareness campaign. I’ll be presenting this petition later, which has over a thousand signatures, many of them from northern Alberta, near Grande Prairie.

This call for action is purposely broad so that it can have broad support. It’s no secret that the opposition and government have disagreements on this topic, but I hope the experience of the Heemskerk family can ground all of us to move forward on this emergency with compassion and empathy. The UCP government has championed recovery, and – let me be clear – having options and capacity for people to enter recovery that’s appropriate for their circumstances when they are ready is fundamentally important, but it is also important to recognize the increased toxicity of the drug supply and the need for harm reduction measures which are based on evidence. The mandate letter from the Premier to the new Minister of Mental Health and Addiction doesn’t mention either, which is a significant policy gap in the response to this emergency.

Those who join me today in the gallery have made significant efforts to reach out to this government, to share their experiences, and advocate for solutions. I really hope that the members who represent Grande Prairie and the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction can connect with them and make time to meet. I’m honoured to have met the Heemskerk family, and I’m inspired by their advocacy so that fewer people will die preventable deaths in the midst of this opioid crisis. I hope all members in this Chamber feel that inspiration as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Canada Pension Plan

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a young, most prosperous province. Each year CPP contributions by Alberta businesses and workers will exceed benefits to retirees by over \$4 billion. Since 2019 Trudeau has been jacking up the CPP over 36 per

cent, forcing Alberta businesses and workers to disproportionately pay for his tax increase.

**1:40**

But, Mr. Speaker, what about inflation? CPP costs exploded more than 10 per cent from last year. Next year CPP maximum will increase 7 per cent more, to \$7,500 for each Alberta employee. Do we want to get serious about confronting affordability for out-of-control inflation on a federal program?

Under an Alberta pension plan each year contribution costs for each Alberta worker of an Alberta business can be thousands lower. That is the truth. Some do not want an APP for Albertans. Are we supposed to be surprised? If Alberta saves billions, CPP costs would increase for the rest of the country. Mr. Speaker, an APP will increase take-home pay for each Alberta worker and reduce costs for Alberta businesses to provide jobs.

The great thing about this opportunity is that there is no net cost to Alberta. It is paid by avoiding transferring billions every year to everyone else. Trudeau and the NDP want to fearmonger about an APP, hiding and distorting the truth. Mr. Speaker, let’s focus on the truth informing us with the facts. An APP is a game-changing competitive advantage.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

### Rural Crime

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently attended, at the invitation of the Forestburg community, a rural crime engagement session with an exceptional turnout. During this session residents of the town and surrounding area shared their experiences where they have been robbed repeatedly. These robbery instances have left community members frightened, and they know the robbers are members of their own community and continue to live amongst them.

In one instance a baby was in the car when it was stolen. Thankfully, the vehicle was returned and the child unharmed. I also heard several community members share their concerns for school-aged students who are afraid to walk to school given the threatening behaviour of one of the residents. Response from local law enforcement is slow, leaving residents feeling vulnerable. Drug use made these perpetrators – is causing even more concern.

Mr. Speaker, these folks are frightened, they are angry, and they are frustrated. They have asked for sting operations so these perpetrators can be proactively arrested. What is most frustrating for not only the residents but the local police is the fact that once these criminals are arrested, they are turned loose again, only to reoffend against the same people that they have just robbed and threatened. That’s why I as their MLA will stand up, take note, and take action. I know this government is putting additional effort and resources into reducing rural crime, but more needs to be done. We need to do better for the residents of Forestburg and the entire province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Team Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to recognize the work of Team Lethbridge, a collaborative group of key organizations, including businesses, entrepreneurs, economic leaders, postsecondary institutions, school boards and local government, social services, arts, community development, and tourism organizations.

Team Lethbridge is working hard to recruit doctors to the community and address the health challenges, a task that would be

much easier if the UCP government did not declare war on doctors during a pandemic and drive them out of the community. For families to move and stay in Lethbridge, they need to have certainty they have access to basic health care. Those who are trying to attract and retain skilled labour professionals or investment tell me that lack of primary care is one of our biggest reputational challenges.

Team Lethbridge is also working on affordable housing and housing solutions more generally. There is significant concern about homelessness and public safety in Lethbridge. I share those concerns. These organizations are working hard to create solutions, but again there is a missing partner at the table, and that is the UCP government.

I will conclude with thoughts on the economy. Economic development has great solutions for innovation, investment, and entrepreneur support and how to diversify our economy. We in the NDP opposition appreciate this work and have developed thoughtful policy as part of our Alberta's Future initiative, including in areas of agriculture, technology, hydrogen. When we were in government, Lethbridge welcomed over \$1 billion in new private- and public-sector investment, but with the job-killing sovereignty act the UCP seems adamant that that will not happen under their watch.

I will look forward to what an NDP government could do by listening carefully to Team Lethbridge to create jobs in the community and create a more resilient economy for Alberta's future. Unfortunately, there's an empty seat around the table, and that's the folks with the funding and the ability to set a strategic direction. Right now that's the UCP government.

With political change in 2023 we'll be able to accomplish so much for Team Lethbridge and southern Alberta.

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

### Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Christmastide is the season of giving, and I believe that showing our gratitude as elected officials towards those who donate their time and resources to help Albertans in need highlights the essential importance of the not-for-profit and charitable sector in our society.

For many Albertans this season will be particularly difficult. We are going through a serious affordability crisis, and many people in our province are struggling to afford food, let alone the gifts they would normally be sharing with their family and friends. When Albertans find themselves in this position, I'm deeply grateful that there are so many great organizations like those that we have here today, amongst many others represented by them, who step in to selflessly help Albertans and their families enjoy the holiday and provide services year-round.

Considering the extensive generosity shown by these organizations, it makes me extremely pleased to know that a delegation from The Nonprofit Vote coalition is in the House today and visiting many different government organizations. The members of this delegation are committing to supporting the nonprofit and charitable sector. They understand how crucial this sector is to our province and the difficult time that they have had over these last two years and with the affordability crisis to keep the doors open. These nonprofits need to hear from elected representatives and know that we care and desire the flourishing sector of that part of our economy and the services they provide.

That is in part why I introduced Bill 202 with the hope that incentivizing more charitable gifts and donations can bolster a tax credit and incentivize more Albertans to give and more Albertans to give more deeply. I'm deeply humbled by the support of many

different folks in this sector for the bill that we're bringing forward, and hopefully we can pass it in this Chamber sooner rather than later.

Anything we can do as elected representatives to support these institutions must be pursued. The charity virtue is essential. It's the watermark of our province since our inception, and I stand together with the charitable sector and with this House in supporting charities and not-for-profits.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Food Banks

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Christmas is only 18 days away. It's been a tough year for many families. Inflation is at an all-time high. The cost of living and raising a family is through the roof. Demands on our food banks this year are at some of the highest levels ever seen.

Our government recognizes the fantastic work that our local food banks do all year every year. We have increased funding to support our food banks so they can help more Alberta families get through these tough times of high inflation and uncertainty. Our local communities, businesses, schools, and, most importantly, our grocery store owners have stepped up, recognizing the need and the great value our food banks provide.

But we recently discovered that with Christmas just around the corner, the Grinch is alive and well and working for the Canada Revenue Agency in Ottawa. The CRA last week sent a notice to one of my local food banks that due to a filing issue they would be shutting that food bank down on December 16, just nine days before Christmas. Mr. Speaker, you would have to be as cuddly as a cactus and have garlic in your soul to do such a thing. Not only would your heart have to be three sizes too small; your brain would have to be nonexistent. The CRA obviously needs to invest in some calendars for their working-at-home employees.

My local food bank's group of dedicated workers applied for an extension so they could have a chance to be in compliance with the CRA and get through Christmas but were denied. Unbelievable. No, Mr. Speaker, this isn't happening in Whoville; this is happening in Canada. Even Dr. Seuss couldn't make this stuff up. I reached out to my local MP because this is a federal issue, and I'd like to thank MP Stubbs and her assistant Tina for helping me to get to the bottom of this and at least provide this group an extension to get them through the busiest season of the year.

I ask everybody in Alberta to please step up and support your local food bank so we can all have a merry Christmas. Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Opposition.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, today I stood with the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. David Dodge. Mr. Dodge very articulately impressed upon Albertans how the Premier's sovereignty act, amended or not, will harm our economy. He said that it sends an international signal that investing capital dollars in Alberta carries greater risk than other jurisdictions. In a world where capital moves fast and certainty is a fundamental requirement to build big projects, Alberta will fall behind. Will the Premier admit that her bill is a threat to Alberta's prosperity and withdraw it?

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me get this straight: we have a Liberal appointee to the Bank of Canada who is not even from Alberta, who didn't read the bill, who didn't read the amendments – quite frankly, the Bank of Canada increased interest rates .5 per cent again today, which actually has a dampening effect on investment – coming to Alberta to tell us how to run our affairs. You know, I'm wondering who this opposition leader is going to have at her next press conference. Maybe she should just invite Justin Trudeau.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dodge served numerous Conservative governments, including that of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Now, he explained how this act fails to meet the challenges of a modern economy, including changes to technology and business practices. Quote: whatever its final form, the act is a signal to the world that we don't know what we're doing, and if we can't get the fundamentals right, investors will look elsewhere. End quote. Why won't the Premier admit that she doesn't know what she's doing and that her bill is simply beyond saving?

**Ms Smith:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I've been waiting for the last couple of days for the Leader of the Official Opposition to retract her comment that CAPP opposed this bill, because they contacted my office and told me that that was not the case, that they neither supported nor rejected the bill, and they've asked the NDP to retract their statement on that. [interjections] Oh, I'd be happy to share it with you, the e-mail from them. In fact, I can tell you what I'm seeing with the oil sands producers. Today Canada oil sands producers are set to open their wallets and direct more capital toward their growth plans in 2023 after several years of relative frugality. That does not sound like chasing business . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that neither CAPP nor the *Calgary Herald*, where those comments were reported, have retracted the statements, and the Premier should stop suggesting otherwise on Twitter. It does not help her credibility. Meanwhile we have so many folks who are outlining that her bill undermines the rule of law, creates a constitutional crisis, chases away investment, makes inflation last longer, kills jobs, and divides Canadians against their province. Will the Premier admit she is more concerned with catering to her base than protecting or, heaven forbid, growing investment in Alberta?

**Ms Smith:** Let me continue in telling you what exactly the oil sands companies are doing. Over the past week four of the country's largest oil sands producers have unveiled bigger capital programs for 2023, with Cenovus Energy announcing Tuesday that it will spend between \$4 billion and \$4.5 billion this year. That's four oil sands companies within the last week. In fact, when asked directly about the sovereignty act, Alex Pourbaix – he is the president and CEO of Cenovus – said: I suspect those initial comments about the bill were directed at ensuring legislation maintains investor confidence; I have not heard anything from investors worrying about it at this point.

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

**Ms Notley:** The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier can't name one investor who's actually in support of her bill.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Ms Notley:** Today an emergency resolution will hit the floor of the Assembly of First Nations calling for the bill to be rejected, amendments and all. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** It is expected that it will pass with fierce support. Chiefs from both Alberta and Saskatchewan are rightfully protecting their treaty rights, which they assert are under threat because of this Premier. The Premier can deny it all she wants, but this government has done zero consultation with Indigenous communities on these matters. None. Zilch. Will she apologize and withdraw her bill?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I asked Chief Billy Morin to be my adviser on my transition team, and all the way through this process he has been giving me feedback. It's part of the reason why asserting the rights of our Indigenous communities is central to the legislation. It's right there in the opening statements of it. We recognize the treaty rights of our First Nations. In fact, we have done so much to support true economic reconciliation. Just look at the Aboriginal Indigenous Opportunities Corporation: a \$1.1 billion deal signed by 23 First Nations to take a partnership interest in seven pipelines. That's what real reconciliation looks like. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Wow. That's not consultation, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Indigenous Relations minister actually claimed to the media that he spoke to the chiefs and they want these amendments. But I want the Premier and the minister to listen to Chief Tony Alexis speaking on behalf of Treaty 6. Quote: we are not looking for changes or amendments to this bill; we want it withdrawn; it is beyond concerning that there has been absolutely no consultation or dialogue with First Nations people; it displays a gross lack of transparency that runs against the ideals of respectful relations and reconciliation. To the Premier: why did your minister make a claim that contradicts the chiefs themselves?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been several chiefs that have approached me to look at amendments, and that's all that I said. But I have just wrapped up calls with Chief Ivan Sawan from Loon River and Chief Allan Adam, and of course they do have concerns around this. I have committed to sit and talk with them about their concerns. This bill contains explicit language surrounding the protection of treaty rights. Let me be clear: this government has no intention in any way of infringing on the rights of First Nation people. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** By passing the bill today, before the Premier speaks with the treaty chiefs, you are infringing on their treaty rights. Chief Darcy Dixon said, quote, it is being said that Bill 1 is just part of a political game . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** . . . that may be true, but we see in it a disguised attempt to disregard treaty; we reject Alberta's Bill 1 and find that no amendments would be enough to repair it; it must be withdrawn. Can the Premier explain how irreparably damaging Alberta's relationship with Indigenous people is somehow a strategy for job growth? When will she stop denying her failure to respect treaty through this bill?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:56.

**Ms Smith:** The Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation supports First Nations with loan guarantees of up to a billion dollars per project, and we've had amazing success stories on it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** This is what reconciliation looks like, and this is what we're committed to. It's part of the reason why we put this bill forward. We know that there are 100 First Nations that have oil and gas development. We know that they want to work with us on getting their product to market. The only way we can make sure that we get our products to market is to make sure that we're asserting our rights under the Constitution. That's what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Chief Tony Alexis and Chief Darcy Dixon stood up today to call on this government to scrap their unconstitutional sovereignty act. Both chiefs confirmed that the UCP government failed to uphold its legal duty to consult with First Nations. Chief Tony Alexis said, quote: we have had no conversations with any minister; only after we did a press conference there was an idea of consultation, but still to this day there is none. To the Premier. This is her flagship piece of legislation. Who's at fault for not fulfilling this government's legal duty to consult, her or her minister?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, I have met with multiple Indigenous groups and have heard their concerns regarding this bill, that there was not enough consultation, and that is regrettable. That's why I am committed to continue to engage in consultation with First Nation leaders and strengthen our relationship with them as I met with several Indigenous groups this . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The minister has the right to answer a question just like you have the right to ask one.

The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are concerns out there, and I am listening to them. They have agreed to sit and talk with me about these. As early as tomorrow we'll be meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Feehan:** From the comments of the Alberta First Nations chief it is clear why they chose not to consult. Chief Alexis says, quote: let's be honest; this all comes down to land and resources; we are yet again the inconvenient Indian, standing in the way of unprotected resource extraction and other exploitation of treaty lands. And Chief Dixon says, quote: this is a warning to Canadians; if you care about these lands, if you care about your country, you should care about this bill; it is not a First Nations issue; this impacts us all. To the Premier: why is she forcing her job-killing, chaotic bill through the House when there is clear opposition from Indigenous communities?

2:00

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, I understand their concerns, and I speak with them on a regular basis. We are working towards some sort of resolution. When I talked to Chief Sawan this morning, his concerns were that it might infringe upon how they interact with the federal government around Children's Services. I made it clear to him that that is not the case and that our minister will be reaching out to him to discuss how we can work further, moving forward, for them to take control and look after their children.

**Mr. Feehan:** Not only will the sovereignty act put First Nations' inherent and treaty rights in jeopardy; it will damage First Nations' ability to attract investment and grow their economy. Chief Alexis said, quote: the act puts a lot of uncertainty in investment; if you have a provincial government fighting with the federal government who is not including our First Nation, it will not be easy to bring investment to this environment; it will hurt the economic fabric of our commerce in all regions. To the Premier. Indigenous leaders are saying that the sovereignty act will hurt Indigenous economic prosperity. Are you really going to stand in this House and call them liars? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** I know that there has been a lot of scaremongering and fearmongering on the other side, and I can understand why it is that people have a misunderstanding of the bill. They bring forward validators . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** I think I would encourage the members opposite to read my mandate letter to the minister of Indigenous affairs and my mandate letter to the Minister of Children's Services. I have been a supporter of Jordan's principle from the moment that it was first declared. We should be lending a hand to our First Nations to partner with them on areas where we have expertise and then work with them on economic reconciliation. I'm looking forward to doing that.

#### Chief Medical Officer of Health Vaccination Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the Premier a simple question that should have prompted a simple answer. We know the Premier fired Dr. Hinshaw as Alberta's chief medical officer of health. Now, there were two deputies in that office as well. We've heard that both have left their roles. Can the Premier confirm that both deputy chief medical officers of health are no longer in their roles?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I can confirm that both deputy chief medical officers of health have submitted their resignation. They are still continuing to work at this point in time. We are in the process of actually looking to fill those roles and support Dr. Joffe in terms of his role as the chief medical officer of health with all the support that he needs to be able to fulfill his function. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday will come to order.

The Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Albertans are concerned about the state of health care in our province. They are concerned about the reports of day-long waits outside the children's hospital, ambulances that may not ever arrive, the sheer lack of information shared by this government about this crisis, and that list goes on and on. The Premier has resorted to having her staff screen the questions she gets at press conferences, so many Albertans are looking to the chief medical officer of health, who is now unsupported, to provide an unbiased, objective update on widespread outbreaks of illnesses that are impacting Alberta families, namely Alberta children. Can the Premier tell us why we haven't heard a

public briefing from the interim chief medical officer of health? Is there a gag order, and is it from . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, that simply is not the case. Dr. Joffe, who is an experienced physician, has taken on the role of the chief medical officer of health. He has actually provided advice and updates to Albertans. Initially, when he first came in, a press release was sent out in regard to dealing with the flu. As I mentioned in this House yesterday, he provided a letter to all parents urging, you know, parents to keep their children home, if they're sick, from schools, to be able to make the choice to go get vaccinated, and it's his department that is leading the flu vaccine awareness program.

**Mr. Shepherd:** A letter, Mr. Speaker.

We are calling for a public briefing directly to Albertans because we're in a crisis, a crisis impacting children, a crisis that I know is terrifying families who are worried they might be left awake countless hours in an emergency room with their sick child. Yesterday the Premier was asked to advocate for vaccines, not mandate them, to simply advocate for people to get their flu shot and get their COVID-19 vaccine. That's pretty standard practice for Premiers and public officials. Will the Premier just simply stand right now – no dodging, no ducking the question – in this House and encourage Albertans to get their flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government is advocating for the flu vaccine. I don't know if the members opposite received a text message like I did last week urging people to make the choice to get the flu vaccine. We are continuing to make flu vaccines and COVID vaccines available, urging individuals to make the choice to get their vaccines done, as we know that it can help them protect themselves from the various viruses that are circulating right now, and we are continuing to build capacity in our entire health care system to make sure Albertans get the health care where they need it and when they need it.

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

### Affordability Plan

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been meeting with many constituents, and consistently I hear that their biggest concern is affordability. They often bring up the fact that they feel uneasy when they go to the grocery store, particularly because of the amount they have to spend for just a few items. We know this challenge is not unique to our province, but my constituents want to know: what is Alberta's government doing to help alleviate some of the pressure being felt from today's inflation and high cost of living?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our affordability action plan and inflation relief act provides up to an estimated \$900 or more in broad-based relief to Alberta households. This includes \$500 alone in electricity rebates, hundreds in additional potential savings on gas and diesel through fuel tax relief, and continued natural gas price protection. From January to June eligible seniors and families will receive targeted monthly relief payments of \$100 for a total of \$600 per senior or child. Targeted relief payments will also be made to vulnerable Albertans collecting AISH, PDD, and income support. We will support Albertans through this affordability crisis.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that inflation has increased the cost of living, making it difficult for many Albertans to meet their basic needs, especially those on fixed incomes, and given that those living with disabilities as well as seniors and unemployed Albertans rely on social benefit programs, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services please tell the House what an increase in AISH, seniors' benefits, and income support will do to help vulnerable Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for her ongoing advocacy. For those listening, she's been a relentless advocate for the disability community and for seniors in her community. Reindexing AISH is going to have a huge impact, not only for today. With the folks on AISH it will be \$100-a-month increase, roughly, in their payments; for income support, roughly \$50 a month.

This is going to have an impact for folks today to be able to help so they don't get forced to choose between meals and rent, but it's also going to help ongoing so that we can make sure that the cost of living goes . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. It's not even an opposition question and I can't hear the answer.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the affordability crisis is hurting thousands of Albertans and their families and the Premier has given direction to increase social benefit programs and also to help strengthen Alberta's food bank network, can the same minister inform the House about the other measures his ministry is taking to respond to these concerns, specifically those of affordability?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I was placed in this portfolio, I've been able to meet with many organizations that serve our most vulnerable. A big part of what we're doing is working alongside our charities, housing providers, and others to make sure that they're also resourced. We have a major challenge, especially in our social sector, when it comes to workforce, so right now I'm working with the sector to make sure that we're addressing workforce challenges, turnover to make sure that those who care for our most vulnerable are cared for. We also announced recently \$20 million in additional funding for the next two years for food banks to make sure that people who are in an immediate crisis of food shortage don't go hungry this Christmas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Health Care Services in Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, there is a significant shortage of health care capacity in Lethbridge, especially in ICU. Yesterday the Minister of Health tried to reassure us that the situation is fine since diversions have not started and diversions are common; however, people in Lethbridge are worried about where else there is to go. The children's hospital in Calgary is stretched so thin that services at the Rotary Flames House hospice have been closed, and there are dozens of hospital closures across the province. Will the Minister of Health release an action plan today to ensure people in Lethbridge and across southern Alberta can continue to access emergency and acute care?



**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. Just to clarify in terms of the comments made yesterday, the system is under strain, and that includes the hospital in Lethbridge and a number of hospitals across our entire health care system. We know that a number of the challenges are brought in by what we're experiencing with the flu, RSV, and COVID, which is impacting not only putting pressures in terms of more people coming to the hospital but also staff. Absenteeism rates are higher.

2:10

Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and we are increasing capacity across our entire health care system. I was very pleased that we actually had added ICU capacity as part of our plan for Budget 2022, 50 additional beds across the entire system, of which a number of beds are also in Lethbridge. We continue to recruit staff in Lethbridge in particular, more doctors and more nurses. We are working on this, and we will ensure that Albertans have the health care that they need when they need it.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that beds are not staff and given that there were no resources behind that plan and given that when I asked the Deputy Premier to commit to supporting Lethbridge's health care system yesterday, he did not answer and given that Lethbridge's ICU is at capacity, that 40,000 people in the community do not have a family doctor, and that there's only one ob-gyn to support pregnant women, will the Deputy Premier from Lethbridge-East please stand and commit to ensuring that this government's top priority should be fixing health care in Lethbridge and across this province, not the job-killing sovereignty act or waging war on AHS?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, one of our government's top priorities is addressing health care. We are actually doing that. The comments made by the member opposite, that there are no resources being put towards this, are simply incorrect. We've invested \$22 billion, the highest amount ever in the province, into health care. By the way, the response to COVID and the response to getting caught up on surgeries is in addition to the \$22 billion. We are increasing that by \$600 million next year, \$600 million the year after that, and dollars have actually gone to Lethbridge as well to be able to improve the capacity there. I'll speak more about what we're doing for doctors . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the UCP would not even debate Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, and they refused to debate the children's health crisis twice, all within one week, will the Deputy Premier commit to an emergency debate about the state of health care in Lethbridge today? If not, will he please explain why health care in Lethbridge is not a priority for him? Why hasn't he answered a single question about this since becoming a minister? Why won't he defend Lethbridge?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Lethbridge for the tremendous work that he is doing, working with me to assist in dealing with the problems in health care. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Copping:** I would also like to thank AHS, the Chinook PCN, community stakeholders, and the members from the city of

Lethbridge for working collaboratively with our government to bring more doctors into Lethbridge. I was very pleased to comment yesterday, but I'll comment again today. We have 17 new doctors, family doctors in the queue that should be working in Lethbridge in the coming weeks.

### Affordability Plan (continued)

**Mr. Nielsen:** Albertans are facing an unprecedented affordability crisis. The rising cost in groceries, housing, insurance, utilities, child care, interest rates, education has left most Albertans struggling and living paycheque to paycheque. While the affordability crisis is impacting over 4 million Albertans, this government's affordability plan leaves half of them without a cent. To the Minister of Finance: why did this government abandon so many Albertans during this affordability crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our affordability response has been both broad based and targeted. We're providing relief to every Albertan with the fuel tax suspension program. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'll say it again because they weren't listening. We're providing relief to every Albertan and every Alberta family through the fuel tax suspension program, electricity rebates, broad as well as targeted support. We're acting.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Broad and targeted, missing half of Albertans.

Given that car insurance has shot up 30 per cent or more for some Albertans and given that Albertans rely on their vehicles to go to and from work, pick up their kids from school, and go to the grocery store, where they're also getting hosed, and given that insurance lobbyists have been key campaign staff for the UCP for as long as I can remember, will the minister admit that he won't give Albertans a break on car insurance because it would cut into the profits made by his wealthy political buddies?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to remind this House of two case studies. When the NDP were in office, they brought in a blunt rate cap to deal with insurance. In 2018, after they brought in the rate cap, insurance premiums went up by 5 per cent. We brought in Bill 41 to deal with the systemic issues that are driving up premiums. In the last 24 months . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** No, no, no. It's only the minister with the call.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, in the last 12 months – pardon me – insurance rates have gone up 2.4 per cent at a time when inflation is over 6. You tell me which plan was beneficial.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Insurance skyrocketed under your watch.

Given that the Condominium Owners Forum Society of Alberta has urged government to open up the regulations so that hundreds of thousands of condo owners that are not eligible for the rebates might see some support, given that for months our caucus raised concerns about this situation, which, described by condo owner Phil Rosenzweig, has created two classes of condo owners, leaving, quote, many shocked and disappointed, end quote, will the minister correct this failure from his predecessor so condo owners can finally get some support?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans across our province are struggling with high electricity prices, and we are going to make every effort to ensure that all Albertans, including those in submetered units, can participate in electricity rebates. To the member opposite's earlier points: they're incorrect. The vast majority – in fact, some measures are for all Albertans, with additional targeted measures to those with higher need, but all Albertans will benefit from our affordability relief package.

Thank you.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, time and time again Ottawa flaunts its provincial biases. Even now as Alberta fights back against the federal government's imperious and unbalanced laws harder than ever, Ottawa still mocks us. The recent news surrounding Quebec's special deal regarding carbon tax rates means they pay less than any other province, and that's blatant favouritism. I ask the government to help tell the House why Quebec only pays nine cents per litre of carbon tax on gas while Albertans have to pay 14 cents for carbon tax, a 55 per cent premium, and that's on top of the \$19 billion a year in unequalization payments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal carbon tax is unfairly applied across the country and during a time of inflation is applied unfairly to every Albertan and every Canadian. That's why while we're providing tax relief in this province to Albertans, we're calling on the feds to suspend, better yet eliminate, the carbon tax for Albertans and all Canadians.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given the preferential treatment of Quebec coming out of Ottawa and considering the seriously disproportionate carbon taxes Albertans and their businesses pay due to the nature of our economy and given the federal government's resistance in making any reasonable concessions to our province whatsoever, I ask the government to tell the House: what will their response be to Ottawa in relation to this prejudicial special exemption made for Quebec?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The federal government's preferential treatment of Quebec is a source of continued frustration for Albertans. We've seen billions of dollars of investment chased from our province because of the federal government's policies, only for the same government to turn around and give handout after handout to Quebec. Albertans have made it clear, their frustration to the federal government, and it's time that Alberta stood up to end this unfair arrangement.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, given the fact that this unfair treatment is nothing new – it's a century old, actually – and given the fact that this bias coming out of Ottawa continues to get more and more obvious and given this government's commitment to ensuring a fair deal for Alberta despite the stubborn resistance of the Laurentian elite, I ask the government to tell the House: what are we doing here in Alberta to fight back against unbalanced laws that favour other provinces at our expense?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're not going to do is ask another person from Ottawa what we should be thinking here in Alberta, like the NDP keeps on doing. Last week our government introduced Bill 1 as a way to ensure that unconstitutional federal overreach has an additional tool to be addressed while we're here in Alberta, and we're not going to allow the bureaucrats in Ottawa to continue to interfere in our affairs. It's none of their business. Bill 1 means more support for our industries and less pursuit of wide-eyed, nonsensical policies from the federal government in Ottawa.

### 2:20 Alberta Sovereignty Act and Agriculture

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, agriculture regulations are strongly intertwined at both the federal and provincial level, from food safety, international trade, export markets, interprovincial markets, and the labour force. All are dependent on a stable economy and a stable democracy. In fact, we have seen when relationships are damaged how markets can quickly be closed to our ag exports. Before the minister of agriculture stands and gives us some nonsense rhetoric, can he inform the House if he assessed the potential economic impacts to agricultural trade that may occur when his boss inevitably rams through the job-killing sovereignty act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would normally thank the member for the question, but that was, frankly, just a terrible question. The arm's-length agencies that the agriculture department uses federally: CFIA, PMRA, and Health. Look at what we've had to deal with just over the last year: front-of-package labelling on our ground beef products, the banning of common products needed to control insects, to control fungicide in our row cropping. [interjection] What do you want?

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister clearly did not do an economic assessment and given that Albertans pride themselves on the reputation of our world-class agriculture and given that the job-killing sovereignty act has caused nothing but reputational harm and given that we're seeing national headlines now claiming that the law is undemocratic, incompetent, and was written in crayon, can the minister explain to this House why he wants to sacrifice the reputation of our agriculture sector to play along with his leader's political games?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, come on. Through you to her: come on. There's only one order of government that is jeopardizing this province's agricultural reputation. We punch above our weight. We produce more than we can consume. We are a proud exporter. Countries and companies come to Alberta saying: how can I get more not just of your commodities, of your people, of your technology, of your best management practices? That's what we will continue to support through research, through programming, through the business risk management suite. We're here for the province.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that, again, most of that funding comes from the federal government and given that no one in the government cabinet can get it straight on what the job-killing sovereignty act actually does and given that the political climate shift in the past has led to the closure of critical export markets in China and India, can the minister inform this House if he has talked to our

international offices and apologized to them for this disastrous mess that they're causing with our international partners?

**Mr. Horner:** The only apology needed is from the opposition to Alberta's agriculture producers to sit in the House and pretend to care. The making-food-unaffordable carbon tax that's going to \$170, that they continue to support: phone the mother ship, phone Jagmeet Singh, say that we've had a change of heart. All we know is that Alberta is punching above its weight. We'll continue to. We're creating jobs. We're bringing investment. We're leading the country. We're leading the world.

### Social Supports Funding and Provincial Grants

**Ms Goehring:** Albertans are struggling right now with a cost-of-living crisis that is making it harder for families to put food on the table, keep the lights on, and heat their homes. I want to firstly thank the volunteers and staff of Alberta's nonprofits, who every day go above and beyond to serve the less fortunate. The very last thing that these organizations need, though, Mr. Speaker, is the uncertainty and chaos caused by this government's job-killing sovereignty act. Can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services commit today that not a single cent of funding support that Alberta's nonprofits rely on will be jeopardized by his support of the sovereignty act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. I'm so thankful for Alberta's not-for-profits and the incredible work that they do in our community. They're key as well, not just the employees but the people who volunteer, the people that donate and are involved with that. They're so critical to our communities. This government will continue to work with and support, partner with our not-for-profits to make sure that they have the resources and the tools to do the amazing work, the critical work that they do in our community.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that we know that many nonprofits rely on funding from the other levels of government, funds, I might add, that often off-set the horrifying cuts imposed by the UCP government, and given that we know that the city of Calgary is concerned with the prospect of what the job-killing sovereignty act could mean for its affordable housing strategy, will the minister commit to backfilling any lost funding and investment that the sovereignty act could drive from Alberta's nonprofits, or does he wash his hands of any responsibility for the consequences of his actions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to say that that's not what this bill is about. This bill does not put at risk the federal funding. This bill is about protecting Albertans, defending Albertans, and making sure that the federal government does stay in its lane. In regard to the federal funding, because I've heard a few comments over the past couple of weeks about us not taking full advantage of the federal funding, I'm happy to set the record straight: we are using every single federal dollar available to us as we speak, and we will continue to work with our federal partners as well as provinces across this country to make sure that our federal strategy matches our provincial . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that we know that the Premier has directed her ministers to call organizations to threaten their funding when they do things that the Premier doesn't agree with, including protecting their workers, and given that the list of activities that this Premier disagrees with runs large and she's made it clear that she's got no qualms threatening to withhold grant funding as a punishment, a threat that is only intensified with the undemocratic power she's trying to give herself with the sovereignty act, will the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services join me in condemning the Premier's threats to withhold funding for the nonprofits that she doesn't agree with?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me get the record straight here. Not only do we defend Alberta's interests, but we also collaborate with additional resources the federal government can provide for us. I went to the national conference for territorial, provincial, and federal ministers. Let me tell you this. I give them credit that we had a very candid dialogue. Not only do they support local priorities; they also have additional resources coming to us. I'm looking forward to having more resources coming to Alberta.

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

### Deerfoot Trail

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of time has passed since the expansion of Deerfoot Trail has been needed. I know that many constituents of Calgary-Hays are tired of a long commute on a road that should be four lanes but in some places gets choked down to two lanes. This causes unneeded backups and delays. To the minister of transportation: when will we be seeing smoke and dust fly on this project, which means when will construction begin?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that this spring construction will happen; we'll see dust flying on Deerfoot. I know there's lots of discussion in this Chamber about staying in your lanes constitutionally, but on the Deerfoot in Calgary we're going to be adding new lanes, both sides going north and south, and there'll be seven new bridges, there'll be seven new kilometres of lanes in Calgary. That's just this government helping Calgarians improve their lives just a little bit by being able to get home 15 per cent faster, going home at night, and then 22 per cent faster . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** That was a good answer, Minister. Now, given that the conditions on Deerfoot Trail that I've been hearing the very most about are on the section between Anderson Road and Glenmore Trail and given that these concerns not only include the backups and delays but the real safety hazards, especially during the winter, to the minister: what can be done right now to improve the safety on this particular section of Deerfoot that I think we all agree needs help?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. I'm happy to say that 180,000 vehicles pass through this area every

day, and that's something that we provide about \$9 million in winter maintenance for, that's been allocated to the Deerfoot. Carmax, the maintenance contractor for the Deerfoot, works hard all winter to ensure that snow and ice are plowed and that the Deerfoot is safe for winter driving for Calgarians and all Albertans that drive on the Deerfoot.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that the minister has just confirmed that this project is going to go ahead and given that this expansion will benefit hundreds of thousands of Calgarians and visitors to Calgary every single day, to the minister – this is the question people want to know despite your previous answer and on top of that – when will construction be complete to the point where Albertans will be able to enjoy the newly repaired and expanded Deerfoot Trail?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to say that, within a year, from 64th Avenue to McKnight will be completed, and Calgarians will get the benefits of this expansion.

Let's just contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with how the NDP views provincial construction projects. They want to bring in restrictive contract arrangements just to start a labour war in Alberta, just to appease their big union bosses. We've seen what that has done in B.C. with the NDP. That adds about 20 to 30 per cent higher construction costs, longer construction delays, and fewer bidders on projects in the province. That's something we'll never see here in Alberta with this government.

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

## 2:30 Postsecondary Tuition

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The students' union at the University of Calgary recently forced administration to delay voting on a fourth consecutive tuition fee increase. The university had failed to consult with students or even make them aware of the coming tuition and fee increases. Once student leaders were finally made aware of the tuition proposal, one of the administrators said that the university is not obligated to consult students. This minister must set and enforce standards for tuition consultation. Has the minister spoken to the U of C to compel them to consult and come clean on what is driving these unaffordable increases?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, tuition increases are a matter that is within the purview of the board of governors for them to consider. Of course, it is the expectation of government, but apart from just an expectation it's actually enshrined in regulation that the university has an obligation to consult with students. I met, just as recently as this morning, with the students' union from the University of Calgary to get a better understanding of what more robust consultation can look like, but we leave that with the university.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that according to the Alberta tuition and fees regulation, postsecondary institutions are required to provide a four-year tuition outlook and specific information on where their student fees go, especially when this government has been jacking those fees up so much, and given that it wasn't until the students' union went to the media that the university hastily provided some information – it was your unprecedented cuts that forced these record increases. How can students be expected to keep

up with the impact of ever-increasing costs to their ability to get an education here in the province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There continues to remain a cap on the maximum allowable tuition increases. That cap, of course, exists in legislation. In addition, as I mentioned a moment ago, all universities and colleges have an obligation, which is enshrined in regulation, to consult with student associations and student bodies. I'm happy to continue to consult and work with student leaders to see if there's more that we can do from a government standpoint to make those requirements around student consultation a little bit more robust and clear. It's important that students are involved in that decision.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that tuition hikes are, sadly, a constant under this UCP government and this minister and given that they come as a direct result of generational cuts to postsecondary funding by this UCP government and given as well that this minister has failed to stand up for students and affordable postsecondary education during his entire tenure in office, can the minister now tell the House what it will take for him to do his job and build a coherent plan and stop jacking up fees for Alberta's students?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a coherent plan. We've developed, for the first time in over a decade, a 10-year strategic plan for postsecondary education, something that never existed when the members opposite were in government. I'm happy, as I mentioned, to consult regularly with our student leaders, as I did as recently as this morning and yesterday as well, to find out what more there is that government can do to help and support students. I call on the members opposite, though, to help take action by calling on the federal government, calling on the mother ship, to repeal the carbon tax and make life more affordable for students.

## Child and Youth Advocate Recommendations

**Ms Pancholi:** The Child and Youth Advocate has reported that since April, 56 children and youth who received child intervention services within the last two years have died. Fifty-six. This year is on track to be much worse than even last year, which was horrific. In this same period the UCP has had three different Children's Services ministers, but despite years of alarms being raised by front-line workers, the Child and Youth Advocate, and the opposition, outcomes for children and youth in Alberta are getting worse. Will the Minister of Children's Services commit to implement all 11 outstanding recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate and finally take some action on this crisis?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The death of any young person is a terrible tragedy, and our hearts go out to any of the families grieving these losses. I am proud of the work that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate is doing, and I am certainly committed to implementing all of the recommendations in those reports. We are pleased to report that the vast majority of those recommendations have been implemented, and many more are simply awaiting confirmation.

**Ms Pancholi:** Eleven recommendations remain outstanding.

Given that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate saw a 62 per cent increase last year in the number of deaths that triggered a

mandatory review and now needs a budget increase to manage all these additional reviews and given that the ministry's own report on deaths of young people in care from this spring notes that opioid deaths are disproportionately higher for young people in care and given that the advocate has repeatedly called for a specific and co-ordinated youth opioid strategy, not one-off announcements, will the minister commit to developing and putting into action a fulsome youth opioid strategy immediately? It is long overdue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have heard from many professionals that, of course, improving mental health wellness is a top priority for our government. With regard to the opioid crisis and the addictions crisis that we are facing, our jurisdiction is no different than the other jurisdictions across Canada. We are working with professionals in order to build out a recovery-oriented system of care and focusing on ensuring that all kids, all individuals who are looking for the supports they need can get them.

**Ms Pancholi:** So that's a no. No youth opioid strategy coming from this government.

Given that the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Children's Services makes no mention of added resources for kinship care, which keeps children and youth connected to their culture and their family, and given that the UCP repeatedly refuses the advocate's recommendations for government ministries to report publicly on their work to support youth and children in care and given that this government is failing to act not only on this child intervention crisis but the youth opioid crisis and now the crisis in children's health care, how can this minister or any member of this government expect Albertans to believe that they are actually committed to protecting the children of this province?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that the hon. member heard any of the responses from this side of the House when we gave those answers earlier. We are absolutely committed to not only the safety but the well-being of children in this province. As long as I am Minister of Children's Services, I will make that my absolute number one priority, no mandate bullet point needed.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

### Children's Medication Supply and Health Care

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across my riding for well over a month now, parents have been trying to deal with the growing shortages of children's medications like Tylenol and Advil. Late last month over 1 million doses of medicine arrived for all of Canada, with only an offer of 500 expected within the coming weeks. In light of that, to the Minister of Health: can you confirm that you have secured five times what Ottawa could find and that 5 million doses are on the way to help Albertan parents access these critical medications?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I'm happy to confirm that we are securing 5 million doses of acetaminophen and ibuprofen from Atabay pharmaceuticals. Currently we're in the midst of Health Canada's

expedited approval process to allow Atabay to send us the 10 shipments of the children's medication. This process is expected to take two to four weeks, and I'm thankful to Health Canada and the federal government for expediting it. Once Health Canada gives their final approvals, the shipments will be on the move and soon be filling Alberta pharmacy shelves. The same distributor which distributed the vaccines will also be distributing the medications.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that parents are desperate for the medications but want insurance that the quality of this medicine is entirely safe and given that you found the source from abroad, again to the same minister: can you assure parents that the medication is as good as any generic medication they would give to their sick children?

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm happy to reassure the member, this House, and all Alberta parents that the medication that we are securing is held to the same high standards as all medication in Canada. What we're doing with these 5 million bottles of children's medication is answering a need for Albertans, and we made sure that we had both the quantity and the quality for those shipments of medication. Atabay already exports raw materials for their pharmaceutical products to Canada, and they also export retail products to other countries around the world. Right now supplies of acetaminophen and ibuprofen are running low, but very soon the shelves will be stocked.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that in April of this year Canada's Prime Minister called for the Prime Minister to provide predictable and sustainable federal health care funding, and as with the children's Tylenol – given the Prime Minister did very little in responding to this cause, again to the same minister: what is the government of Alberta doing to provide predictable and sustainable funding to our health care system?

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks once again to the hon. member for the question, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to providing sustainable system funding for health care. As talked about many times in this House, we have done that by increasing funding to the highest levels we've ever seen, with commitment to increase more. We're working with my colleagues in other provinces and territories, who are doing the same thing, responding to the challenges that are being faced, quite frankly, across the country and asking the federal government to step up to do their share to be able to provide funding to assist our ability and all provinces to deliver the health care that Canadians deserve.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period, and in 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine. But before you go, I'm sure you'll join me in wishing a very happy birthday to the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the call.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition with a total of 1,068 signatures. The signatories petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to declare a state of public health emergency in response to the ongoing opioid crisis and to

seek possible solutions through increased Alberta Health and social programs assistance along with a public awareness campaign.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time under Standing Order 42 I intend to move the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge the current lack of access to health care in Lethbridge, including the local intensive care unit at Chinook regional hospital being near capacity, potentially resulting in some new patients being diverted to other communities that are facing similar capacity challenges, the chronic shortage of family doctors accepting new patients, resulting in an estimated 40,000 people who do not have access to primary care and are reliant on emergency care, and reduced access to obstetric and birthing care due to only having one full-time obstetrician and gynecologist working in the community; express its concern about the negative impact on residents in Lethbridge resulting from the severe lack of access to health care; and urge the government to make public as soon as possible a plan to increase access to health care in Lethbridge.

Mr. Speaker, I have the requisite copies here.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

#### Bill 2

#### Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Our province's economy has recovered strongly, yet Albertans are struggling under record inflation and high cost of living to make ends meet. Families are eating less and less nutritious food and wondering if they can keep their children in activities. Seniors and vulnerable Albertans, generally on low and often fixed incomes, are being forced to make increasingly difficult budget decisions. Inflation is causing Albertans hardship across the board. They feel it in their groceries, gas, utilities, and more. We are experiencing an affordability crisis.

Providing relief from runaway inflation is a top priority not just for this government but for all Albertans. That's why we are providing the largest relief package in Canada, enabled through this legislation and supporting regulations. If passed, this bill will enable us to deliver both broad-based cost-of-living supports and targeted relief for families, seniors, and our most vulnerable when and where they need it. This legislation will also provide utility relief, protection, and stability this winter. It will index the Alberta child and family benefit and personal income taxes and suspend the full provincial fuel tax from January to June next year. In short, this bill provides real relief. It is my honour as the Minister of Affordability and Utilities to deliver critical broad-based inflation relief to all Albertans and additional targeted supports for families, seniors, and our most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

**The Speaker:** I will refer the hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities to the Minister of Justice's introduction of a bill yesterday for future introductions.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of survey results that I referred to in my question yesterday in question period, the Alberta classroom pulse research, which shows that 85 per cent of teachers have seen a dramatic increase in the complexity and diversity of student needs in their classrooms this year, among other things. I think it's interesting, and I encourage all members to read it.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table the report of the Auditor General of Alberta, November 2022. Just for everybody's note, electronic copies of this report will be provided to all members.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the five requisite copies of a paper referenced in debate yesterday called Running Afoul the Separation, Division, and Delegation of Powers: The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, written by Martin Olszynski and Nigel Bankes.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the 2021 report An Act to End Predatory Lending. This report provides information on the status of the payday loan industry in Alberta. I have the requisite five copies.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act Alberta Health Services 2021-22 annual report; pursuant to the Health Professions Act College of Alberta Psychologists 2021-22 annual report, College of Acupuncturists of Alberta annual report 2021-22, College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta 2021 annual report, College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta 2021 annual report, Physiotherapy Alberta College + Association 2021 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 1:56 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Questions about Legislation

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise about a point of order today that was called against the Leader of the Opposition while she was asking a question to the hon. Premier. At the time,

mentioned by you, Mr. Speaker, it says “By passing the bill today, before the Premier speaks with the treaty chiefs, you are infringing on their treaty rights.”

Mr. Speaker, it is contempt of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* to presuppose the outcome of a bill. I’m not sure why the member opposite would do such a thing. This is not her first kick at the can nor her first rodeo. I would ask that going forward, the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, refrain from presupposing the outcome of bills in this Chamber and allow us as Members of the Legislative Assembly to do our job, robustly debate these bills, and vote on them according to the will of our constituents and what’s best for Alberta.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader is not sure why the Leader of the Official Opposition may make such a statement when on Monday they introduced a closure motion, a time allocation motion, and they used it on Tuesday. On Tuesday they introduced two more time allocation motions. They’re probably going to use those today. That is the thinking. That is the pattern we’ve seen from this government.

That being said, conversations about this topic, which at the time of this point of order we were debating the sovereignty act putting First Nation inherent and treaty rights in jeopardy as well as damaging First Nations’ ability to attract investment – I believe tempers were hot. Certainly, we would not want to presuppose the actions of this government. That being said, I think we can all guess what’s about to happen. We certainly would be happy to withdraw the comment if the Speaker would like us to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else that would like to provide any additional comments with respect to the point of order before the Assembly?

I am prepared to rule. I’m curious to know from the Government House Leader’s perspective what is the citation which he speaks to. Of course, there are parliamentary requirements with respect to privilege in terms of showing documents that are the Assembly’s or advertising outside of the Assembly that would presuppose a decision inside the Assembly. I’m not sure that a member can’t opine upon what the Assembly may or may not do.

Of course, it would be inappropriate of the Speaker to presuppose a decision of the Assembly or the government to, and I know that this has happened on numerous occasions. I’m sure members of the opposition will be aware and some members who’ve been around long enough will also be aware of times in which the government has done that externally and exposed dollars based upon a decision that may come of the Assembly.

I’m not convinced that there’s a point of order. Perhaps I’m happy to be educated. The Speaker is not infallible as well. With respect to this I don’t believe it’s a point of order. If there’s a requirement for a clarifying statement tomorrow, I will be happy to provide one. This is not a point of order, and I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** At the appropriate time the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West rose on Standing Order 42. She has up to five minutes to convince the Assembly of its merits.

### Health Care Services in Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:**

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge the current lack of access to health care in Lethbridge, including the local intensive care unit at Chinook regional hospital being near capacity, potentially resulting in some new patients being diverted to other communities that are facing similar capacity challenges, the chronic shortage of family doctors accepting new patients, resulting in an estimated 40,000 people who do not have access to primary care and are reliant on emergency care, and reduced access to obstetric and birthing care due to only having one full-time obstetrician and gynecologist working in the community; express its concern about the negative impact on residents in Lethbridge resulting from the severe lack of access to health care; and urge the government to make public as soon as possible as plan to increase access to health care in Lethbridge.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise pursuant to Standing Order 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion that is urgent and pressing and which I read out under Notices of Motions. I would like to acknowledge that pursuant to SO 42 I’ve provided the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why this is a pressing and urgent matter is that as the representative for Lethbridge-West I am urging all members of this Assembly to show the people of Lethbridge and of southern Alberta more broadly that addressing the health challenges there is a key priority for all of us here.

I will note that Team Lethbridge comes to Edmonton every year. They all dutifully file onto buses every year, a wide group of business leaders, entrepreneurs, leaders in community and social services agencies, school boards, local government representatives, arts organizations, tourism organizations, the Sport Council, you name it. They come here to ensure that Lethbridge is heard because, in their experience and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in mine, too, if we do not advocate for southern Alberta and for Lethbridge, we will get ignored.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, when we hear of such a pressing and urgent limitation at the Chinook regional hospital, we must grapple with it here in this Chamber. Lethbridge is facing multiple and overlapping challenges in health care which have now culminated in capacity constraints at the Chinook regional hospital. This affects more than just the 100,000 of Lethbridge but, rather, all of the communities in southern Alberta that rely on Chinook regional. I would argue, too, that it affects the people of Medicine Hat and more broadly because those communities are anchors for access to acute care, emergency services, primary care, and so much more specialist care throughout the region.

Yesterday we heard new information, Mr. Speaker, about how stretched the intensive care unit is. The Chinook regional hospital was over 100 per cent capacity over the weekend. It was at the point that if any more people came in, patients would have to start being diverted to other communities. This is due to a number of factors, not the least of which is staffing shortages that come as a culmination of a three-year UCP war on front-line health care workers during a pandemic. It is deeply concerning since communities across the province are also having capacity issues, so if we have capacity issues, there is nowhere else to go. Our health care system is at the point where the Rotary Flames House, a children’s hospice, is needing to pause services to move more staff to Alberta Children’s hospital in Calgary. Children in

Lethbridge and surrounding areas also rely on those services and that hospital.

The situation is dire, and the people of Lethbridge and all across the province deserve to hear directly from us today on what is being done, a specific resourcing and staff recruitment and retention plan. Beds are not people, Mr. Speaker, and intensive care and all of those sorts of services require staffing. There are no robots for this work.

Lethbridge also has an extreme lack of access to pregnancy and birthing care. In October I stood with the Leader of the Official Opposition and a local health care provider, Vicki Todd, highlighting how concerning this is. Families need to have certainty that they can have a baby in their own community. Doctors specializing in maternity are also fundamentally important for high-risk births. Lethbridge only has one full-time obstetrician gynecologist right now, and aside from pregnancy and childbirth women do not have access to a range of women's health and reproductive health care services. It is not just women of birthing age; older and elderly women and menopausal women need access to ob-gyns quite often, and they do not have that access in southern Alberta. The UCP needs to highlight the importance of this and display that they are taking it seriously. Hundreds of thousands of people rely on it.

Finally, there has got to be some sort of action on access to primary care. We are still without appropriate access to walk-in clinics. We still don't have family doctors that can send lab results anywhere; rather, patients that can have lab results sent to a family doctor. Without adequate access to primary care people are more reliant on the emergency room, but we have already talked about that.

We need this debate, Mr. Speaker. We need a plan. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 42 a member of Executive Council does have up to five minutes to respond to the matter of urgent and pressing necessity of the motion.

I would just like to provide a very brief comment before calling upon what appears to be the Minister of Health that over the recent days we have heard during discussions of Standing Order 42 that this is a request for an emergency debate. I want to be clear that Standing Order 42 is not a request for an emergency debate; it is a motion, available to members under the standing orders, Standing Order 42, of urgent and pressing manner, which is different than a Standing Order 30, which, of course, is an emergency debate. I think it's important that we provide some clarity around those things and encourage members to speak directly to the appropriate motion.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, or the Minister of Finance, has up to five minutes to respond to the urgent and pressing matter.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the elevation to the position of Minister of Finance. That's greatly appreciated.

**The Speaker:** No. No.

**Mr. Copping:** Yes. That's not a problem.

I want to thank the hon. member for raising the issues of the challenges that our health care system is facing, particularly in Lethbridge, and I want to thank – I see some members in the gallery from Team Lethbridge are here, and I want to thank them for the work that they're doing in representing the city of Lethbridge. As well, I just take the opportunity to thank my colleague for the work that he is doing as well in representing Lethbridge. I understand that the Member for Lethbridge-West suggested that government isn't listening to Lethbridge and that they, you know, have to come here and there's a need, an urgent need, for this particular debate.

I can tell you that we are indeed listening, not only through my colleague and the representations that he is making to me, but quite

frankly, Mr. Speaker, I was able to go to Lethbridge earlier this year, held a workshop. We had many of the members – the Lethbridge mayor, Lethbridge city councillors; we had doctors; we had AHS employees – to talk about, you know, the challenges facing our health care system: what's working, what's not working, and things we can do to improve, to make it better.

**3:00**

Mr. Speaker, I can say that we are listening. One of the biggest items highlighted by the doctors in Lethbridge was looking at, you know: how do we make it easier for changing the system of pay so that doctors and family physicians could see more patients? We heard that feedback, and we acted on it. Actually, that action showed up in the AMA agreement we reached, that was ratified in September by over 70 per cent, and we have implemented that already in terms of being able to improve access to family physicians.

We appreciate that this has been a challenge in Lethbridge in terms of access to family physicians, and we have taken action. As I indicated in this House earlier, Mr. Speaker, there are 17 family physicians who have accepted positions in Lethbridge. A number of them are going through the various certification processes with the CPSA. Some of them have already started practising, and more are on the way.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in this House during question period, we are taking action and investing in expanding capacity across our entire system, including in Lethbridge. We have added 50 additional ICU beds across the entire province, and a number of those beds we put in Lethbridge, and we put the money behind that to staff those up. In addition, we are adding resources to be able to hire more. We are hiring more across the entire AHS system, including in Lethbridge, and there are ongoing searches for staff where they are short right now. I can tell you, you know, that I'm very pleased that AHS, the chamber and city council of Lethbridge are all working together to attract and retain not only doctors but other health care professionals, and we are actually having progress in that regard.

We're going to continue to do more because we know that there is a shortage of health care professionals. We're not only seeing it in Alberta, but this is what we're seeing across the entire country. That is why, Mr. Speaker, you know, our government has invested in expanding seats in postsecondary education across the entire province, to get more nurses, to get more allied health professionals because we know we need them. We have hired them. Quite frankly, we have more nurses, more doctors than ever before working in this province, and we are going to continue to focus on recruitment, training, attraction, and retention to be able to get the people where they need it.

Now, the hon. member across the way spoke of the challenge that we have in our health care system, and these are challenges being faced, again, right across the country. Part of that challenge is in regard to absenteeism because RSV, flu, and COVID are circulating, and that impacts our health care staff as well. We haven't had to transfer out any patients from Lethbridge, but that's the beauty of our system, that when we need to do that, we can do that, and we have done that on occasion in the past. Now, we're looking to build capacity so we don't need to do that in the future. I am hopeful, when we look at the overall rates of flu and COVID circulating in the province – and it looks like we've peaked on flu initially. That will be coming down.

We are continuing to add capacity, and for that reason, Mr. Speaker, you know, we have a plan, we're acting on our plan, and we don't need a special debate on this matter.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Ordres du jour.



**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**

**Bill 5**

**Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't prepared for first reading of this. I can advise that I'm now more prepared for moving second reading. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, Albertans look to government to improve their day-to-day lives. They look to government to reduce red tape. They also look to us to increase access to the justice system and to feel safe and secure when they visit the Legislature Grounds. This omnibus bill will do all of the above and more. It will reduce red tape, it will increase access to the justice system, and it will allow legislative security to carry firearms.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill which proposes to change a number of laws. Specifically, there would be changes to the Legislative Assembly Act, to the Provincial Court Act, the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, the Referendum Act, the Sale of Goods Act, and the Trustee Act.

I'll begin by addressing the amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, following the tragic 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill and the high-profile event that occurred here at the Legislature Grounds in 2019, the Sergeant-at-Arms and your office initiated a security review. Since that review, we've also seen other incidents throughout the world, like the attacks on Congress on January 6, 2021, and now the review has concluded that the Legislative Assembly security service should be allowed to carry firearms in the Legislature Building and surrounding precinct as a preventative measure. With more and more Albertans enjoying the Legislature and its grounds, we're taking these steps to make sure that they can continue to enjoy it in a safe and peaceful setting. The Legislative Assembly security service protects our democracy, and they do that by ensuring the security of the Legislature, the safety and security of those who are in this Chamber and come to visit the precinct.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Changes to the Legislative Assembly Act would allow Legislative Assembly security to be treated as peace officers under the Criminal Code. This means they would have the authority to carry firearms. The security personnel would receive the necessary training to equip them with firearms and secure the Legislature Building and grounds of the legislative precinct if ever needed. Providing these officers with the tools that they need, including firearms, to protect all of those in this building – staff, visitors, and themselves and their fellow officers, Madam Speaker – is a top priority for our government. This change will bring Alberta as well in line with many other jurisdictions.

It's also been pointed out to me, Madam Speaker, that we have an obligation as employers to ensure the health, the safety, and the welfare of employees and to provide them with the right tools and the personal protective equipment to ensure their safety and to ensure the safety of other employees here within the precinct.

I think it's also worth noting that all of our LAS officers currently are former members of the Edmonton Police Service, and many if not most have specialized training, and many have served on the tac team of EPS. As I said before, Madam Speaker, these are folks who come to work every day to protect democracy.

Next I'll address the proposed changes to the Provincial Court Act. Madam Speaker, these changes would lay the groundwork to expand the civil claims that can be filed through the Provincial

Court, which we have now renamed the Alberta court of justice. Currently this limit for what many call the small claims court but what is called officially the civil claims division of the Alberta court of justice is \$50,000. There is concurrent jurisdiction with the Court of King's Bench as opposed to other jurisdictions like Quebec, who have distinctions in the jurisdiction between those two courts. We have concurrent jurisdiction, and people have a choice here in Alberta whether they want to take their claim to have final resolution in the Alberta court of justice or in the Court of King's Bench.

Now, the amendments that are proposed here in Bill 5 will permit government to adjust the limit, an ability that they've always had, by regulation up to a maximum of \$200,000. This would give more Albertans the option to resolve their civil legal disputes by filing a claim in the Alberta court of justice. This court for Albertans is easier to navigate, which means that more Albertans could represent themselves, which saves legal costs. Madam Speaker, at the same time it would free up the time and the resources in the Court of King's Bench to focus on more complex matters. Ultimately, this makes the justice system more accessible to all.

We're also proposing changes to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act to make it easier for Albertans to collect child and spousal support payments. Specifically, this is earmarked for families living in different parts of the country from their former partners and former spouses. All we're doing is allowing in legislation the electronic transfer of certified family support documents between reciprocating Canadian jurisdictions. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia all already have completed comparable legislative amendments in support of a transition like what's being proposed in this bill. The remaining provinces are working towards completing their own changes, and this amendment will greatly reduce the time needed to collect, to exchange, and to process information and to improve family support enforcement here in Alberta for those who are often going to be the most vulnerable.

3:10

The next piece of legislation we're adjusting is the Referendum Act, Madam Speaker. Amendments to this act will strengthen democracy by ensuring that Albertans have a direct say on important matters. We're simply making it clear that only constitutional questions require a resolution be made in the Legislature.

Next we'll amend the Sale of Goods Act. Changes to the Sale of Goods Act will eliminate unnecessary record-keeping requirements for buyers when grain is sold and delivered at a grain elevator. They would also make the language in Alberta's Sale of Goods Act the same as the federal legislation, which is the Canada Grain Act, just to help avoid any confusion.

Then, last, being the proposed amendment to the Trustee Act. This change would make it clear that a trust would not fail if there is temporarily no trustee. The proposed change would remove the transfer of trust property to the court, allowing the trust property to move directly to the new trustee once appointed.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, all of these changes will improve the experience of Albertans when dealing with the legal or court processes or if they're visiting or working in the Legislature. With that, I move second reading of Bill 5.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 5 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in second reading of Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). I appreciate that some of the

changes that have been made in this act are intended to expand access to justice for Albertans, which, of course, is something that I think we're all committed to. I appreciate many of the changes. I mean, we have some questions as well, but I think overall there are some changes here that we can certainly be supportive of. For the sake of those Albertans who may be watching this scintillating debate on Bill 5, I would like to go over a little bit of what the bill contains and the various pieces of legislation that they amend.

I thank the Minister of Justice for reading his bill and for understanding it and speaking to it today in the Legislature. He's not batting a hundred on that in the House so far this session, but certainly on this one it appears he is familiar with the content of the bill, so that's fantastic. I will review some of the provisions and the various enactments that are amended by this legislation just to summarize sort of why they may be important.

The first piece, of course, is the amendment to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act. While that sounds like a very fancy term, Madam Speaker, it essentially means that when there is a family law support order, some kind of, you know, dispute in another jurisdiction – we know that when there are arrangements as well as agreements and orders that are in place that affect, for example, custody as well as child support payments, families don't stay in the jurisdiction in which their children were born or even where they lived. We know that, of course, people move around, and one of the challenges that has existed for some time is that if a family support order is in place in one province, in Alberta there has been a sort of onerous process by which that parent can seek to enforce that order when in Alberta.

I actually had to deal with this a little bit myself, Madam Speaker, in my prepolitical life. I did a lot of work for school boards who were regularly dealing with parents who may have different custody arrangements and different orders in place and the challenges of ensuring that the proper documentation was there to enforce their rights as guardians and parents here in Alberta. Of course, under education law here in Alberta and under our statutes and regulations parents and guardians have very specific rights and responsibilities, but it has to be clear as to who is the legal guardian and who is the parent in order to access, for example, their child's personal information, to be able to access student information. Certainly, one can particularly imagine challenges around, you know, who can pick up the child after school if that child is seeing a counsellor or something like that. There are certainly a lot of privacy provisions.

I dealt with and supported many school boards who would be faced with a parent producing an order that was from another jurisdiction, and unfortunately, due to sort of the stringent requirements that we currently have in Alberta around those documents being sworn and certificated within Alberta in order to be valid, it caused, honestly, some significant confusion and challenges, both with guardians and with school boards and teachers and, frankly, of course, the implication that that had on the student.

I'm certain that there are people in this Assembly and Albertans who are dealing with it on a more regular basis, but I can just say that I appreciate how challenging that was, to not have those orders recognized properly in Alberta without going through, quite honestly, a number of significant, you know, hoops in order to prove that.

**Mr. Dach:** Intervention, Member?

**Ms Pancholi:** Oh, certainly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. Sorry. Interventions aren't allowed at this stage of the bill.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for seeking to intervene.

As I understand it – this actually was new to me; I was not aware of this – you know, Alberta is a little bit of an outlier in terms of requiring those strict requirements, so if the changes as proposed in Bill 5 will actually make it easier and bring Alberta more in line with other jurisdictions, I think that's definitely a positive step.

The specifics in Bill 5 are, you know, that it removes the need for documents that are produced by a guardian to be sworn documents, meaning that they don't have to be sworn by a notary or a commissioner, removing the need for certified documents and providing a little bit more flexibility. One key change in Bill 5 around this, which I think is important, is allowing for documents to be sent in either by e-mail or telephone transmission of documents.

I want to pause on that point just to note that there are opportunities from the pandemic where we have learned in terms of how to facilitate access to justice in a time when, of course, people couldn't physically attend courthouses. We saw that there was a lot of flexibility in terms of how, you know, documents could be provided and, of course, how testimony could be provided, and I certainly hope that some of that can be carried over not only in contentious sort of family law disputes such as this bill refers to – a bit of a tangent, Madam Speaker, but I'm recalling conversations that I had in my visits and discussions with folks at the Zebra centre, which is a fantastic organization, a child advocacy centre here in Edmonton.

Of course, there are many across the province that support children who have been abused and who are often having to give very sensitive testimony, and they do remarkable work at the Zebra centre to really support those children and wrap them in love and security so that they can feel comfortable talking about things that are really challenging. One of the things that I know the Zebra centre has advocated for is that during the pandemic children were allowed to testify remotely, from kind of the comfort of being in a place that was familiar, at the centre, with people around them that they knew and, of course, the support of fantastic support dogs at Zebra centre. They sort of certainly hoped that that kind of ability for children, in particular, to be able to provide testimony in more comfortable settings, where they feel safe and it's not as scary as being in a courtroom, they hope that can continue.

I just want to pause and say that we think about access to justice. This bill certainly opens up some avenues for increased access, but certainly there is lots we can do and lessons that we have learned from the pandemic to really support individuals who may be particularly vulnerable in being able to have their story heard, to present their evidence in a safe environment. Certainly, I hope this will pave the way for consideration of other amendments.

With respect to the other legislative changes in Bill 5, as the Minister of Justice noted, you know, there were some changes, of course, to the Legislative Assembly Act, which does provide, for example – I think there are a number of changes within the bill, but one of them is that it does allow the Speaker to, I guess, authorize Legislative Assembly security staff to be able to have weapons. I think that's certainly something that I'd like to know a little bit more about. I know that the Minister of Justice gave some examples of situations, both in 2014, that happened at Parliament, but also many of the members in this Assembly will be very familiar with the situation of what took place in 2019, where many of us were present when – it's very unfortunate that a man committed suicide right outside our building. I guess I'd like a little bit more information as to how weapons in that case or arming the LAS could have affected or changed or in any way altered the course of events that took place that day or certainly how they anticipate that it could going forward. I just have some questions about that piece, and hopefully we will get some clarification on that.

3:20

I do note that Bill 5 also makes changes to the Provincial Court Act which increase the threshold amount for which a claim, a civil claim, can go to the Provincial Court for resolution. The Provincial Court civil claim process is a lot more – I don't want to say informal because, of course, it is still a court process, but it is far less stringent than, say, going to the Court of King's Bench. I just want to note that's the first time I've actually said it out loud, and I said, "Court of King's Bench." I'm very happy that I caught that.

Rather than going to the Court of King's Bench, which can be, of course, a very intimidating process – we know that it's heavy on procedure as well as the requirement to have legal representation. For many years, of course, we have had this threshold where we're saying that civil claims can go to the Provincial Court if the claim is for an amount less than \$50,000. That's basically, like, a small claim sort of idea – right? – addressing those claims in a more informal setting to provide more access to justice for claimants.

I understand that under Bill 5 the threshold would change from \$50,000 to up to \$200,000. Again, increasing access to justice is really important, and it's an important thread. Certainly, I know it underlines many other challenges in the court system around access to justice, but I guess I'd support the idea of more people being able to resolve issues and legal claims in a more informal process that doesn't require being able to afford a lawyer to be able to have your matter heard and resolved.

I'm curious as to why \$200,000 is the threshold. What thinking went into that? Was it looking at the kinds of claims that have come forward, obviously potentially looking at the Court of King's Bench claims and seeing, you know, what difference it would make if the threshold was raised to \$200,000? Does that mean that a number of those claims would be moved, and what are those numbers? I'm hoping some assessment was done as to what that would mean. While that may relieve pressure, for example, on the Court of King's Bench – perhaps it will; perhaps it won't – if it relieves pressure, are there the corresponding resources available to the Provincial Court in order to accommodate what would likely be an expanded caseload?

As we know, our court systems are very strained, under enormous pressure, and we're seeing long delays in terms of cases being heard, so while it's important to provide access to justice, I would appreciate hearing sort of an assessment or any analysis that was done by the Minister of Justice or the government to determine whether our court system has the capacity to handle those increased claims. You know, if it's still going to be a very, very long delay, as they say, justice delayed is justice denied. We have to be cognizant of the additional pressures.

On that note, you know, when we talk about access to justice, Madam Speaker, I'm struck, of course, by the ongoing dispute – "dispute" is probably not even the proper word for it – the challenges right now around individuals being able to access justice through having a legal aid lawyer assigned to them. We know that right now the funding model that has been presented by government is unsatisfactory. We know that many Albertans are being denied their procedural and, frankly, constitutional rights to have a criminal matter heard and to be able to defend themselves by having a lack of access to legal aid.

I would certainly like to hear some significant steps being taken by this government to address that, to ensure that all Albertans, particularly those, when we're talking about the criminal justice system – failure to have proper representation could mean that somebody loses their liberty and is actually in jail. We need to make sure that those individuals have access to proper representation. It's a core, honestly, of both our criminal justice as well as our

democratic systems, protecting those procedural rights. I encourage the government to consider those issues as well.

One other change that has been made within Bill 5 is that we know that it makes changes to – I think these ones, I mean, are relatively noncontroversial – the Sale of Goods Act. I understand that section 25 of the act has been changed to align with what I understand is federal legislation, to remove the need to keep a record of the vehicle and registration that delivered the grain to an elevator and changes "track buyer" to "grain dealer." It seems to be a small – I will defer to anybody else who may have more expertise in this area to comment on the significance of that, but it does seem to be aligning with federal legislation and is something that, generally speaking, would be noncontroversial.

Another piece of legislation amended by Bill 5 is the Trustee Act. You know, we had the Trustee Act come before us I believe a couple of times in this session of the Legislature. I'm looking at my colleague the Member for St. Albert because I know she's very familiar with the Trustee Act as many individuals with disabilities and their families often rely upon that act for governing the estates and property of persons with disabilities.

I appreciate that in, you know, previous sessions – and forgive me, Madam Speaker; I can't remember exactly which one it was – we did have Bill 12 come forward, which made changes to the Trustee Act. I believe, if I recall correctly, those changes were really meant to reflect some work that had been done over a period of time, maybe even by I want to say the Alberta Law Reform Institute, but I'm not entirely sure that that's accurate. I know that there had been a lot of substantive legal assessment as to the changes that needed to be made to the Trustee Act to bring it up, to modernize it, to make it more reflective of the needs of individuals.

I believe this change in Bill 5 to the Trustee Act is really meant to clarify something that was put into Bill 12, because there was really concern that the changes would apply additional pressures onto the court system. As I understand it, Bill 5 would amend the Trustee Act to ensure that where there is no trustee in place, the trust will not fail. This is only when there is no trustee in place temporarily. Typically what would happen is that if there was not a trustee in place, the trust would essentially fail and would go back to the courts, and then the courts would have to, you know, appoint a new trustee. Really, that process of going back to the courts was adding additional pressure onto the court system.

The idea here, as I understand it, is that if a trustee is just temporarily not available or not named, rather than it going back to the courts, it could be held until such time as a new trustee is appointed without having to go back to the courts. Again, while I support removing pressure from the court system, I go back to: how does this align and how does this work with changes around the threshold for civil claims to go to the Provincial Court? Have we addressed those challenges in the court system?

I do want to mention, too, going back a little bit to the Provincial Court changes, that those changes around access to the civil claims system are often used in landlord and residential disputes. Not solely, of course, because we also do have the landlord-tenant residential dispute system. I totally misnamed that: the residential tenancy dispute system. Anyway, I got the name wrong. Simply put, this is where more significant matters that fall outside of that residential resolution dispute service lie. Again, what are the pressures, what are the implications for the Provincial Court system, and are they going to be significant?

**Member Irwin:** The residential tenancy dispute resolution service.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. Residential tenancy dispute resolution service. I could remember the acronym RTDRS.

**Member Irwin:** You did well.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you very much. I got sort of all the words but in the wrong order. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for that.

The last change that Bill 5 makes is to the Referendum Act. As many in this Assembly will recall, we, of course, saw the Referendum Act come before us. I believe that the intention of the amendment would be to clarify that bringing a resolution to this Assembly prior to a referendum would only happen in the case of a constitutional referendum. I guess my question on that is that it's hard not to think about these changes, Madam Speaker, without the context of what we have been sort of struggling with over the last few weeks, which is sort of a confused understanding, whether it be deliberately trying to circumvent democracy or whether it's simply members of the government cabinet not understanding the bills that they drafted and voted on or that they just simply didn't care. But, you know, it's hard to not think about the fact that there is a lack of understanding around when things do and do not come back to the Legislature from the government caucus.

Certainly, if we're talking about a motion from the Legislative Assembly to authorize a constitutional referendum, my question would be: why wouldn't we have a motion from the Assembly to authorize any referendum?

3:30

As we know, referendums require a significant amount of investment to do properly, to actually, you know, properly frame the question, to do public education campaigns to make sure that the public is aware. Of course, then there are the administrative costs related to actually having an election and having a referendum through the normal election process, maybe sometimes outside of an election process, too. That's entirely possible. So why wouldn't this Assembly get a chance to weigh in on a motion to approve any referendum that's going forward?

Those are certainly some of the questions that we have. I'm looking forward to a spirited and thoughtful debate by the members of the Assembly on Bill 5. A number of questions that we've asked related to, you know, the effect of changing some of the provisions around access to the provincial court system, around the referendums, why we shouldn't have a motion for all referendums that are brought forward, and really just sort of understanding the decisions that were made and providing clarity as I think we should all hold the government to account on those kinds of questions.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will cede my time, and I look forward to the debate in the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). I thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for much of her learned input regarding the various pieces of this bill. I think that most of the questions that members might have had were partly raised in debate by her, but I hope to bring a couple of little pieces of new elements that occurred to me to seek some clarification on myself.

The bill itself, of course, according to the Justice minister, was seeking to improve the day-to-day lives of Albertans. Of course, the day-to-day lives of Albertans right now are impacted by many, many things, not many of which are actually covered by this Bill 5, Madam Speaker, because indeed we're looking at the day-to-day lives being completely unaffordable. There are some of these elements of this bill, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), that might actually

make things more expensive to Albertans. Of course, by practice of, perhaps, sins of omission, the real things that could have been done to make life a little easier financially for Albertans were omitted or avoided.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud herself alluded to one that occurred to me. Of course, it's the legal aid funding model, that is in great dispute right now between the legal aid lawyers and the province. It reached an unprecedented boiling point where, in fact, the legal aid lawyers and their organizations were in the streets protesting in absolute desperation for their clients, who they serve, to be served by a legal aid system that actually functions because they've been able to attract legal aid lawyers to the system because they're paying them enough. I mean, the funding model is outdated. The legal aid lawyers have been making representations incessantly to the government without result and finally ended up on the streets. Indeed, there were the stated terms of the Minister of Justice that this legislation was seeking to improve the day-to-day lives and improve access to justice, then, in fact, this would seem to be a very natural aim of the bill, to address the legal aid funding model that is acutely affecting access to justice in Alberta today.

I served as a court intake worker, a volunteer, in the Solicitor General's department when I was going to university. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, some of the same problems then in terms of underfunding of the legal aid system are still current now. I'd never seen it get to the breaking point that it has been now. To see legal aid lawyers in the streets should have told the government that this needed to be urgently and immediately dealt with, and it's not happening. [interjection] Madam Speaker, an intervention. Go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I was very curious to just learn a little bit more, and perhaps you were going there, about your own work. I mean, you, like me, well – you're not a lawyer, but you did have some experience working with legal aid, and you started to say that, interestingly enough, some of the challenges remain the same. So I would just be curious to hear a little bit about what some of those challenges were. I don't know if you said when that was; I'm guessing it was a couple of years ago. Just what some of those challenges were.

I would imagine, as my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, we know that there are incredible challenges currently with legal aid that we're not seeing addressed by this government. I know I've heard from a number of lawyers who are certainly concerned about some of the significant challenges that folks across Alberta, including many of my constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, are encountering when it comes to the system of legal aid. So I would ask the member to elaborate a little bit more on that and to talk about some of those challenges because, again, as we've seen – I'm not getting cut off here – we're not seeing a whole lot of action. I think that's what it was . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The buzzer's not working.

This is just a great place for the Speaker to intervene and provide some caution in the remarks for the speaker to come, that they are relevant to the second reading of Bill 5. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I do see the relevance myself, because what the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was indeed speaking about was the omission of the legal aid funding model amendments that we were hoping to see in any Justice Statutes Amendment Act, and it's a glaring omission from this piece of legislation that I speak to this afternoon.

Now, the member mentioned that she wanted to hear a little bit about what my experience was in the court systems. It was a few years

ago; it was in the middle '80s. Nonetheless, my role as a volunteer court intake worker was to sit in courts of first appearance, courtrooms 63 and 65, and be present so that if indeed the judge presiding decided to pass a sentence of probation, I was there to ensure that the individual sentenced to probation did not leave the courtroom prior to signing probation orders and prior to me assigning that individual to a probation officer.

That time that I spent – and it was two, three days a week over the course of over two years, Madam Speaker, while attending university. It was morning courtrooms, and in that time frame, after hearing dozens and dozens of cases, what I witnessed time and time again was that many of the accused would attempt right in front of the judge, sometimes without duty counsel – because they hadn't taken the time or weren't aware that duty counsel or legal aid lawyers, as they were referred to, were available to discuss their situation with them, and even if they were, they had only moments to do so prior to the accused taking the stand and their case coming before the judge.

What would happen in many cases: just to be expedient, the accused would simply try to plead guilty, and that is no service to justice, for an individual to suffer consequences that were perhaps entirely avoidable by putting in a not-guilty plea and going to trial and perhaps having their case heard in a much broader light and having consequences which would have been much different than the judge would have available to him or her in sentencing if indeed the guilty plea was accepted. In many cases the judge would caution the individual about the guilty plea and arrange for the individual accused to speak to duty counsel and advise that they were going to be having that individual reserve their plea rather than going straight to a guilty plea, which would have life-changing consequences for that individual should they have that guilty plea accepted and have that indictment, a charge on their record for life. The opportunity has been missed in Bill 5, I think, to address a very acute justice issue, and that is the legal aid funding model in this province.

3:40

I was disappointed to see that, Madam Speaker, and perhaps the Minister of Justice in the near future will see fit to address this model. It has been not loud in the news lately. I hope to learn that the Minister of Justice is really intently negotiating and in fair negotiations with the legal aid lawyers' representatives to reach a resolution, a long-term resolution, which will satisfy the need for legal aid lawyers to be properly compensated and for them to be able to attract more individuals to the profession of serving in a legal aid capacity.

It certainly is a fundamental first entry right of individuals who are in the justice system who have no capacity to hire their own lawyer to have a legal aid lawyer appointed for them and to them and available to them right at the first appearance and ongoing throughout their case so that they actually do have access to justice, which was the minister's stated goal in bringing forward Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). That is one element that I wanted to expound upon a little bit. It was an omission by the Justice minister in Bill 5.

Something else that caught my attention with respect to this bill was the Sale of Goods Act amendment that was required by the minister's changes that were made to align with federal legislation under section 25, which removes the need to keep a record of the vehicle and registration to deliver grain to an elevator and changes "track buyer" to "grain dealer" in terms of definitions.

I imagine, Madam Speaker, that the point at which the legislation was made to actually require that a record of the vehicle and the registration used to deliver the grain to elevator was implemented that there was a reason behind that. At the moment I'm only speculating

upon it, but I had been, in the past, a critic for Agriculture, and I know that one of the things that I heard from producers is that indeed the fairness of the weighing of their grain is something that was in dispute. There were complaints about them being potentially cheated out of the weight. [interjection] I have another intervention.

**Member Irwin:** I know. I didn't actually want to interrupt, so I was going to sit back down, but you took the words out of my mouth. I was thinking, you know – as the critic for Agriculture I was going to ask you what your speculation was. As I was looking through this bill, I must admit I know very little about the Sale of Goods Act, but why would it be that it would remove the need to keep a record of the vehicle? I'm curious. I know there are a few farmers in this Chamber, but there are many UCP MLAs who represent a whole heck of a lot of farmers. I'm just hopeful. I'm having memories from yesterday of government members not speaking to their own bills. I'm hopeful that some of them will stand up and weigh in on some of these. Perhaps they could answer some of our questions. They could ask their own questions if they've all read the bill.

I would ask the Member for Edmonton-McClung to speculate a little bit more because, honestly, I'm curious, in a bill like this, justice statutes, why that piece would be included in there. I would love to learn a little bit more.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member, and I certainly do hope to learn more myself. The nature of my comments regarding this section are interrogative more than declarative. I hope to learn exactly what the reasoning is to remove the requirement to keep a record of the vehicle and registration that delivered grain to the elevator. It doesn't seem to be a huge load of red tape to unpack. The Minister of Justice seems to think that this is a red tape item that will smooth things out for farmers, but I can think of a couple of reasons myself why indeed even today one might want to continue recording the vehicle and registration that delivered grain to the elevator perhaps. If there was ever a dispute about the weight of that grain, Madam Speaker, and the payment to the farmer who delivered it, an important piece of the argument could rely upon the weight of the vehicle that actually delivered that grain, because, of course, as you weigh grain on the scales, you're looking at the GVW, or gross vehicle weight, of the vehicle, the empty weight versus the weight of the vehicle when it's loaded with grain. Of course, you subtract, and you end up with the weight of the actual load of grain.

Indeed, if there is a dispute over the weight, it would be very good to have, I would think, a record of the vehicle and the registration of that vehicle that delivered the grain to the elevator. That makes me wonder: are we losing an opportunity here to maintain the integrity of the weight or the ability of a farmer to dispute a payment on the basis of an inaccurate weight, removing the ability of that farmer, that producer to verify indeed that the weight was incorrect based partly upon the weight of the vehicle that was used to deliver that grain and that sat on the scales to actually ascertain the weight of the grain in that truck?

I'd like to really hear more detail on that, Madam Speaker. I'd like to hear who actually was asking for this. Of course, if something like this has changed in legislation in the Sale of Goods Act under Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), in all likelihood it didn't come while the minister was brushing his teeth. It probably came as a result of some lobby group, farmers, an agricultural organization. It could be the grain buyers. I'm not sure who actually came up with this idea to ask the minister to make this change, but it would be very informative to see from what end of the grain world this came. That I hope to learn.

Also, there's another aspect to this, Madam Speaker. As the critic for transportation I'm very interested in the improvement and the

maintenance of our roads, particularly our rural roads. As you may know – you’re from a rural area – I have rural backgrounds as well, and I know that the country roads that serve our agricultural producers are fairly soft, especially in the spring. But in the fall, when a lot of the loads are being delivered to the elevator, they still have maximum load limits on those rural roads, on the county roads, and even on our highways.

I’m wondering if section 25, the removal of the need to keep a record of the vehicle and the registration that delivered the grain to the elevator, indeed limits the ability to enforce – or an opportunity, at least, at that point to enforce – the legal load limits that a truck might carry. It’s certainly an opportunity to see if somebody is trying to sort of double up on their load and make one or two fewer trips to get their grain to the elevator by overloading the truck beyond what the weight limits of the roads leading to the elevator might be. It’s one way of certainly ascertaining that somebody was carrying too heavy a load for the roads. That’s a question that I have as well: have we lost an enforcement tool to protect our rural roads by not requiring that the vehicle that delivered the grain to the elevator record the registry and the type of vehicle that delivered the grain? So questions that I have that occurred to me as I was reading through the legislation. [interjection] Go ahead, Member.

**Member Irwin:** My final intervention. Yeah, I just wanted to get on the record here, too, because I was perusing how the Sale of Goods Act was amended there. You know, there’s a little bit more in the bill itself, but again it talks about presently that “the buyer acquires a good title to the grain” and “keeps a record [of] the kind of vehicle,” that sort of thing. Again, being someone who’s from a rural area as well and who’s lived in various parts of rural Alberta, I’d be curious and wanted to put on the record my appreciation for your speculation around the impact on rural roads. That’s something that – oh, man, some of those rural Albertans get pretty fired up about the roads, as they should because some of those rural back roads in particular are quite hard to navigate.

Again, I’d like to ask the government members to let us know, because we’re quite curious, particularly around section 25 and the amendments there. I just would love to know some of the background there, and again perhaps some of those members from rural areas will be able to give us a little bit more information so that we, I and the Member for Edmonton-McClung, aren’t left to speculate.

3:50

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member. I think that’s the purpose of the debate this afternoon, to seek clarifying answers to questions we have about the legislation brought forward. Of course, we’re all intent on protecting the integrity and safety of our roadbeds, whether they be rural or major highways, and the weight restrictions are there for a reason.

It makes me wonder if indeed we are, as I said, giving up an enforcement opportunity to confirm that overweight vehicles are not travelling on our rural roads, particularly the ones that are leading from farm to elevator, in many cases where they are gravel roads, or we used to call them macadam roads, which are of a softer roadbed and more prone to damage from overweight vehicles. Of course, that’s why we have load limits and road limits in the spring, to protect the roads.

In the fall heavy loads are travelling on grain trucks going to elevators to allow farmers to get their grain to market. We all, as a community of producers in Alberta, want to make sure the roads are protected and that nobody is breaking the rules and putting the roads at risk. This would be one way of, I think, keeping a record of overweight vehicles or determining if overweight vehicles were

actually coming to the elevator. I’m wondering if that element of the question was being considered by the Justice minister when he indeed formulated this change to the act to remove the need to keep a record of the vehicle and the registration that delivered the grain to the elevator.

Hopefully, there will be some answers forthcoming to those questions. I hesitate to find how this bill in fact will, quote, unquote, improve the day-to-day lives of Albertans. The Minister of Justice had that as his head goal or leading outcome that he wanted to achieve by this bill. Many of the items here are housekeeping items. I know that the changes that were brought forward . . . [Mr. Dach’s speaking time expired] I will continue my thoughts later.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We’re having some buzzer problems today, so forgive me if my interjections are a little bit odd.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre on second reading of Bill 5.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). Now, as my colleagues have been noting, there are a number of different changes that are put forward in this act, a relatively brief bill covering a few different things. One that stood out to me, of interest, as I was taking a look through things is some of the changes to the Legislative Assembly Act, changes to bring Alberta in line with some other jurisdictions in terms of allowing for the arming of security personnel that are under the purview of the Speaker.

Now, certainly, we’re aware of some of the history of this place. We’ve all been over at the gold elevator at the front of the building, where we, in fact, have a bullet hole from an individual many years ago who was able to sneak a weapon into the Legislature and get off a shot. Certainly, we’re aware of the challenges that have arisen over the last few years. We’ve seen the changes to security here around the Legislature Grounds, a reinforcement of the gate arms at the gatehouse to the east of the Legislature, and some of the other changes that have been brought in. Certainly, we deeply appreciate the consideration of the safety of members, those that are visiting here at the Legislature, and we certainly appreciate the important work that all of our sheriffs do.

Certainly, I’m looking forward to reading a bit more and better understanding some of these changes, how it’s operating in other jurisdictions, and will be taking the opportunity to delve into that a bit more, but one thing that also stood out to me as part of this provision is that what’s included here in these changes is that the Speaker will be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers, but that will be clarified in changes to the Police Act for increased civilian oversight of law enforcement personnel. Now, the reason that stood out to me, Madam Speaker, is because we are still waiting to see those changes to the Police Act.

Now, this is a process that began during our time in government, broad stakeholder engagement on the future of policing that began in June 2018 and began to move forward since then, and this is a process that has been going on ever since on a very important issue, Madam Speaker. This is regarding how we set up our civilian oversight of policing services and the discipline process for officers of the law. Of course, we have had a great deal of discussion as a society about this issue, again noting that this is something that is included here as part of this bill, noting that a future piece of this bill is going to be adjusting for those changes to the Police Act. This is a process that is still in place and is still ongoing under this government.

I know that it has moved forward, Madam Speaker. Again, it began in 2018 and sort of moved on up through the election, where

in that time they gathered perspectives from Albertans to determine some of the critical areas of the Police Act, the police service regulation, and Alberta provincial policing standards that needed to be amended or reformed, looking specifically to hear from folks about how we go about modernizing policing, how we ensure Albertans feel safe and confident that justice is being done and ensure that police are accountable to the communities that they protect, much as it discusses in the bill here that for the current time the Speaker will be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers, but that will be clarified when there are changes to the Police Act, of which I am speaking now.

Now, Albertans shared their thoughts on policing under this government, so under the new ministers of Justice, through an online survey from December 3, 2020, to January 4, 2021. According to the information online from the GOA, in that period the Alberta government held 13 engagement sessions that were attended by approximately 200 different organizations representing law enforcement, health and social services sectors, municipalities, and Indigenous communities, and I would imagine, perhaps, that some of the Alberta sheriffs were indeed involved in those conversations as well.

In addition, there were about 15,000 Albertans that completed a public survey that covered several topics related to law enforcement such as the role of police in the community, processes for handling complaints from the public, and officer discipline, which, again, I noted is being discussed in the act here, in this case where officers would see discipline should there be concern of wrongdoing, first an investigation that would be undertaken by the Speaker, of course to later be clarified by changes to the Police Act for increased civilian oversight, which I'm speaking of here.

Now, as of February 23, 2021, the then Minister of Justice, now minister of— and I forget the exact title because we've had a number of changes— essentially labour under a different name, appointed Dr. Temitope Oriola, an associate professor of criminology at the University of Alberta, who has been appointed for a six-month term. He was appointed for a six-month term on February 23, 2021, to provide independent advice to the government as it weighed those policy options raised in the ongoing stakeholder discussions that had begun the previous fall. Now, Madam Speaker, that six-month term, of course, ended last year. The report from Dr. Oriola was delivered to the minister, so that has been on the minister's desk. I would certainly hope there has been some progress made, but so far we have not seen any further movement or any further action from the government regarding these important reforms, which again relate directly . . . [interjection] Yes.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you for allowing me to intervene there. I know you were on quite a roll there. I really appreciate your digging into the Police Act a little bit. You know, the Member for Edmonton-McClung dug into some of the other aspects of the bill. Again, I'm hoping that some of the members in the Chamber will be able to weigh in, especially on the Police Act piece.

You, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, have done so much consultation, obviously, with your race-based data bill and pieces like that. You've heard from a lot of community members, and I know you've consulted with Dr. Oriola as well. I'm just sort of curious if you can expand a little bit on what you're hearing from folks in the community. You know, like you said, there's really not been any action from this government to date when it comes to what we're seeing right now, actually, in Bill 5, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). So if the member could expand a little bit on some of those pieces, which, of course, Madam Speaker, are relevant to the bill in front of us.

I'm not sure if the timer is working again, but I will pass it back to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

4:00

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for that question and those comments. Certainly, I will touch on what she was talking about in terms of what I'm hearing from the public in regard to this. Again, we are talking about Bill 5 here, this provision under Bill 5 where the Speaker will be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers to later be clarified by changes in the Police Act for increased civilian oversight of law enforcement personnel, which has been part of this ongoing review with government. Indeed, as the member noted, there has not been significant action or movement or, indeed, announcement from government in some time.

I can understand, Madam Speaker, perhaps why that is. We know the government has been wrapped up in a considerable amount of its own drama and intrigue, which led to the leadership race and the installation of a new Premier and, of course, now an interesting preoccupation with the job-killing sovereignty act, and all of that internal turmoil and rancour, frankly, has led to some distraction of the government from perhaps some of the more important issues, which we're of course discussing here around Bill 5 and that review of the Police Act. What we do know is indeed that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. I hesitate to draw the correlation between the Police Act and Bill 5, which is the bill we're debating right now. Maybe it's time to course correct here. I'll give you the opportunity to do as such, but I'm having a hard time finding the relevance. Please continue with your debate.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will attempt to continue to show relevance. Of course, we are talking about Bill 5 here. Under Bill 5 the provision that they are making changes to bring Alberta in line with other jurisdictions which allow for the arming of security personnel under the purview of the Speaker and within this bill, again, a new section is clarifying that the Speaker is responsible for the security of the Assembly and, allowing for the continuation of the current system where both sheriffs and legislative security have jurisdiction in different areas as per agreement with the minister of public safety, that the legislative security personnel powers and duties will align with those of peace officers and officers not put under the act to maintain the independence and the jurisdiction of the Speaker, and of course, again, the connection, then, with the Police Act, which I've been discussing, which is that the Speaker will be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers, but that will later be clarified by changes to the Police Act for increased civilian oversight of law enforcement personnel.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Of course, the Speaker is currently responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers, or at least that is what this legislation is proposing. What I am discussing is if indeed this is perhaps the correct approach. Is this the way we should go? We are still awaiting that review from the Minister of Justice or perhaps the minister of public safety. I'm not quite sure how the two are correlating or how their duties are divided on this particular issue. There, again, has been a bit of confusion as we've had the new alignment of ministries and certainly nearly two-thirds of the current government caucus appointed as either ministers or parliamentary secretaries.

That said, as I was discussing, there certainly has been robust public discussion since 2020 and the unfortunate murder of George Floyd about the role of police in some aspects of public interaction, particularly when we're talking about things like wellness checks

for individuals in mental distress, which we know that at times our officers, the sheriffs, here at the Legislature have in fact had to deal with. These are real challenges that we know that we need to consider.

With that, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is asking what I've been hearing from the community. Certainly, we've seen that there has been growing discussion about how public dollars are allocated to promote the safety of individuals in the public, whether that should be better allocated to police or to other community organizations on those particular aspects of the work and how those two can interact. Of course, that's a portion that we would perhaps consider, certainly recognizing that the officers here at the Legislature would be in a bit of a different position in terms of their interaction in that regard. We recognize that that debate has become quite heated. Certainly, at times it has become a very divisive debate. Certainly, I have seen that here in my position as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre and some of the discussions with city council and the Edmonton Police Service, and I have heard from constituents about this.

I think one way that we could certainly help defuse some of that tension is by looking at some of these reforms, which, again, are noted here as we're looking at the Speaker sort of temporarily taking on the responsibility for these investigations of wrongdoings by officers but which may shift in the future with these changes to the Police Act, recognizing that this is something where law enforcement and the public and those calling for reform are pretty much in agreement. These are pieces where the police themselves, to the best of my understanding, and most law enforcement bodies no longer want to be responsible for these areas of oversight. They would like to see some form of independent body in existence to be able to review when there is an accusation of wrongdoing against an officer of the law and indeed to consider how that discipline should go forward. In this case, of course, we know we are taking about, under Bill 5, the Speaker being responsible for those investigations of the wrongdoings by officers, but that may be future clarified when we see the completion of the review of the Police Act.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the level of distraction, the level of drama, that has gone on under the government over the last year and a half has put us in a position where some of these important things to the people of Alberta are getting put off. I had really hoped to see those changes come forward in this legislative session. Instead, what we have is Bill 5, where we have it briefly touched upon as we consider how yourself as the Speaker would be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers, but looking at how that may change under the future changes of the Police Act, we do not have those pieces of the Police Act here for consideration in this Assembly. [interjection] Yes, Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I just wanted to thank him for clearly making that connection between what we see in Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, and the connection to the Police Act.

I think he's posing to this Chamber some very important questions. You know, why is it that we still have not yet heard from the review? Again, I would really love if the minister responsible for – I may get his title wrong – public safety, perhaps other things, could give us an update. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has noted, he's heard from a lot of his constituents. I have as well, similarly conversations with municipal leaders, too. It's a little bit interesting that there has been radio silence, but as that member noted, we can imagine, with the great deal of chaos inherent in this government, that there's been no action.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for those comments. It occurs to me as well, you know, that this is a power that is being awarded, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I respect the work that Speakers of the Legislature have done and certainly recognize that they assume many of these responsibilities in terms of essentially being a de facto head of HR or sort of responsible for all the staff of the Legislative Assembly as well and sort of take on some of that role and quite a bit of authority and responsibility with that. Certainly, it is a significant new responsibility to ask that the Speaker would be responsible for investigations of wrongdoings by officers at the Legislature.

Now, I certainly believe that the Speaker would be able to avail themselves, I'm sure, of many resources and expertise and other things should that be the case and should they have to undertake such an investigation. I imagine that has occurred in the past when there have been other requests for investigations or concerns that have been raised about staff at the Legislative Assembly. But I would say that this takes on another level of responsibility for the Speaker in so doing.

I think that moving forward with that review of the Police Act, in that context, would be very helpful as well in providing that clarity and perhaps being able to provide an alternative in line with what we will hopefully see for other police forces, other law enforcement bodies in the province of Alberta where we will see increased civilian oversight though, again, recognizing that the legislative area is somewhat different from, you know, regular policing, that sort of thing, in terms of public interaction, some of those other aspects, but then, again, recognizing that, of course, our sheriffs here at the Legislature – the Legislature is here in the heart of our city, in the middle of Edmonton-City Centre, where we have seen an increased number of individuals who live houseless, where we have seen great impacts from the ongoing drug poisoning crisis. Certainly, I'm sure those are issues that have impacted not just across the downtown of our city but also here on the Legislature Grounds. So, certainly, we want to be able to ensure that as part of all of these conversations we are being able to provide the best support we can for the important work that our sheriffs do and do very well, I will say. I've certainly appreciated them in all their interactions. [interjection] Yes, the Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**4:10**

**Mr. Deol:** Well, thank you, hon. member, for giving me the opportunity to add some comments and for providing the information. As you recall, hon. member, we were invited to the event in Calgary during the past month – actually, the month of October. Similarly, what I was hearing in my riding – and I believe you have had many, many meetings, actually, into the similar stakeholders' concerns – they are concerned about the cuts to the Human Rights Commission, particularly cuts to human rights education funding. Particularly what had happened, the process of appointments of the Human Rights Commission itself really actually impacted not only their ability to seek justice in a situation but also the way they were frightened. They were afraid.

Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, I appreciate the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Meadows. I certainly recognize the Alberta Human Rights Commission would be another one of those independent bodies which is providing oversight, to the best of my knowledge has perhaps less involvement when it comes to law enforcement but certainly is an important part of protecting the rights of Albertans in many areas. Ultimately, what we are talking about here is a question of public safety.



The provision in this, again, I understand is that this is something that has been done in other jurisdictions, brings Alberta in line with other jurisdictions to allow for the arming for security personnel under the purview of the Speaker. Certainly, I will be undertaking the opportunity, then, to review some of these other jurisdictions. Having just received the bill recently, I haven't had the chance to delve into that yet, but I'll certainly be interested to see how that has come into practice in other jurisdictions, what steps might have been taken.

Certainly, you know, this puts me back in mind, I suppose, of the gentleman that made his way into the Parliament building back in I believe it was 2014, under the time of Prime Minister Harper. I remember the concerns that were raised there. Indeed, I remember visiting the Parliament that fall for the first time, in September of 2014. I believe that was the year because that was when I took the trip. I recall sort of considering and just for the first time really experiencing that level of security and how things were protected and indeed being warned as I, in taking pictures, wandered a little too closely to the doors of the Chamber.

I certainly recognize the importance of this in the current atmosphere, where we find, unfortunately, increasingly heated political rhetoric, both from politicians and from individuals, certainly, as with the events that we saw, unfortunately, during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, where some have chosen to fan the flames of conspiracy and, unfortunately, continue to do so, and that can put us in a position, unfortunately then, where that does impact the safety of legislators and potentially all of us here at the Legislative Assembly. So this is an item worthy of consideration, and I appreciate it being brought forward as part of Bill 5.

I look forward to the opportunity to delve a bit deeper into this act and some of the other provisions that are put forward and get a better sense perhaps as we do of where the government's next steps will be in regard to that review of the Police Act and its importance to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 5, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). This bill actually makes quite a few changes. Some are minor, some are important, and some are really worth paying attention to because even if they seem a step in the right direction, that needs still a lot of explanation how its implementation or lack of implementation is going to impact the people of the province.

Section 1 of this bill makes changes to actually speed up the process to bring child support orders in line with most of the other provinces, I believe. It says the other provinces, but it doesn't say, like, all the other provinces or most of the provinces. It removes some of the requirements in place right now so the support can be in place in a speedy process. It removes the need for sworn documents, and it removes the need of certified documents to provide flexibility for certification.

Also, the section allows that – you know, definitely, it's important these days that people can transmit their documents electronically via e-mail or also confirm and testify via telephone. It removes the requirement of statutory certified copies and provides a designated authority the ability to require certified copies if determined as necessary.

It clarifies section 19, the court's ability to set aside an order, and it provides the ability to determine if an order is not authentic and parameters for doing so.

It makes changes, as I heard from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, our former critic, as well, for Agriculture,

who raised some questions around this change, in section 25 that remove the need to keep a record of the vehicle and registration that delivers the grain to the elevator and changes "track buyer" to "grain dealer". We understand this change as we read it, but it would have been really helpful . . . [interjection] Yeah. Go ahead, Member.

**Member Irwin:** Sorry to cut you off mid-phrase there. You know, of course, the member, for those opposite not paying attention, was referring to the Sale of Goods Act, section 25, and some changes around grain being delivered to elevators.

I noted earlier that, you know, the Member for Edmonton-McClung was left speculating as to why those changes would be needed in this Justice Statutes Amendment Act. I can honestly admit that I can't quite figure it out. Without referring to the presence or absence of members, there are some new folks in this Chamber who most certainly represent rural Albertans, many of them, in fact. So I would just again urge these government members to weigh in on their own pieces of legislation and perhaps answer some of the questions that not just folks like me and members of the NDP have but the public as well, your stakeholders, your key stakeholders, in fact.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Member. You know, well said. That was my concern and question around this change to section 25.

You know, it's good to learn, and I think the members of the government caucus have a great opportunity as well as I'll be happy to learn and listen more from the Minister of Justice on how this change actually helps and who gets help, like, who needs help from this, and how it's going to change the process. Who were the stakeholders? What was the consultation around this? Who, basically, requested this change in this piece of legislation we are discussing here?

We just understand that the requirements to keep the records have been waived. The question around this to members like us is that we do not know the specific questions, concerns, or the advocacy behind this, what this change is going to exactly do – help the dealer or help the registered owner? – or actually where this demand was coming from.

4:20

Also, this bill makes changes to the new Trustee Act in section 26. This act removes the need for a trust to be transferred to the courts if there is no trustee and clarifies that in these situations the trust remains intact until a new trustee is appointed. I don't see, like, much of the concern as also being a trustee of some of the accounts. [interjection] Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. Go ahead. Yeah, I'll take your intervention.

**Ms Gray:** Yeah. Well, thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows. I appreciate the comments he's putting on the record on Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). I know that as I'm looking through Bill 5, I see much that I am certainly supportive of.

He was talking about the Trustee Act changes. One of the things that I think is really positive is that the proposed change is intended to make sure that a trust won't fail if there is temporarily no trustee. In listening to the member, I know, I think, I'm supportive of this. I think that's a really important move and something that has needed some clarity. In looking at Bill 5 overall and seeing some very positive things, this Trustee Act change to ensure there will not be a failure when there is temporarily no trustee strikes me as a very positive change. I was curious if the Member for Edmonton-Meadows might agree with that and have any thoughts from his constituents.

Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, for asking your question. Yeah. You know, as I said, I do have a situation where I am the trustee of an account. By saying this, that is a very kind of comprehensive and complex process that takes, actually, time. It takes months and months to get established and get through the process. Definitely, actually, this change, I recall, was from Bill 12 from the spring session. This change certainly is helpful if in the situation where the trustee expires or the trustee is no longer there to deliver his responsibilities. For the new trustee the same whole process is going to start again, so it's a bit of help to bring the new trustee in with a smooth or kind of a fast process, I would say. So I definitely support this actual amendment and the change in this piece of legislation.

Also, as I said, this legislation impacts, actually, a number of sections in the law. One of them makes it clear about the nonconstitutional referendums and constitutional referendums. It says in section 3 of this piece of legislation in clarification that a constitutional referendum requires the passage of a motion by the Legislative Assembly prior to being ordered. Some of them also clarify that nonconstitutional referendums do not require a motion to be passed by the Assembly first. Yeah. On this it would also be quite helpful to know where this change is coming from and who demanded this, who was actually working for it, and why this minister or the government House members, like – anyone who has better knowledge on this is most welcome to step up. [interjection] Thank you. I'll give it to you once again, Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Meadows, who's going through and doing quite a thorough discussion about Bill 5. Certainly, the change to the Referendum Act is a piece that also caught my eye because a referendum is such an expensive and wide-impacting thing to have happen in the province, and the change that we see in Bill 5, which I'm not opposed to, essentially means that there will not be a role for this Assembly, this Chamber, when it comes to determining types of referendums unless, of course, if I've understood this correctly, it's around a constitutional referendum, so making clear that only constitutional questions require a resolution to be made in the Legislature. I'm surprised by this one but looking forward to the discussion at Committee of the Whole in particular. Prior to this for referendums there needed to be a discussion here in the Chamber and MLAs needed to be part of that.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Member, once again. Yeah. That was exactly the kind of question I was, you know, putting forward and would love to hear. I know we will have an opportunity to discuss this bill probably in the next coming days as well, but I would love to have clarity on this because this is a very important change in this piece of legislation. That is concerning because a referendum itself – you know, with the name “referendum” kind of you can understand the impression and impact it will put forward in society when it says “nonconstitutional.” It probably seems like nonconstitutional is not something very important, but it affects the society, actually, in many different ways.

Why would somebody put forward the referendum if it is not going to affect anything? You know, who can bring this kind of referendum forward? Who is going to decide the authenticity or ethical behaviour behind this lobby or the referendum that is going to be called without it being discussed in the House by the representatives in this House, the legislative members? These kinds of behaviours are, to my understanding – I don't know. I really need to learn. People can choose these kinds of opportunities to just – I don't know – impact or set narratives or change narratives. Maybe it wouldn't do much directly changing or challenging the Constitution, but also it will

definitely impact the society and the popular narrative in the society. So why would somebody do it? Like, where exactly is this coming from? It will be very, very helpful if – I will be able to provide much better feedback on this if we know this. What was the reason behind these sort of changes?

Another change that is really concerning – you know, I can't really say exactly good or bad itself – that it says is that what is being purported in sections 3 and 5 changes the responsibility to the Minister of Justice, and section 9 allows cabinet actually to increase the maximum decision under civil courts from \$50 K to \$200 K. This would be the highest level in the country, so that is concerning, what really triggered this government to do this, because this is not common practice. This is not common practice, but I would love to hear more around these concerns from the minister in the coming days or from any government House members.

With this, I will conclude my remarks and also move to adjourn debate on this one. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:30

Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

[Debated adjourned December 6: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak at second reading of Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. I paused a little bit to allow some time for government members to potentially rise and speak on Bill 4. We've heard repeatedly from members of this Assembly how important they claim health care is to them now. It's not Bill 1 – Bill 1 is, of course, the sovereignty act – but certainly we've heard talk at least from the Minister of Health that he cares deeply about health care, so I thought for sure these government members would be eager to speak to addressing Bill 4, which is an attempt, I believe, by the government to amend for the years of chaos that they have initiated and which we are all suffering as a result of in this province.

It began with the legislative change that Bill 4 is seeking to amend, so it's quite a shock to me that none of them would, like, perhaps want to stand up and apologize to Albertans for their decision to allow a provision, Mr. Speaker, that gave the government of Alberta the sole authority to terminate unilaterally a contract with doctors. Of course, they introduced that in fall of 2019 and then quickly exercised that authority to end the contract. Simply on their own volition, with no input, they unilaterally ended that contract. I can't remember the precise timing of when they exercised that and how far before the onslaught of the pandemic it was. I believe maybe a month or two. [interjection] February 2020.

Oh, that's a time that many of us will remember as the time when a global health crisis came and affected all Albertans, whether it be their health, their business, their schools, their kids – everybody was affected – and that mere weeks before, when, of course, many of us knew the writing was on the wall with respect to this pandemic as well, many experts had said was coming: that's when the United Conservative Party government decided that they would begin a war with doctors.

Now, I just want, for the context of the Assembly, to read again what that provision was in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and that was in Bill 21. In fall of 2019 the government introduced section 40.2 to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. That provision, subsection (2), allowed the Lieutenant Governor in Council by order to terminate an agreement, the AMA agreement, which would be the

Alberta Medical Association agreement, or any other agreement between the Crown in right of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association or any other person respecting compensation matters. That's really what it did. It allowed them to just tear up that bill.

Now, what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that I decided to go down what ended up being a very dark path of reviewing the debate on Bill 21 in the fall of 2019, multiple days of debate on Bill 21, as some of the members may remember. Actually, they may not remember, but I'll get to that next. This was actually an omnibus piece of legislation. It contained many of the most egregious changes that this government brought in early in their mandate. There were many more egregious decisions to come, of course, but this was one of the first bills of some really outrageous decisions by the government, who decided to, for example, balance our budget or seek to try to balance the budget because they also actually had increased the debt significantly and lost 50,000 jobs by this time.

But they sought to balance the budget on the backs of people with AISH, for example. Bill 21 took me down that dark path of remembering the hypocrisy of the members in this Legislature on the government side who had just previously, a year prior, when they were in opposition, stood in favour of indexing AISH and spoken about the need for compassion for those individuals who are on AISH and then, in Bill 21, decided in one fell swoop to deindex AISH.

Now, what was remarkable to me, Mr. Speaker, as I was looking back on the Bill 21 debate to see if I could find some statements made by government members on why they thought being able to unilaterally terminate the AMA agreement was so important – as I went down that path of reading the Bill 21 debate, it was remarkable. Oh, gosh, there were at least 12, 13 days of debate on this bill. Not one single government member other than the Minister of Finance when he introduced these egregious bills, who, of course, smoothed over . . .

**Member Irwin:** Not one.

**Ms Pancholi:** But not one single member . . . [interjection] Yes. I'll give way.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you for giving way to me, to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Is it déjà vu? It's just incredibly intriguing that this government, that these UCP members, who I know – and I talked about this at great length yesterday. I know they are hearing about health care from their constituents because I've talked to their constituents. I've talked to their constituents in Edmonton-South West, in Medicine Hat – oh, my goodness, where else? – Sherwood Park, in many ridings in Calgary, in St. Albert and Morinville because I've knocked on doors. And the fact that this . . .

**Ms Pancholi:** Leduc.

**Member Irwin:** Leduc. The list goes on. I've been all over this province. The list goes on.

The point is that you are hearing about health care. Spruce Grove-Stony Plain: I'm getting CCed on a number of e-mails to Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. Listen, the point is that health care is a concern to all of your constituents, and the fact that these UCP MLAs refuse to speak up and either support or, you know, not even try to defend their bills is quite alarming to me. I just had to get that on the record.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I agree. It seems to be that this is a pattern of behaviour. They couldn't stand up and say why they thought it was okay to deindex AISH and why it was okay for them to be able to unilaterally end the agreement with doctors, which started the war

on doctors and our health care systems and our health care professionals at a time of a pandemic. They didn't want to speak about it then, and they don't want to speak about it now. They don't want to say: I'm sorry; we were wrong; we were wrong to do that. But the thing, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans know that they were wrong, and they do know they were wrong, because this is why they're trying to sneak this in. I notice, too, by the way, that there is very little eye contact being made right now, many, many members avoiding looking up and acknowledging that they thought it was fine.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud, in Edmonton-Whitemud, to represent a constituency that actually has a lot of physicians, has a lot of doctors, a lot of nurses, a lot of respiratory therapists, a lot of OTs and SLPs, like, a lot of health care workers. You know, as I door-knock in my constituency, there has been a consistent theme that I've seen. First of all, we know – and we've heard these stories, and I've heard it first-hand from my constituents – of doctors who said: "You know what? I could not go on practising under this government. It was an affront to everything that I have done as a medical professional." They chose to retire early.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was door-knocking, and I came across a doctor who said: "You know what? I would love to vote for you in the spring; however, I'm moving. I'm moving to B.C. I don't want to practise medicine in this province anymore." By the way, B.C. is undergoing a massive recruitment campaign, which will be taking Alberta health care professionals because – guess what – health care professionals do not want to work in Alberta given the circumstances of this government and the complete disrespect. I can't recall how many pieces of commentary I heard that said that the decision of this government to go to war on Alberta doctors and health care professionals during a pandemic was quite possibly one of the most foolish decisions ever.

That is probably why, when we saw that, we saw approval levels for this government and the former Premier be the lowest in the country. I mean, that, of course, and there's the Best Summer Ever and the extremely high numbers of people who died in Alberta per capita from COVID due to this government's lack of action or delayed action. That had real implications for people's lives, Mr. Speaker.

But that decision to not veer away, to not take a step back and think about what the province was actually experiencing but to pursue doggedly an ideological agenda absent evidence and fact – well, actually, we're seeing a repeat of that behaviour. We see it with the introduction of Bill 1, the sovereignty act. These folks just don't seem to learn. They don't seem to even take responsibility for their actions. None of them seem to be standing up to be able to say: we made a mistake. It's all fine and good that they want to bring forward this Bill 4 and remove the ability to do what they should have never empowered themselves to be able to do in the first place.

4:40

I've reviewed the debate on Bill 21 and saw speaker after speaker from the opposition stand up and speak out against both the deindexing of AISH as well as the decision to unilaterally end, be able to terminate, the contract with doctors. In fact, I want to give credit to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for his very clear conviction, during debates on Bill 21, about the impact this would have on the trust and the relationship. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the health care challenges that our province faces right now, they all revolve around trust and value and respect. It's why we have an incredible shortage of health care workers. [interjection] Yes. I'll give way.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member. I'm pleased to intervene to ask a quick question involving trust and the trust that is dissolving faster

every day in light of the government's inability to actually paint a clear picture of what's happening to the number of doctors in the province. Of course, we in the opposition point out that doctors are leaving the province. The government responds by saying: oh, no; we've got more doctors in the province than we've ever had before. In fact, the number of doctors supposedly should be increasing as we increase in population. I'm wondering indeed, since there is simply a real huge doctor shortage, because many, many people can't find a family doctor, what the government's picture is lacking, in your estimation, in terms of describing the real picture about doctors in the province and the numbers that are here and those that are leaving and why there's still a shortage.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the member for the question. You know, actually, when I think about what the challenges are in terms of the trust in the relationship, I think about just a few minutes ago. When I mentioned that I'm proud to represent a constituency that has a lot of doctors and health care professionals who work in it, some government member over there scoffed about that and made a little noise like: oh, of course, they do.

That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly the problem. This government has disdain for the professionals who are on the front lines of our health care system. They express it in every way, and they expressed it legislatively in Bill 21 back in 2019. What they said was: we don't care about your working conditions. Let's not forget that it wasn't just the ending of the contracts, right? Of course, there was all the billing codes and the Minister of Health at the time, who was on driveways screaming at doctors or going after doctors and finding their personal phone numbers and calling them up to berate them.

Then it was, you know, just the idea that we currently have a Premier who talks about the fact that the health care shortage was manufactured, which completely flies in the face of the everyday lived experience of health care professionals, not even just during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker. These health care professionals are strained. They have not had a break. They haven't had a break, and it is continuing, one public health crisis piled on top of the other. It's happening right now with children's health care.

We have a government that has disdain for science and for medical expertise. We have a Premier who won't even stand up and encourage Albertans to get a flu shot. She sends her Minister of Health to say it because he'll say it – that's great to hear – but the Premier won't. The Premier has been given multiple opportunities to stand up and encourage Albertans to get a flu shot, and she won't do it. What she's saying to health care professionals is: "I don't care if more people get sick. What I'll do is that I'll make sure that there's medication. That's a key issue."

**Mr. Rutherford:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Relevance Imputing Motives

**Mr. Rutherford:** On 23(b) – we are not on topic; I think we are very far off it – and also on 23(i). To say that the Premier doesn't care if people get sick, I think, is a comment that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud should apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On 23(b) I have to disagree. I've been listening to the member. It has been related to

Bill 4 but also the events that have led up to Bill 4, which, yes, can get broad, but we are at second reading. I think it's all been in order. That having been said, I did not actually hear the comment under 23(i) that the member is referring to, that specific language, so I will have to defer to you, Mr. Speaker, if there was a point of order. I would suggest likely not, but I will leave it to you.

**The Speaker:** The Speaker is prepared to rule unless there are any other submissions. I agree with respect to the matter around relevance, and I – without the benefit of the Blues I'm not a hundred per cent sure exactly what the member said. If she did say that, it probably is a point of order. Certainly, she has made a number of statements specifically directed at a member of the Assembly that could be construed as accusations about a member, and it's . . . [interjections] Order.

This always moves us down a trail of language that's likely to create disorder, and if the hon. member would like to make references to the government or others, it certainly depersonalizes the debate and I would encourage her to do so.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the government does not send a message to Albertans about encouraging them to take preventative health care actions that are very clear actions that can be taken to relieve pressure off the health care system, the message that the government and the leader of the government are sending to health care workers is that we are not interested in alleviating the work and the stress and the strain that you're experiencing. Instead, we've heard a government take a position of wanting to increase capacity. Their focus is always on more sick Albertans, and their frustration is that we don't have capacity for more sick Albertans. What I can tell you is that not only is that not comforting as a parent or as an Albertan, that my government wants to see more people sick rather than address the core issues that would actually minimize illness, but it also sends a message to health care workers that we think that you will just keep on going, that you will keep on handling the enormous strain.

We have all heard messages in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, from health care workers, front-line health care workers, who are talking to us about how burned out they are, about working doubles, about not finding somebody who is able to take over and they continue on in the shift. We're seeing horrific stories out of children's hospitals right now, stories that are a parent's nightmare. The idea of not being able to access the health care, not just not being able to access but the quality – I am terrified as a parent in this province right now of something happening to my child that requires me to go to a children's hospital because I don't know the conditions and how long they'll be waiting. I know that the staff have been working far too hard for two and a half years to compensate for the lack of judgment from this government, from disdain from this government, from disrespect for the working conditions and continuing to layer on more and more challenges onto our health care system.

It began with this, Mr. Speaker. It began with what Bill 4 is attempting to address. Of course the government is now able to stand up and say that they'll repeal the ability to unilaterally terminate a contract with the Alberta Medical Association because they already exercised it. They did what they wanted to do. They didn't have the courage to speak to that when they did it, and they don't have the courage to speak to it now when they're trying to atone for it. I can say that that means it's not much of an apology – is it? – when they won't even say the words. If it's no longer necessary for this provision to be there, they should explain why they thought it was necessary in the first place, because this has been two and a half years of an attack

on our health care system which began with this provision, which began with a Minister of Health who was disdainful towards the very professionals which our Albertans and our health care system have relied on during a public health crisis that we hadn't seen in a generation. [interjection] I give way.

**Member Irwin:** You know, sorry to interrupt, but probably good for you to take a short break because you are – and I'm not even being facetious – very passionate about this. You and the Member for Edmonton-City Centre in particular have been incredibly vocal on children's health in particular, and I know many Albertans appreciate that so, so much.

I just think back only, oh, gosh, 24, 48 hours ago, Monday, our first opportunity to speak about the discharging of folks from Rotary Flames House – of kids; I shouldn't say folks – receiving respite services. Of course, at our earliest opportunity we put forward an SO, a standing order, for an emergency debate on children's health, and it was denied by this government. Moments later our leader put forward a private member's bill to address the crisis in health care. It was denied by this government, the same government members who right now refuse to stand up and speak to and defend their actions on health care. Says a lot.

4:50

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I agree. I think this is a pattern, right? We don't see an actual acknowledgement of the wrong that was done here, and then it's pretty much impossible without that for Albertans to actually think that this government has learned any lessons or is changing course at all.

While I have certainly remained frustrated that this is the health care bill that's brought in, that we're not seeing an action plan, which is what hospitals and what health care professionals are asking for, to actually address, for example, the most pressing health care crisis that we have right now, around children's health, although it's by no means the only health care crisis because we know continuing care and individuals who are seeking surgical treatments and procedures are also still delayed – but we're not seeing any acknowledgement that any of the actions taken so far by this government on these issues are failing. What we have seen is more chaos.

This Bill 4 is meant to address the chaos that began in 2019, but we are seeing the escalation of that chaos: firing the chief medical officer of health, firing the entire AHS board, now we hear that the deputy chief officers of health have also resigned. This is not the picture of a government that either (a) is able to handle the crisis that they're facing right now or (b) is even aware of the fact that they are contributing exponentially to the chaos in our health care system.

No lessons have been learned, Mr. Speaker, and I think all Albertans can't move forward unless we actually hear that, until we actually hear that they understand that they were wrong then and they continue to be wrong now. Until we have a Premier who is also willing to lead on actually taking the actions that our health care system needs by encouraging Albertans to go out and get their flu shots – let me do that. I encourage all Albertans to go out and get their flu shot for our kids and for our public health, to make sure that we are not putting more pressure on our health care professionals, whom we rely on desperately and whom we are very, very grateful for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question or have the minister to close debate.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, just so I can know, how much time could I have to close debate?

**The Speaker:** Fifteen minutes.

**Mr. Copping:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, colleagues, for the debate. Happy to move to close debate on Bill 4. First of all, I want to say to members across the aisle: thank you for supporting this bill. It is greatly appreciated. You know, I've had the opportunity to hear much of the debate that has gone on in this Chamber over the last few days since we introduced this bill, and I just wanted to make comments on two key facts.

First, although I appreciate the fact that the members of the opposition are willing to support the bill, I've also heard some of their concerns. They're suggesting that the challenges being faced in our health care system at this point in time, which are real, Mr. Speaker, are a result of past actions and past policies that were taken by this party earlier on in our mandate. I just want to comment that, if we look around the country, the same challenges are being faced by other provinces at the same time, for the same reasons, COVID. That belies the assertion that it was caused by past policy choices; it, rather, is because of the significant challenges that have been posed by COVID and the impact that it's had on our health care system and on our health care human resources. I would suggest that that assertion being made by the other side, quite frankly, is not correct.

The other general comment that I've heard from the other side on this is what's not in the bill even though they may agree to removing the one aspect of 40.2 in the Alberta health insurance act. What the concern is is what's not in the bill and suggesting, quite frankly, that the challenges that we're facing in Alberta in terms of strains on our health care system and lack of staff in certain areas of the province can be fixed by legislation. A member earlier just commented that the private member's bill would address these crises in health care. Mr. Speaker, the ways to address these issues in health care that we're facing and every other province in the country is facing are not necessarily through legislation that's simply going to say, "We're going to measure," which is in essence what we already do; it is through concrete actions and concrete plans that our government is already taking to address these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we talk about building capacity in our health care system. We are spending more money than we've ever spent before, \$22 billion this year. We're increasing that amount. There are additional amounts on top to deal with COVID and to get caught up on surgeries. We are actually investing this money in every part of our health care system.

We are focusing on prevention. I am very pleased that we announced MAPS, modernizing Alberta's primary care. We know that we need to focus on primary care to keep people out of the hospitals when they're the sickest, and we can learn from other countries on how we can be more effective doing this. I'm very much looking forward to their interim recommendations on what we can do as quick hits to be able to improve access to primary care but in addition their longer term vision, because we know we need to migrate towards that. We need to look at a model, quite frankly, of primary care, community-based care, home-based care. Mr. Speaker, we need to look at prevention.

I was very pleased not only that, you know, we talk about prevention. The hon. member across the way just recently mentioned this in terms of one thing is getting your flu shot. We are running a campaign. Our government is running a campaign right now. Text messages have recently come out on this asking people to make the choice to get their flu shot to protect themselves, especially as we're going through a

challenging flu season this year, having not had, basically, a flu season prior to last spring for a number of years.

We know, Mr. Speaker – and this brings it back to Bill 4 – that retention and attraction of health care professionals is a challenge. It's a challenge being faced here in Alberta, particularly in rural areas. It's a challenge being faced across the entire country. You know, we are having some successes on this. We have more doctors, we have more nurses than ever before in this province. Now, quite frankly, they're not enough, but this bill delivers on a commitment that our government made in agreement with the AMA, and that agreement follows three key themes.

It's about partnership, working with the AMA. We know we need to work together to provide the services that Albertans need to be able to attract and retain doctors in this province. Even though we have more doctors than ever before, we still know we need more, and we need them in the right places, in the right specialties.

Secondly, it's about stability. This agreement adds approximately 750 million additional dollars over the next number of years to be able to attract and retain doctors.

Quite frankly, third, it's about innovation. We know that different methods of pay need to be put in place, and we need to work jointly with doctors. The fee-for-service model may work good for some specialties, but for others it doesn't promote allied health professionals working together. It doesn't promote dealing with patients particularly who need complex care and seniors. Changing that method of pay: there's an commitment in this agreement to work on that.

Once again, I'm very pleased that we reached this agreement with the AMA, with over 70 per cent ratification rate, and that this can help form the foundation for retention and attraction of doctors. Once again I want to thank the hon. members on the other side of the aisle for agreeing to support this bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

### Bill 3

#### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate December 6: Mr. Hanson]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

5:00

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and speak at second reading to Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I'm surprised, actually, that none of the government members jumped to their feet. I have heard for many years now in this Chamber how important these issues are, so it's a little bit disappointing that no members have decided to jump up and weigh in. In any event, I'm going to do my best to go through this piece of legislation and offer some thoughts. Actually, I have a few questions, so hopefully at later stages we'll be able to get some clarification or some answers.

Bill 3 is really sort of not a correction but, I guess, the next step of Bill 206. People will probably remember that Bill 206 was, I think, originally introduced by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and then I think there was unanimous consent to change the member, and it became Brooks-Medicine Hat. All of that happened in 2020. The UCP at that time brought forward that piece of legislation, which, sadly, at the time actually failed to address a number of the issues related to property rights that Albertans had been calling for for quite some time. So, as we have said previously, we support this legislation to bring property rights and remedies in line with legislation in other provinces in the country.

In fact, what happened with Bill 206 – there were a number of issues that were identified in Bill 206. I can't remember exactly what happened at the time and didn't have a chance to read through *Hansard*, but ultimately it did get referred to the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, which issued a report in June of 2022. I was not on that committee, so it was quite helpful to have the report to look at and to see. It was actually quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. I think the report sort of lays out in detail the consultation that was involved, which is terrific, and I will talk a little bit about the various consultation processes that have impacted or resulted in what we see today with Bill 3.

What Bill 3 does is that it provides some clear rules within and across jurisdictions that can help create some economic certainty and good relations, actually, between neighbours and businesses. My colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud yesterday, I think, did a really good job about sort of putting on her lawyer hat and telling us, giving us a little bit of background about why this was essential and where some of the confusion would come up under property rights, and that was quite helpful. It's easy to understand why there would be some confusion or potential conflict between neighbours and businesses. Clear rules that are created as a result of extensive consultation on this subject, consultation with subject experts, with people that are requesting these changes, is really important.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, you know, strangely enough, what will likely happen tonight as it relates to Bill 1 is that the government, who are unwilling, clearly, to hear more about why Bill 1 is just a disaster and needs to go, is shutting down debate, and they haven't done their homework in terms of consultation. Now, they've likely talked to their friends and insiders and Rebel media or whatever they talk to, but they have not done a good job in consultation. My colleague the critic for Indigenous affairs, I think, has been very clear about: we have a duty to consult before we bring this legislation forward, before we start having these debates and voting. Clearly, that has not been done. Now, members opposite have said the opposite and said, you know, "Yeah, we picked up the phone" or "Someone called me" or "We did this," but there's no clear consultation process.

A meaningful consultation process requires time and effort, as you'll hear a little later in this bill debate. That has not happened with Bill 1, and that's unfortunate, because I think most of us can agree that when we take the time to actually speak to the correct people – and putting political parties aside or alliances aside, when you actually take the time to identify who the subject experts are, who are the people that will be impacted by the legislation, when you take the time to speak to them and hear their ideas, you just create better legislation. Obviously, that was not done with Bill 1, as Bill 1 is more of a political game, I would say.

In any event, this bill, the property rights amendment act, is an example of a bill drafted after consultation, after receiving advice from communities and stakeholders and experts, one of those experts being the Alberta Law Reform Institute. We know the bill was the subject of public consultation as discussed by a legislative committee over several weeks. As such, the bill provides an example to the UCP, as I mentioned, about what is an appropriate and lawful process for powers of the legislative branch.

The bill acknowledges the role that the courts and the judicial branch must play to arbitrate disputes and provide remedies between parties. In short, the bill and the process to draft it run absolutely contrary to the UCP's Bill 1. It's not lost on me that this particular bill, that took a whole lot longer to develop than Bill 1, is actually in line with our jobs. That's our job as legislators, to create legislation and to debate legislation but to create legislation by

using a process. So for us to sit in this place and think that we have the answers for all things and to develop legislation without actually speaking to the people who are impacted, you have to know that it's not going to be the best piece of legislation possible.

In contrast to Bill 1, which received no public consultation and, in fact, will have very little debate time because this government is clearly a government not onside with enhancing democracy or letting democracy flourish in any way, as we see for the framework of Bill 1 but also the work that they did creating Bill 1 – their lack of consultation and all of that was not drafted on the advice of constitutional law experts, obviously, and it does not respect the separation of powers. I would just like to again add to the record that Bill 1 is such a good contrast to this particular piece of legislation.

I don't mind saying that I am quite happy that Bill 3 came with as much work as it did. I think for those of you that have not had a look at the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights final report that was issued in June 2022, I would encourage you to do that. [interjection] Go ahead.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to my colleague. I think the contrast between Bill 3 and Bill 1 is an excellent one, particularly given when you look at the public report from the select special committee and you see how many public members were able to come and make presentations, when you're able to see how many submissions were received and, really, the in-depth process. Now, of course, we know Bill 3: these issues have been introduced into the Legislature repeatedly, often through private members' bills of various forms, so in the end we have a piece of legislation that has been incredibly well canvassed and has multiple perspectives reflected in it. I really just wanted to comment that I think the line of comparison between Bill 3 and Bill 1 is quite stark. We have within the caucus now a bill in Bill 3 that we can support.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you to the member. That is an excellent point. I think the differences between Bill 1, which is the job-killing sovereignty act, and this bill, Bill 3, are just very stark. One took a long time to develop, and I think, as the member noted, that it came through private member bills and it has been debated, actually, over a number of years. Then to have the special select committee take a deep dive and, you know, do the road show like they did, I think, was a really terrific idea to make sure that everybody had a chance to weigh in.

But, you know, this . . . [interjections] Hope I'm not interrupting you over there. The bill is an example of the government realizing that it got it wrong in its 2020 bill, and it went back and did some significant consultation and committee work to correct the bill, which I actually do appreciate. You know, Madam Speaker, I would say that none of us always gets it right, for sure. Nobody's perfect. We all make mistakes. Sometimes we forget steps in a process that we need to take. That's completely normal. It happens. I think it takes a big person or a big government – that's odd, that I'm saying that. You guys are a big government. It takes a mature government, maybe let's say, to realize: "You know what? We can make this better. We can stop and really consult and make it better."

5:10

I wish, Madam Speaker, that those would be sort of the tools that would be used for other bills because so many times we have seen things arrive here and then get jammed through with time allocation. You know, time is cut off, we're not able to debate as long as we'd like to, and things just go ahead, and then these unanticipated consequences, and then harm continues, and it's really, really difficult to undo that damage. [interjection] Go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for St. Albert for letting me interject. I just wanted to point out, you know, the mention of the fact, from the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods as well, which was a very apt point, about the level of consultation. I know some of our members have spoken to this bill and talked about the committee work and the deep level of consultation, of course, all coming through private members' bills. I just can't help but again point out on the record that there have been some really important private members' bills. There's been bipartisan support on some of those bills but not for our bills, not for opposition bills. Just on Monday Bill 201 from our leader, from Edmonton-Strathcona, was shot down, right? So it's frustrating to hear this government's talk about the importance of consultation, the importance of getting their legislation right when they're not even willing to allow for opposition members to have the same opportunity to get their legislation right. They don't even get the chance to debate it.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you to the member for those comments. She's, you know, quite right. There are very different standards for government members and for opposition members. Rarely are the bills that we bring forward given the same treatment that private member bills from the government side are, which is, again, not great. I am quite thankful that there was a bit of a change, that our bills will not go to committee, but then again we saw the shenanigans that happened the other day when our bill, our first private member bill, was introduced and then got shoved down to the bottom of the Order Paper, so we're never going to be able to debate it. So once again you see a government that is really – they don't seem to be really big supporters of democracy, let's just say.

In any event, you know, I did want to put something on the record. Again, I am giving props to the government for taking their time and doing their work and doing the best job that they can to get this right. It's really important to Albertans. Property rights, obviously, are essential. You want to get it right. But I so wish – and you're probably hearing a theme between the people standing up and asking questions or sharing comments, and that is that there is stark contrast between this, which obviously seems to be important to the government, and other pieces of legislation, that are very important to Albertans but don't get the same treatment.

I want to take you back a little bit to contrast with Bill 21, that we saw in 2019. There was – and perhaps I'm wrong, and the government can correct me. I don't think there was any consultation there, and that was the bill, the omnibus bill, if members will remember, that included pretty much everything but the kitchen sink, and it was a lot of damage.

One of the damaging changes that was contained in that omnibus bill was deindexation of benefits, and not just AISH; that was deindexation of benefits for low-income seniors. Yes, I'm contrasting with this bill, Madam Speaker. That particular piece of legislation is unlike this. What we tried to say at that time was: "What you're doing here is going to harm people. We know this. It's going to add pressure to food banks. We know this. It's going to contribute to homelessness. We know this." And now three years later we see it has happened. I hope that, like Bill 3, we will all have an ability to – when we are saying, "Look, this is a problem; this is going to harm a lot of people," the government will listen and actually do their jobs and consult and find out: "Are we correct? Is that correct? Is that information correct? Can we actually prove or say with certainty that this bill will not harm Albertans?" That has not been the case.

We urge the government to use its own Bill 3 as an example of how the legislative process can and should work. For example, when the landowners have a dispute, they can refer to the clarified guidelines. Clarification is always very good and appreciated. When the courts . . . [interjection] Oh, go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you to the member. I just wanted to ask. I don't want to cut you off before you go down this too much, but I think that in terms of clarification, you know, as the member said, this bill is a way to really clarify and take responsive action to consultation – right? – to really engage with people, and to hear what would be clear. As you mentioned, this is not something we have seen happen very often with some other government member bills. In fact, when you talk about a clear process and clarification that is happening under Bill 3, I'm wondering if you can contrast that to – for example, there was a very unclear process under the government's Bill 1, which was introduced in this very same session, which actually provided a lot of uncertainty and chaos and continues to do so whereas this bill seems very much focused on trying to actually make it clear to Albertans how to exercise their rights and how to seek that guidance from the courts where necessary but also how to resolve matters themselves. So is there a contrast here that you see between those two?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm just going to take the opportunity to intervene here. While interventions may be broadly about anything, the debate on the bill must be about the debate on the bill.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I mean, it couldn't be more clear, stark with this particular piece of legislation. Actually, there was a lot of thought put into it, there was a lot of consultation, and I wish we could say that about other pieces of legislation, particularly Bill 1. I think that Albertans will recognize when somebody – I mean, when you're having a conversation with someone, when you're talking to someone and they're trying to shut you up, there's a reason. That's what it feels like, that this government has introduced a piece of legislation and doesn't want to talk about it very much. So it's been a few days of, you know, a lot of opposition, a lot of comments in the public, a lot of concerns, a lot of questions with no answers, and it is very confusing. Now we find out that likely we're not going to have much more time to debate. But, in any event, Bill 3 is not that. I am grateful for that.

Now, there are three concerns that we as a caucus do have. I'm really hopeful that at later stages we'll get some answers from the government side. I'm not hugely optimistic because their MO seems to be: say nothing; don't make eye contact; run away.

The three concerns that we have. First of all, we would like the Assembly to be exceedingly clear that Indigenous and treaty rights will be respected, are respected in the context proposed in this legislation. That would include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit right holders. Will the government make clear on the record its intent with respect to Indigenous rights holders; for example, with respect to exercising treaty rights and traditional activities?

A question for the government: did the government consult Indigenous communities on the legislation? It's a really easy answer, and it would be very disappointing if we heard again from the minister responsible for Indigenous affairs that – you know, we ask about consultation. We get things like, "Well, yeah, you know, I contacted a couple of people" or "They called me up." That's not consultation; those are phone calls. Consultation is a process. It's a well-thought-out process that looks at: who are the stakeholders, and who will be impacted? It usually takes time, often costs money, but it's really important and essential. We want to know what happened. What was that like with First Nations, with Métis people, and with Inuit right holders? What was that consultation like, and can you tell us what the result was? Are they happy with this piece of legislation?

The second concern. The Alberta Law Reform Institute in their blog from August 2021 – that was Stella Varvis – has proposed that a

tribunal, ombudsman, or alternate dispute resolution should be considered along with the legislative amendment so that it doesn't create unnecessary capacity issues for the courts. Now, obviously, we often hear this when we are debating legislation: let's not inadvertently add pressure to systems that are already overwhelmed; let's not inadvertently create more difficulties. It can be very difficult and expensive to go through the courts. You know, did the government do all of the work they needed to do to ensure that that wouldn't happen? One of the concerns we have is that it will add pressure to the courts.

5:20

Also, another question that we have, that hopefully the government members or somebody will answer in later stages, is: can the minister and the government outline the planned steps that they're taking to address additional capacity issues in the courts if, in fact, that ends up being the vehicle or the direction that they go?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 3 in second reading? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. You know, since being elected to this Legislature in 2015, I represent a rural riding. While I haven't had a great number of constituents come into my office to discuss this issue, I have had some, so I wanted to stand up and speak this afternoon to Bill 3, which I think is a bill worthy of support.

In many of these cases, when I've had a constituent come into my office, they're concerned about a property line that maybe has been misdrawn, a fencing line, or it's perhaps a neighbour who has, in putting in a driveway to their farmyard, gone across a property line, often not knowing they've done that but having had that occur.

In many of the cases the issues had been created many years prior to the constituent coming into my office. You know, it often happened when the land was being cleared or the farmyard was being graded and the farmhouse was being put on the property and it was discovered, maybe even many years later, that the offending landowner had crossed a property line.

They were reluctant now to move that fence or they were reluctant to move that driveway, sometimes at great expense. Sometimes the offending landowner would then come back on the registered landowner and claim that they should be able to keep the property because of adverse possession rights.

Of course, the constituent that would come into my office would be a little frustrated, maybe a great deal frustrated because in many cases they had never even heard of adverse land rights, or squatter's rights, as sometimes they call it in my neck of the woods.

Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, is designed to stop people from taking ownership of someone else's land. The Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, will ensure that the registered owners of a piece of property are protected from the individuals who claim ownership through adverse possession, or squatter's rights; that is, if they've occupied the property for at least 10 years.

Interestingly, adverse possession claims can only be made against private landowners. Public land, municipal land, irrigation districts: they're all exempted from adverse possession. It's the private landowner that has sometimes had a problem with a neighbour that has claimed adverse possession rights.

Now, if passed, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, will update the Law of Property Act, the Land Titles Act, and the Limitations Act in order to eliminate claims of adverse possession. It will remove the burden from registered property owners to be



continually monitoring their land in order to prevent people from taking possession and over a period of time claiming squatter's rights.

This legislation, should it be passed, will allow registered property owners to get a court order at any time to regain possession of their property from someone who illegally occupies it. It's providing a legal capacity or a road to be able to redress what is obviously an issue.

In a country that has a strong rule of law, we believe in the right to own property and to be able to purchase property and to be able to maintain a capacity to decide how that property will be used and by whom that property will be used. This bill, Bill 3, moves us forward in helping private property landowners to be able to protect themselves and their property.

The Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act will abolish the ability of squatters to make a claim, and it will give private landowners the same protections that were once reserved only for the government of this province. If someone is possessing land for which they are not the registered owner, the registered owner can go to court to regain possession at any time.

Over the last 10 years advocates and past governments have pushed to abolish adverse possession. For instance, in 2016 the Property Rights Advocate office recommended abolishing adverse possession. In 2021 this government created the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights. This committee was formed, and it travelled across the province speaking to stakeholders. The MLA Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights did extensive public consultation in 2021, and it received multiple requests to abolish adverse possession.

Now, the Alberta Law Reform Institute identified nine cases in the eight years leading up to 2020 where adverse possession had become an issue in the province of Alberta. In April 2020 they provided the government with seven recommendations to end squatter's rights. These recommendations were and have been placed into the report and placed into the law or the legislation, the bill that we are looking at today. The committee tabled its final report in June 2020, and in its final report they recommended the abolishment of adverse possession.

Other provinces and territories like Saskatchewan and New Brunswick and Yukon Territory have had to address the issue of adverse possession, and they've done so by passing laws banning squatter's rights. Property rights advocates like Farmers' and Property Rights Advocate Peter J. Dobbie are in support of this bill.

Removing adverse possession will bring some peace of mind to registered landowners and ensure that they can use and enjoy their registered property. I know that for the constituents that have come into my office, they will be supporting and want me to support this bill. This bill would have helped them five or six years ago, when they were coming into my office. This doesn't happen very often, but I know that the constituents that I have met with were absolutely at their wits' end trying to address the issue over squatter's rights on what should have been their land.

Madam Speaker, I believe that this is a good bill. I believe it addresses an issue that for some constituents and people across this province has become an issue. For this reason, I will be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pleased to rise to speak to Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. As this House well knows, I'm a former real estate agent of 30 years. As such, I have a great interest in any legislation which touches upon property rights and real estate in this province. I know that in my

career, of course, I have had situations personally where there were incidents of defined adverse possession that occurred on properties that I had listed or was intending to sell to a buyer.

5:30

Often, Madam Speaker, these adverse possession issues are not cases of negligent behaviour or intentional behaviour on the part of landowners but, most often, innocent errors. I would say that it's really not, of course, defined as a rural issue although primarily, in the public's mind, those are the cases that they think of, where somebody will have built a cabin on rural property that's in a wooded area and lives on it for a while and takes possession in hopes of taking over the land in a malicious way from the legitimate owner by relying upon adverse possession claims. Of course, we're very pleased, or I'm very pleased as a former realtor, to see this property rights amendment act come forward to address adverse possession and abolish it.

Of course, there are some concerns that I still have that linger around the remaining assets that may be on lands that were subject to adverse possession claims and the satisfaction of disputes over those improvements between the former claimant of adverse possession or somebody who's built something on somebody else's land and now wants to be compensated for it following the rules and regulations contained in Bill 3, the property rights amendment act. Of course, Madam Speaker, we all know that in business time is of the essence. Whether it's a piece of rural property between farmers or agricultural producers or somebody owns a recreational tree lot for hunting purposes or just simply recreation purposes or whether it's a downtown parcel of land in Calgary or Edmonton where someone has inadvertently built across a property line and is now seeking compensation, there are other remedies that may be available in law.

But in the case of an adverse possession claim where there are improvements that are situated on a property, this legislation attempts to address how indeed those disputes will be settled, how the individual who has built improvements on the land, whether it be a well or whether it be a house or a building or any type of structure, may get compensated for the improvements that they put on the land that they, in fact, didn't own. I wonder and I want to seek real clarification, Madam Speaker – and I'm sure all members of the Alberta Real Estate Association would be interested in hearing this as well – as to how the process is really going to work, because if it indeed does not incent an individual who is seeking compensation for improvements on land that is not theirs, if it does not incent them to be seeking that compensation in a timely manner – in other words, if they are able to draw out the whole process and drag their feet, it may be in their best interests to do so.

I'm hoping that the remedies in this act to allow that individual to gain compensation for improvements that will remain with the land and the rightful owner are such that they have to act in a timely fashion or they end up losing their rights to compensation, because to add insult to injury, if this bill, you know, goes ahead and abolishes adverse possession but, in fact, allows the landowner to be, over a long period of time, suffering the effects of a foot-dragging former holder of that land because they see it's in their best interests not to settle, then, of course, the full remedy to that landowner has not been effected. That's a fairly significant concern that I have.

But I think this whole property rights amendment act and the concept of property rights speak to the real importance, Madam Speaker, of maintaining the publicly housed and administered land titles registry office. There was an attempt earlier by this government to sell off the land titles registry. That was abruptly halted. I fear that they will make another run at this and try it again. But I think it's pretty good evidence,

Madam Speaker, about the importance of maintaining the sacrosanct nature of public ownership and operation and having that data bank housed under the dome, let's say, of a public registry, because people in business need to have absolute confidence in the land titles registry system.

There are other systems in operation, even in Canada, which are less reliable. I know that you'll have a title deeds system, which goes back to the parish set-up in Quebec, which necessitates people to search a title in successive searches to chain one piece of title and ownership to another.

That also happens in the United States, where you have title deed companies, private corporations which can charge a lot of money for somebody to search and verify title, but indeed you're relying upon corporate paper to verify your ownership whereas here in the province we have a system of land registration which is guaranteed by the province. There's an assurance fund which will take care of compensating individuals for mistakes made on title, but they are very rare indeed. That is something, Madam Speaker, that in this particular case, where we see cases of adverse possession and the lingering improvements that are being compensated for over time, the real landowner can rely upon. [interjection] I'll yield to the intervention.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I really, truly hated to interrupt the Member for Edmonton-McClung because, of course, as a – do I say former realtor?

**Mr. Dach:** Former realtor.

**Member Irwin:** Former. Okay. I guess teachers – we like to not say “former” because you're, like, always a teacher.

Anyways, as a former realtor he's got a very in-depth understanding, and I actually was learning a little bit there with his reference to the parish system in Quebec and whatnot. That's all news to me. You know, I especially appreciated his comments around land titles because I do know – admittedly, I don't hear a lot about property rights in my own riding, but I have heard a little bit about some of the delays with land titles claims. I know that a lot of Albertans are struggling with some of that, and Service Alberta was planning to try to address some of those big concerns. I would appreciate the member to just continue talking about some of the connections there with land titles and what we see in the property rights amendment act because, as always, I learn a great deal from my former realtor counterpart, the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I must say as well, you know, that I'm appreciative of the member. Sorry. Go ahead.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I must say that even though technically I'm no longer a realtor, because I gave up my real estate licence to avoid any conflict of interest once I was elected, I'm always, as many realtors are, a realtor at heart. I take a very strong interest in issues regarding real estate matters, and this is no exception.

Yeah, the land titles office is really at the heart of the issue of property rights because that is what people rely upon in this province to verify their ownership and title. It's a simple matter of pulling your title and looking at it and saying: there's your name. The government of Alberta guarantees and assures that that title is correct. In many jurisdictions in Canada and around the world it's not so clear as to who actually owns land. You have to paper together your verification of ownership, and the disputes over that are many. It's a costly thing to actually verify title, and you have to buy insurance.

Insurance is available here, too, but that insurance is more widely used now than it used to be because our land titles operation in the province has been understaffed now. A lot of people were laid off, and they haven't been hired back, so we have real estate lawyers in

this province now clamouring for the government to get rid of the backlog of registrations, now measured in months, not days or weeks. It is damaging to the economy of this province, and I don't understand why indeed they're looking at a property rights amendment act. They weren't at the same time looking at making sure that the number of people required to be hired at land titles to get the processing time to a normal period of operation very quickly. As I mentioned with respect to this Bill 3, time is of the essence, and we're worried about how much time it might take to satisfy a dispute between the rightful owner and the former adverse possession claimant in satisfying issues of the cost of improvements and compensation for those improvements.

5:40

Time is of the essence in every business transaction, including real estate transactions, Madam Speaker, and right now land titles, which used to be a proud operation of Alberta's government – and it used to operate in, you know, carbon paper style down at the Brownlee Building, and it actually worked pretty well. It's updated to a certain extent, but now you can't even go to get counter service. I had an individual at my office a couple of days ago who tried because she wanted to go back to her maiden name, after going through a divorce, on a land title and was unable to have anybody do anything at the Brownlee Building at the land titles office because everything is now online. She had to make an online submission to even gain access. She couldn't talk to anybody. That's a little bit disturbing, as a side issue.

With respect to the bill before us, the property rights amendment act and its relation to the land titles, I mean, for us to do anything that would diminish the faith that the public has in our land titles registration system would be a shameful thing to do. I'm hoping that – while the government's intent is of course supported by me and, I think, most members of the public to get rid of adverse possession and to ensure that the compensation for improvements that are on those lands is settled out and sorted out in a timely fashion, there are many more things that the government needs to be doing with respect to the proper transaction of land titles in the registry in the province of Alberta.

We have a government here that talks about being a strong supporter of business and economic development, yet we've got a land titles system – one of the fundamental activities of business is the transaction of land, and it's being held up. Lawyers are actually at their wits' end, Madam Speaker. I spoke to a gentleman who I used to do real estate transactions with regularly who's a real estate lawyer in town, and I found that they are no longer able to extend insurance and reassurances between themselves to allow transactions to close. They're at the capacity of the insurance limitations between themselves, even using western protocol, and they don't know where they're going to go beyond this.

The answer, of course, is to get land titles up to speed and hire the people that need to be hired. I know that the minister suggested that they were going to have the individuals who were being trained right now do the simple stuff and then continue on with the training for those that needed to be trained further for more complex matters, but it's not working, and it's really taking way too long. I mean, the legal community once again is screaming loud and clear, but the government is responding really slowly, whether it happens to be legal aid lawyers or lawyers operating in business, not only just real estate transactions for residential houses, but we're talking about multimillion-dollar transactions that are holding up construction of a major building, holding up development of land. That is a cost, a huge cost, to our Alberta economy.

I'd like to see more attention paid to that, Madam Speaker, quick and rapid attention so that our land titles office doesn't lose the integrity that

it's enjoyed over decades. That would be a very damaging thing to have happen. It's suffering. The reputation of Alberta's land titles registration system is suffering under this government, and that's something that they would be remiss not to pay strong attention to and consult widely and listen to those individuals who are stakeholders in the area of transacting real estate in the province, particularly the lawyers who represent their clients and buyers and sellers in transacting real estate. Listen to the paralegals who work for them, who will tell you how difficult it is and how frustrating it is to have buyers and sellers not get a deal done. [interjection] I'll wait.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, my goodness. Again, I hate – the member is still giving a very eloquent discussion about land titles. Again, obviously, a clear connection to the bill in front of us. Without referring to the presence or absence of members, if the minister of service Alberta were able to weigh in a little bit on some of these changes, I'd be very curious to hear. In particular, we've heard from – I was cut off earlier, but I started to commend the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for weighing in on this. You know, I asked him, actually, as I came back in the Chamber. I said, "Don't your members care about this topic?" And he said, "Damn right, and I'm going to talk about it right away," which was great, and I gave him a thumbs-up. So I would love if other members would weigh in because, as I've noted multiple times, I know that members on the government side hear about property rights, hear about squatters' rights. I'm sure the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has heard about this lots from his constituents.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for that intervention and for pointing out the sort of lack of interest on the government members' parts to participate in this debate. One would have thought, given how critically important it is to the business community in this province to have anything that is a detriment to the transaction of real estate act as an impediment to business, it would be something that would draw the attention of the members of the government caucus and would attract them to join in the debate to express their support for business in this province.

We're happy to do so on their behalf, to let it be known that the caucus on this side of the House, our NDP caucus, is a huge supporter of our businesses in this province, small and large. Of course, we know that small businesses are responsible for about 75 per cent of the economic development activity in the province.

The land titles registry and the office that is under the public domain right now has been proudly operating for many decades in this province and is something that we hope will be continuing to be operating as a publicly housed and administrated body so that business can have confidence in the land titles, not only when we talk about Bill 3 and adverse possession and the transaction of sales of land that has been subject to an adverse possession claim but also right throughout the province, Madam Speaker, in land transactions of every size and type that land titles, of course, must process.

The legal community has been very, very vociferous and clear, and they're expressing their extreme frustration with this government over the length of times it's taking to get the bottleneck at land titles fixed. The biggest problem, of course, is that there were a number of people who were fired, let go, at the land titles office, and they haven't been replaced. I know that the minister responsible is looking to train up people, but it's taking a long time and is costing our businesses a fortune.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and be able to add my comments to the bill, Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, on behalf of my constituents and also concerned Albertans. I'm happy to see that this bill is actually being debated, and there seems to be agreement on both sides of the House on this bill being discussed.

This bill is also an outcome of the Alberta Law Reform Institute summary recommendation report. I also understand this is also fixing some of the problems of the bill that we debated a few years ago in this House that was presented by the government, Bill 206. I was looking in this report of the Alberta Law Reform Institute, the summary, where it concludes that adverse possession awards deliberate trespassers and penalizes registered owners, who are forced to give up some of their title lands without any compensation. This continues to persist despite the fact that successful cases are relatively rare.

5:50

I understand that the stakeholders advocated for this, and there was a report that was conducted. I also understand that this is what should have been done, generally speaking. Also, you know, this bill particularly reminds me how important it is to be open-minded, because things change over time. What is important today might not be interpreted into the same context after some time.

When I was looking at the squatters' law, I remembered those days, my childhood days, and conflicts and contradictions around these laws. There was pressure from the public, and also there was reaction. We hoped this bill would bring economic certainty; that is true. It is important. But when these bills were being introduced, particularly by the nonsocialist countries or then developing countries, they were aimed at bringing economic equality. So it's very interesting to see after 50 years that things have changed, and now I am standing in the House, and I'm speaking in favour of something that I was looking at very differently 30, 40 years ago.

The squatters' law or many, actually, laws, a line of those land ceiling acts: I remember that that was to stop, you know, unethical storing of public lands or residential properties and addressing the issue with those people. They would never be able to come up with such an amount to put up down payments to purchase properties due to given situations and their jobs. In the majority of cases there was only one family member in the household that would take care of the whole family. They lived years and years and decades and decades on properties and, you know, basically paid off those properties for the landlords but never had been able in their lifetimes to see such a house for themselves being able to be built.

I think it was also their way to address the housing issues. I also saw these laws being abused in my lifetime. You know, that happened too often to absentee landlords, public servants, or people moving, being transferred from one place to another, then ending up really renting their own properties and living on rent in different cities, a different part of the country, and then getting into trouble. [interjection] Definitely, I will give it to my colleague. Yeah.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Meadows. I hesitate to interrupt, because he's also drawing on his own experience working, obviously, in insurance and a number of fields, you know, where he's dealing with landowners and whatnot. I am curious – I was genuine when I said earlier that this isn't a topic that I've heard at the doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, but I am absolutely certain many folks have in other ridings – if the member has heard anything specifically about the property rights amendment act. Could be, like the Member for Edmonton-McClung, land titles is something that you've heard a little bit about. I would just love to hear if this is something that your constituents are reaching out about, and if so, what is the nature of their feedback, of their concerns? Admittedly, it's a topic I would

certainly love to hear more about, to learn more about, to speak more about. I'm happy to do that, and of course any opportunity that we get to share our constituents' feedback is a good one.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, hon. member, for the question. You know, definitely, as this report says, you know – I'll just refer to this report once again. It says that despite the facts successful cases are relatively very rare. It seems like the issue is not very prominent, but as I said, it's a privilege and an honour to participate in an act that will really help the concerns of the citizens in this way.

Part of this legislation we are discussing is that the stakeholders, the people that the government have heard from, or the Law Reform Institute summary was mandated to do. The people who they heard from: this is the outcome of this. I really wanted to relate it to – you know, I know that I have a very limited time today. I won't be able to actually expand on this. It's in my mind given that we do not have enough time in this evening, but I will look forward to speak more about this.

This is also because it's really allowed me to look into how history changes, how things change over time, why we need to be open-minded and, you know, willing to work together to address these very issues that belong to our constituents and the people of this province and where that has been ignored. We have another piece of legislation where the government could have learned in the same manner, but I see there's a lack of intent there. I'm referring to Bill 1, particularly.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah, absolutely. You know what? That's a really good segue from the member. Obviously, the focus here is on Bill 1, but the serious contrast between the lack of consultation on that bill, which sounds like it's going to be rammed through tonight, and this bill, which you've got to give the members of the committee props for the work that they did; they consulted – I don't know if it's thousands; don't quote me on that – a whole heck of a lot of Albertans. [interjection] Yeah, I'm quoted on that. It is *Hansard*. Good point. But they consulted a lot of Albertans – right? – from all corners of this province. I know they went to Hanna. They went to a number of other communities. It is intriguing, to say the least, this government's inconsistency when it comes to consultation on their bills. You know, we are supportive of this because, of course, we had our members weigh in on it as well, but contrast that with Bill 1, where we've seen, we've heard from multiple folks, including the treaty chiefs, that they haven't been appropriately consulted. That says a lot.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, hon. member, once again for your insights and for your question. Definitely, you know, I became very passionate about this piece of legislation when I saw this, the squatter and adverse possessions law . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock now strikes 6, and the House is adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 7, 2022

Day 6

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
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Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**The Deputy Chair:** The Committee of the Whole has under consideration government amendment A1 under the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment on Bill 1. You know, when I was a kid, my dad had a favourite joke he used to like to tell us. This was one of a couple of jokes that he told us that he had learned growing up in Trinidad. This is a joke called wisdom pie.

The way it goes is that there was a man who didn't have much. He lived on the streets. He was forced to use his wits to survive. One day he had an idea. He managed to scrape together enough coins – begged, found – to get a little bit of butter, flour, and an egg, whipped up a sort of pie crust. He filled that pie crust with a substance that was in, shall we say, copious supply in a nearby cow pasture. He mixed it in with a little bit of cocoa that he found, covered it with a bit of cane sugar, and he baked it over an open fire. He took that pie, and he went out and knocked on a door in the community. When the homeowner came to answer, the man declared: "Hey, this is your lucky day, sir. You have a chance to be the first to try my special recipe, wisdom pie." The homeowner said: "Oh, wisdom pie. Well, what's that?" The poor man said: "Ah. Well, it's the most wonderful thing. You know, it's a magical pie. It's made from the freshest natural ingredients. It's guaranteed to give you a tremendous burst of energy, to raise your awareness, and to give you a long memory, and all this from a single bite."

Well, the homeowner was impressed. He thought it sounded like a wonderful thing, so he haggled with the seller for a few minutes before they settled on a price for the pie, and the seller quickly hurried off with his money. The homeowner went inside to sample this amazing purchase. He cut a slice, and he took a bite. As soon as he tasted what was in that pie, he instantly sat up and ran out the door to chase that seller down. He found the seller a few streets over, and he started giving him a pretty good chewing out, saying, you know, that he'd been cruelly tricked. The seller said: "No, no, no. Not at all. You see, clearly, one bite of that pie gave you a tremendous burst of energy that allowed you to run here so quickly, you're clearly far more aware than you were before, and I'm sure this is a memory that will last the rest of your life."

Mr. Chair, what we have before us in Bill 1 is a heaping serving of wisdom pie. The fact is that, yes, the bill has been amended, but – you know what? – no amount of cinnamon and spice and extra sugar changes what is at the heart of this bill. It does not change what is at the heart of that wisdom pie.

You know, I think back, Mr. Chair, to this spring, when I had the honour of introducing a private member's bill. I remember at that time being told my bill was not worthy of debate, being told that I had not consulted enough, in particular that I had not consulted enough with racialized communities, including Indigenous communities. I remember being told by one of the ministers, indeed the minister of what is essentially now labour, and his comments were:

Mr. Speaker . . . a bill of this nature requires a great deal of consultation, not just from the activist class or from the academic class but from a wide range of cultural communities.

The minister went to say:

Rather than taking into consultation different communities, they propose an unwieldy bill that would make it harder for government departments to function.

"A political football," he called it, Mr. Chair, and said that on that side of the aisle they were not interested in party and foolish politics.

That minister, Mr. Chair, has been one of the chief people stumping for this hot mess of a job-killing bill, an embarrassment of an act that did not see a single bit of consultation with Indigenous communities, who are owed the duty to consult under treaty rights. This minister stands in favour of that. If my bill was not worthy of debate, then this bill was not even worthy of ever being introduced. Far more thought and care went into that bill than has been spent in any of this bill that we have sent here. This bill is an embarrassment, is going to be incredibly damaging to our economy, and the government should be ashamed of ever having brought it into this House.

You know, we've been down this road before. Now, the bill is being amended, and the amendment is removing sweeping powers that this government chose to award to itself. The minister, of course, tried to deny this multiple times on social media, but the fact is that they are now essentially admitting it is true because they are amending to take it out. Now, of course, this just goes to show either how little thought the government put into this bill and that they failed to recognize the incredibly sweeping powers they were giving to themselves and are now amending out of existence, or they intended to do so and just got caught.

You know, I think back, Mr. Chair. Again, this is a government that is very fond of awarding itself extraordinary powers. We have another bill in front of this House right now, Bill 4, with which this government is taking back a power. When they brought in Bill 21, they said, "Well, we're just clarifying a power that we always feel we had," this being a government that is pretty presumptive, arrogant, entitled. I think those are appropriate words.

I think back to Bill 10, Mr. Chair. I remember the debate on Bill 10, where they expanded the powers that they had that were similar to this under the Public Health Act, going even beyond what they've tried to award themselves here in Bill 1, going so far as to allow themselves to create entirely new legislation without ever setting foot in the Legislature. Now, at least then that was within the context of a public health emergency, so at least there were some boundaries on it there. As embarrassing as that was and as much as they, in the end, then had to go and walk that entire thing back, strike an entire legislative committee, spend weeks with multiple MLAs to undo that bit of arrogance that they refused to listen when we were debating it here in the Chamber and we told them exactly what they were doing. But it blew back on them from their own supporters.

What we have in front of us now, we have clearly seen over the last week, is receiving incredible blowback from many in the community, to the point that we are now here debating this amendment to the bill today, an amendment which certainly removes a problematic portion of the bill, but ultimately, Mr. Chair, this bill at its core is wisdom pie. There is nothing to redeem here. There is nothing of

value in this act. This amendment does not go far enough. The only amendment that would be appropriate would be an amendment that removed every single clause in every single portion of this bill.

Speaking back to consultation, Mr. Chair, we saw clearly today that the chiefs from the Assembly of First Nations spoke very clearly about what they think about this bill. Let's be clear. The duty to consult is not a duty to appoint someone to maybe go and talk to a few people after you've already introduced the legislation. It is not a duty to say that we'll send someone over to explain that to you because you don't understand what we're talking about. It is not a duty to say, "We'll pass the legislation; we'll put it in place; we'll put a little clause in saying that we promise to be nice to you; just trust us" and that's good enough.

7:40

The duty to consult means that you sit down with dignity and respect with Indigenous leaders, with First Nations, and you talk to them about what you are thinking of doing or what you are intending to do. You genuinely listen to their feedback in a way that allows them to actually participate in the process before you attempt to move legislation that affects them.

This government did none of those things because this government was in such a rush to bring in this flagship bill. It's clear that they barely even sat down and thought it through. They were so desperate to try to fulfill this radical promise of the Premier that she was going to give Alberta the power to never have to listen to anything the federal government ever said again, taken from a cockeyed idea from Alberta separatists who intentionally wanted to pick a political fight, a constitutional fight, who said: "Yeah. Absolutely, this legislation is one hundred per cent unconstitutional, and that's the point."

So the Premier had to try to find a way in a few short weeks to adapt that hot mess into this hot mess, into something that she could somehow get past all of the leadership candidates who now sit in her cabinet who spoke out against the very concept and idea of this bill repeatedly, on the record, talked about how destructive it would be for Alberta, how destructive it would be for our economy, the chaos it would cause.

What we have before us, Mr. Chair, is not a bill that's intended to do things better for Albertans. This is not a bill that is intended to improve our economy. It will not even improve things for our energy industry. It is here because it was a campaign promise for this Premier. It is about her political fortunes. It is about this government's intent to play political games in desperate hopes of re-election next May.

You know, again speaking of that consultation piece, Mr. Chair, as we look at this amendment, as this government tries to make a bad bill better and fails miserably because there is no redeeming it, one of the reasons that we have had so many challenges getting pipelines to tidewater built is because Conservative governments have done such a terrible job on the duty to consult. The fact is that we saw this repeatedly under Conservative federal governments. We saw that happen with Northern Gateway. It was killed because they tried to do a runaround on the duty to consult, to do it shorthand, find a shortcut, skip their homework, and they got called out by the courts.

And you know what? Even the Liberal government, when they came in and were working at getting TMX through, had to go back and backtrack and make sure they did that consultation. Now, of course, they were having to work on the poor foundation that had been laid before them, but the fact is that it still came down to the only reason that we have a pipeline to tidewater that will be in operation next year is because the Liberal government sat down and redid that consultation.

Our current mayor here in the city of Edmonton, actually, Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, in his role as the Minister of Natural Resources sat down and redid that consultation and made sure it was done thoroughly and before the facts, and that got the approval to allow that pipeline to be built. Well, that, of course, and the advocacy of the Leader of the Official Opposition, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, who was relentless in holding the Prime Minister to account to ensure that pipeline was funded and built. She did it, Mr. Chair, without a grandstanding hot mess of a piece of legislation that threatens to potentially scuttle any further energy infrastructure ever being built for the province of Alberta.

So we have here this amendment today which is removing some of the sweeping powers this government awarded itself. Again, that was certainly the largest concern that was raised, but it's not the only one, and multiple constitutional scholars have spoken out with concerns. Now, of course, this government has dug deep and spent days working to find the 1 in 10 dentists that will say that sugar does not cause cavities. They've managed to find a handful of those, but we know that the vast majority of constitutional scholars, lawyers, individuals have spoken out and said what we are saying: this bill is a hot mess. It's something that never should've seen the light of day in the Legislature, and it's something that will cause untold headaches and costs for Albertans and potential damage to our economy.

In the words of Ian Holloway, dean of the law school at the University of Calgary: "If I was grading one of my first-year law students on the actual writing of the bill, I'd give them a C minus at best. It's so poorly drafted, so riddled with internal contradictions. It's trying to thread a needle that's very hard to be threaded. To my mind, this is about as clearly an unconstitutional gambit as I have ever seen in my professional lifetime. The Premier is engaging in a game of political chicken. This is not really about asserting greater sovereignty for Alberta but, rather, winning the election and goading the federal government into saying or doing something intemperate."

Mr. Chair, this is what this government makes its Bill 1. It's what it's obsessed with. It is what it's pouring all its energy into at a time when we have real problems here in the province of Alberta: a health care crisis, a health care crisis for children. On that, this Premier has next to nothing to say other than: perhaps we'll get you some Tylenol in four to six weeks. But they have all the time in the world, all the power, all the resources to pour into this hot mess, this steaming wisdom pie.

Even with removing the sweeping powers that the government awarded itself in this bill and then attempted to say that it was not in fact actually awarding itself and then said, "Well, maybe," and then said, "Oh, oops, sorry; we'll pull that out" – even without that, there are several legal problems that remain that make it very likely that this bill is utterly unconstitutional, including trying to award powers to the Legislature which belong to the courts.

Now, I find that incredibly presumptive, Mr. Chair. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a constitutional scholar. I do not believe that I have the personal ability as an elected legislator to determine what is and is not constitutional. Neither does any member on that side of the House or this side of the House. Even those that are lawyers do not have that ability. Now, each of us may have an opinion. Certainly, we're all allowed to have one of those. You know what the saying is: everyone has an opinion. But that is far, far different than saying that our opinion should carry the weight of the rule of law.

Now, of course, we as legislators are given enormous power to indeed introduce, debate, and to pass laws. For that, there is no requirement. There is no IQ test. There is no experience requirement because, of course, we want people of all experience, knowledge,

skill sets to have the opportunity to represent the people of this province. But it is a far, far different thing, Mr. Chair, to say that anyone elected to this Legislature has the skill, the knowledge to be able to determine at the same level as our Supreme Court what is constitutional or that they should.

Now, I get it. It can be really frustrating, really aggravating when someone else does something you don't like. It can be absolutely frustrating when you feel that you do not have the power to retaliate or that the means of, I guess, pushing back take time, take effort, that you can't have instant satisfaction. But that is simply the reality of life, Mr. Chair. That is what it means to be an adult.

7:50

We have a system in place. If there is an issue of constitutionality, if we question whether or not something is constitutional, then we go to the courts, and the folks that are appointed to do that work, who have decades, in some cases, of experience, knowledge, training in making these: a group of them together will make that determination.

What we have here is a government that is insisting they have the right to throw a temper tantrum when something happens that they don't like, that because they don't like the time it would take to go through the courts – and let's be clear, Mr. Chair. This is a government that is happy to put that burden on other people. This is not a government that's been ashamed to trample on potentially labour rights and say: "Hey, if you don't like what we did, go to the court. In the meantime we're going to do what we like." They certainly weren't ashamed to do that in terms of taking away, again, with what we were debating . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, any other members looking to add – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the acknowledgement and the chance to speak on the amendment to Bill 1 and just a couple of things that occurred to me when we saw this introduced last night. First of all, I was astonished to see that this amendment was almost half the size of the entire act, right? A very similar amount of rhetoric and talk, legalese and so forth, and similarly jumbled and well paired with the original bill as it was brought forward to us in its contradictions and its sort of vague associations from one thing to another.

Again, when we're looking for clues, like Sherlock Holmes, to see how this whole thing was made up, we can see that's it's been very haphazard and sort of glued together in the very quickest sort of way to satisfy some kind of need for – I don't know – internal problems that this UCP government might have or internal problems within their caucus. Whatever. But here it is, foisted upon the people of Alberta. We have to deal with this here in the Legislature.

You know, I've learned over the years as a legislator that you only really have two most valuable commodities available to you. You have time, and the time is rapidly ticking down on this government, I can tell you, right? It's slipping away to a matter of months to do something effective to deal with what Albertans actually want their government to deal with at this moment, this juncture in history: a 40-year high of unaffordable cost of living in all sort of ways possible, a public health system that is not there when you need it for yourself and your family, and all of the insecurity that is associated with those two immediate emergencies that need to be dealt with. And here we are burning time – right? – the very limited time that this government has left, discussing something that really needs to be dealt with in other ways.

Yes, of course, a government has to step up to Ottawa. I mean, provinces do it all the time. It's an important thing. We did it as government, and we will continue to do so again when we form the government again. But to put up these half-baked bills – they're more like a call to arms to I don't know what; some fringe group of our society – is a terrible waste of time.

The other thing, the other commodity that we have, I believe, as legislators – again, this government is burning through it like, you know, gambling in Las Vegas – is integrity. If people don't believe that your integrity is intact and that you're serving the people of this province, then it doesn't matter what you bring forward. Once your integrity is gone, they simply won't believe you. This is a huge dose of integrity compromise, Bill 1, and this amendment does nothing to fix that. It feels like, you know, you're trying to bail out the boat with a cup somehow – right? – and it just keeps on getting worse, and it's just not working. Yes, indeed.

I have categorical problems – I've said it before, right? – of the very existence of a sovereignty act being brought forward into this Legislature. Those very words cause turmoil. They cause issues around integrity, of course, but also around – people are just not sure what's going to happen next, right? The implications and the responsibility of this provincial body extend to postsecondary institutions, to nonprofits, to all of the associations we have with the federal government and the funding of important programs that we are responsible for. It puts all of those things into question. People have to sort of say: okay; are they going to bring forward some sovereignty tribunal to look and see whether they should build that affordable housing in Lethbridge, or should they, you know, think twice? It's not governance; it's just somehow subverting the whole notion of governance.

People don't like it, right? I mean, maybe, sure, they say: well, Ottawa is encroaching on our province. You know, sometimes we have a right to think that, for sure, and we need to fight back on it, but this is not fighting back. This is a lazy way by which to make people angry or try to make people angry, but – you know what? – they're getting angry for the wrong reasons, and I'm getting angry about the issue of Ottawa. They're getting angry with the government not doing their job. That's what they're angry about.

You know, I always am happy to give free advice. My advice to this government now is to pull back on this now. We can see in Saskatchewan that they're doing the same thing, right? Their Saskatchewan First Act, or whatever, is not even in the same league as this one in terms of offensive breaches of constitutionality and so forth. Their watered-down version of Saskatchewan first: they're backing off on it. They're saying, "Maybe we're not going to do this right now" because they can see similar backlash from groups like just what's happening here in Alberta.

The AFN, for example, Assembly of First Nations, spoke out in the most clear terms possible that this Bill 1, the sovereignty act, in Alberta and the Saskatchewan First Act need to be dumped immediately. They're illegal. They breach the terms of treaties across this country and in Alberta and Saskatchewan specifically. It's an insult, quite frankly, to the premise of treaties and the agreements signed therein.

We know that investors are shaken by this as well, and we know that all of the institutions that are under the purview of this provincial body are also shaken and wondering as well. They're coming to me from the postsecondary sector. They're saying: what on earth can they overrule? Are they going to overrule on research? Are they going to overrule on expansion? Are they going to determine, you know, what we have to teach and otherwise pull back on those things?

In some ways I think that this UCP government has been practising for the sovereignty act over the last three and a half years – right? – with all of this leaving money on the table with the federal government, dictating which courses need to be taught at postsecondary institutions, you know, backing off on so many promises and responsibilities. It almost feels like it's just been kind of a warm-up to this bill that we have before us today.

Certainly, Mr. Chair, I believe that this amendment that has been brought forward, again, is equal only in the sense that it is equally as incompetent as the original bill that we have been given a few days ago.

Just as one more, a couple of words – and I certainly will speak on it again. I mean, it just seems to show a lack of understanding of the separation of powers. It makes the legislative body and the cabinet judge, jury, and executioner for a whole range of initiatives that we need to deal with in the normal way that the Westminster system does lay out over a period of 120 years here and probably 400 years throughout the world.

With that, I'll leave it. You know, the committee is a good chance for us to have different speakers in different circumstances, and I'm glad to continue the debate here this evening.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to add to debate tonight? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

8:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to be able to rise to speak on this matter in Committee of the Whole and to speak as well about the relevance, the impact, the import of the amendment to Bill 1 that is being put forward by this government.

Let me start from the overarching position to just review relatively quickly why it is that this act as a whole is a bad idea and why as a whole it is quite unfixable. In essence, this act, Mr. Chair, generates an unprecedented amount of uncertainty in the province relative to the rule of law, and it does so in a way that undermines investor certainty not only here in Alberta but outside of Alberta, in the rest of Canada, and indeed outside of Canada amongst investors internationally.

It does so through a number of different means. First of all, quite honestly, the whole rollout of this Premier's flagship bill is a lesson in legislative incompetence. We had the Premier introduce the bill on throne speech day, and within an hour or so we'd all had a chance to look at it, and we understood that this Premier was attempting to take for herself unprecedented antidemocratic powers in a broad-ranging way outside of an emergency, in a way that we'd never seen in a proposed piece of legislation in the province of Alberta before.

Then we had the Premier and various and sundry agents of the Premier insist that what the bill said was not what the bill said. They claimed we hadn't read the bill, Mr. Chair, and they claimed we didn't understand the bill. They claimed that it didn't say what it said. So that was very surprising. It became increasingly clear to those Albertans who really pay attention to these things that the Premier herself had either not read her own bill or, alternatively, was incredibly poorly briefed on her bill, which makes us question the capacity of the folks who are around her, or actually did know what was in the bill and was just deciding to say something else. That in and of itself is deeply troubling.

That whole drama, for lack of a better term, around the impact of the King Henry VIII clause – what it meant, the fact that it was there – leading up to last night, when the government finally introduced an amendment, which we are discussing today, that in part included the elimination of that clause, does not generate confidence in any way, shape, or form. I have heard that from so many folks across the province over the course of the last seven days. They truly worry

about who is at the helm and what they know about the job they've been asked to do by the 1 per cent of the population that selected the Premier to lead the government caucus last month. That display in and of itself drives a tremendously deep level of uncertainty across this province.

Now, there are also, of course, things in the legislation that created a tremendous amount of lack of clarity: this whole issue of who it is the government can direct, the language around anyone with a fiscal relationship with the government. It's actually not clear to us how far and deep into the private sector the government would purport to go with this bill. Once again, of course, that creates a lack of clarity. The consequences of this government declaring that federal laws are not applicable or not enforceable here in Alberta, of course, creates a tremendous lack of just clarity in terms of what the bill is intended to do.

Then, of course, uncertainty also is driven by the likely unconstitutionality of elements of this legislation. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre as well as the Member for Edmonton-North West were just outlining those points again today even. I will say – and I'll talk in just a moment – that there is nothing in these amendments that appears to undo the primary concerns around the constitutionality of this piece of legislation.

And then, finally, it is very clear to us that we have a very, very serious problem embedded within this legislation as it relates to treaty rights in this province. That also creates a tremendous amount of uncertainty.

Now, Mr. Chair, this is not me sitting around, coming up with fun, exciting ways to suggest that this bill creates uncertainty. This is me listening to Albertans. We have heard from the head of CAPP that any bill that creates uncertainty for investors is a bill that is a bad idea for the province.

We have heard from the Calgary Chamber of commerce that this bill creates uncertainty for many members, a range of members within the Calgary Chamber of commerce. I understand that the Premier likes to talk about those anonymous folks who allegedly called her one day and said that they don't agree with the head of the chamber, but I will say that, you know, we dispatched three of our MLAs to go to a chamber function a couple of days ago and they spoke to a multiplicity of chamber members at that function, and, actually, they all kind of agreed with the head of the Calgary Chamber of commerce and said that, yeah, this is very, very concerning and it creates a lot of economic and investor uncertainty. They spoke actually to investors, in fact. We also heard from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, who also said that this bill creates tremendous economic uncertainty.

Then today we were pleased to stand with a former governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, who outlined in great detail the means through which this legislation created uncertainty, essentially saying that the incompatibility of this legislation with provincial and federal laws and the inability of international investors to predict which laws would apply to the investment that they might or might not make would inevitably lead to those folks choosing other jurisdictions and that that was a huge problem because we are in a place right now where everybody is competing for international investment dollars and we are only one jurisdiction and we are doing the exact opposite of delivering a message that this is the place where those dollars should come. That came from the former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, someone who, just to review, served under former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

The final problem with this bill as a whole, of course – and it has, again, been touched on by other members of my caucus – is that it is to a large degree diverting this government's attention from the issues that actually do matter to Albertans. There have been now

multiple polls that have been both publicly and quietly published on this issue. I know members opposite get access to some of those private, nonpublished polls that we do that reinforce the fact that this is absolutely not what the people of this province want to hear their government talking about right now, yet that's what they are doing.

What does that mean? Well, it means that in the midst of the probably single most damaging flu, COVID, RSV epidemic impacting children in decades in this province, we have a Premier who, on one hand, is unwilling to stand and recommend that children get the flu vaccine and, on the other hand, was unable to answer the question I asked her yesterday about the resignation of the two deputy chief medical officers of health. Why? Probably because she was spending so much time trying to finally understand what the bill she had introduced meant after she finally decided to read it.

The point is that what she wasn't doing was finding out or being briefed on the fact that actually the top three public health positions in this province right now are vacant. I mean, yeah, we have someone who is theoretically called the chief medical officer of health, but he's got a full-time job already. Really, he's doing this literally off the side of his desk without an extra cent, so he's a volunteer. Then now the other two positions: we have resignations with both of them. And we have a Premier who apparently didn't know that that was happening at a time when our emergency rooms are overwhelmed with far too many children desperate for medical care. That's what happens when the government is diverted from the issues they should be dealing with.

**8:10**

Now we have a government that has introduced amendments. Let me be perfectly clear about the consequences of these amendments. I will say on the first matter that, no question, the amendments now effectively eliminate the Henry VIII clause. It now clarifies that we are no longer dealing with statutes, pieces of legislation. Rather, we are dealing with regulations, and that is fine. That is good, a good step forward. I don't know why we needed to be subjected to so many arrogant insults from the Premier.

I wish that on the first day, when we had pointed out what she had done, she would have risen, apologized, thanked us for pointing out the mistake, and just indicated right then that she would fix it, but no. Apparently, she did not quite learn the lessons she claims to have learned from former Premier Ralph Klein. Nonetheless, that's the first thing that this amendment does, and that is good. It does not, however, for all the reasons I've just outlined, address the much bigger problems embedded in this bill.

The second thing that this amendment does is that it attempts to limit the lack of clarity in one element of the bill by more directly defining what amounts to harmful. I thought what they had done, actually, when I'd first heard about these amendments, Mr. Chair, was eliminate reference to "harmful" altogether and otherwise just said, you know, that this would be a matter that is brought before the House when, in the opinion of the House, we think that there's been an unconstitutional act on the part of the federal government, but no. It turns out that, nope, that's actually not what they did.

They didn't actually even do that either. They kept the possibility of passing a resolution if it is harmful, and then they went on to say that harmful means that the range of actions that are covered by this piece of legislation, that the federal government may take, affect something that's in provincial jurisdiction. That's all that has to happen; then it's harmful. It affects – that's what the legislation says. Just want you to be clear. It doesn't have to hurt something that's in provincial jurisdiction. It doesn't have to diminish something that's in provincial jurisdiction. It just needs to affect it.

And if it affects something that's in provincial jurisdiction, then it is officially harmful.

Let's walk down the list of things that would fall under that definition, Mr. Chair. Well, we had a very good-news announcement on the part of the government a little over a month ago in the Industrial Heartland, where a new project – \$1.2 billion, \$1.3 billion – was announced by Air Products, and that particular project, an excellent project, is a project focused on developing hydrogen, reducing emissions while still taking advantage of our energy resources here, a very good project. In that project – I think it was about \$1.2 billion, so \$1.2 billion, \$1.4 billion – \$140 million was committed by the provincial government through what is now the successor to our original PDP program, and \$300 million was committed by the federal government.

Well, pretty sure that amounts to an initiative on the part of the federal government that affects a matter that is within provincial jurisdiction. Yep. Sure does. It does, Mr. Chair. But that is how they have changed the definition to include "harmful" or "to be harmful." In fact, they've not limited the scope of this word "harmful" at all. In fact, it still could even relate to things that the Premier has articulated her extreme displeasure with, like, for instance, the billions of dollars that the provincial government is receiving in order to support young families across this province through finally bringing in a robust child care program.

So the second amendment, then, Mr. Chair, does nothing to effectively limit the definition of "harmful," and it does not eliminate the provision which actually is at the heart of what is one of the two most unconstitutional elements of this bill, which is the belief that the Legislature can step into the shoes of the courts and make a determination about the constitutionality of a federal action or a federal initiative or a federal act. As a result of that still being in there, they have not actually touched one bit, not by one iota, the most offending part of this legislation as it relates to that particular head of unconstitutionality. There is no change here. They still allow themselves the ability to make a motion that says that in the brilliant opinion of this UCP majority government, the folks who literally spent seven days telling us that what was written in their bill was not written in their bill, that with their brilliant guidance we're going to determine what is now unconstitutional on the part of the federal government, and then we're going to do a range of things that we don't really describe to a range of people who we can't really identify.

It's this kind of thing, Mr. Chair, that drives investors to say: yeah, you know, I could open my tech company or my digital media company in Calgary, or I could just go to B.C., where they're a little less close to diving off the deep end and where I've got a better sense of what the laws are. That, I'm afraid, is what one of the consequences of this horrible piece of legislation is going to be.

Now, the other thing that is critically important about this bill and the reason why it must be rejected out of hand, which is completely unaffected by the amendments brought forward last night, in the dark of night, by this government, is the fact that we do not address the fundamentally flawed approach taken by this government when it comes to addressing the rights of Indigenous people in this province.

We have a legal obligation to acknowledge treaty rights. That's not done here. We have a moral obligation to pursue genuine reconciliation. By refusing to speak to a single one of the grand chiefs of the treaties here in Alberta, the Premier has failed to demonstrate any modicum of reconciliation. By repeatedly claiming that she has one person that she's spoken to and then at the same time failing to apologize for the fact that her minister claimed to have spoken to the actual representatives of the treaties,

failing to apologize for the fact that he claimed to do that when he had not, that is the opposite of reconciliation.

Finally, this government also has a practical obligation to acknowledge the treaty rights of Indigenous people, because that is the only way you can actually build a genuine partnership in economic growth and development. Acknowledging treaty rights and pursuing reconciliation does not mean that you say to Indigenous Albertans: we'll give you this one-time opportunity to partner with us on this one economic deal that we picked. That is not reconciliation. That is not treaty rights. They have an opportunity to partner, yes, but they have a right to choose not to and instead to ask that they be treated as the treaty leaders that they are. This government failed to do that.

They have now picked a fight with Indigenous leaders and treaty chiefs across this country, and they have injected a higher level of legal instability into our whole regulatory regime than had existed for years. So they have really messed this up, Mr. Chair. The fact of the matter is that it is not at all touched on by the amendments, and to pursue the objective of passing this legislation today, tonight, tomorrow, without pulling back and engaging in meaningful consultation is to ensure that this will be challenged in moments and that it will be found to be unconstitutional and is to absolutely torch the critically important nation-to-nation relationship that should exist between this Premier and the leaders of the treaties. [Ms Notley's speaking time expired] All right.

8:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members looking to add to debate tonight? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment on Bill 1, the hot mess express that is Bill 1. I'm going to speak first about the separation of powers a little bit and usurping of the role of the courts, which is what this legislation does and the amendment does not touch, and then I would like to make a few comments about the democratic implications of such a project and the bad-faith conduct, essentially, that is characterized by both the introduction of this bill, the amendment process, and ultimately the time allocation and so on of this bill.

Why is this happening right now? Why does this legislation take the form that it does? I would argue that this is happening by design of usurping of the role of the courts and a politicization of the courts by certain elements of the far right who have now adhered themselves to the UCP electoral coalition and have made themselves much more prominent by the election of this particular leader.

This bill – when one looks at the free Alberta strategy, one can just read what they have said, which is that the federally appointed judges are accused in that strategy of “blatant judicial activism [and] bias against the constitutionally enshrined jurisdictional rights of Alberta,” which is, I guess, an odd thing to say about a Supreme Court that remains majority appointed by Stephen Harper, but here we are. The fact of the matter is that this bill has its provenance out of a wing of the conservative movement that has become more prominent, that has in fact taken over the conservative movement in this country, and that has no regard for the rule of law, for the separation of powers, and for our institutions of liberal democracy. In fact, it is *sui generis* to this movement that they undermine those aspects of what makes for a good life for all of us at every available turn.

Here in this bill – and the Leader of the Official Opposition just spoke to many of its implications in terms of investment and so on. I want to do something that probably she wishes that she could, because I know her well enough by now, which is that I'm going to

get into a little bit of detail about separation of powers. Let's buckle up here.

One of the core functions of any liberal democracy and any place that grounds itself in the rule of law is that the judiciary is independent, and in Canada, of course – of course – it's not just judicial independence for the purposes of staying away from the sort of feckless and reckless flightiness of elected Legislatures. No. It's also intimately bound up in the concept of jurisdiction since Confederation. So the court's concerns for protecting that independence is not just to protect us all from decisions that might target one group of individuals or one region or so on and upset the balance in that way, that balance of our own individual security of the person and various collective rights; it also has to do with intrusion from provincial Legislatures over the years into the levels of the federal judiciary.

Bankes and Olszynski, which my friend from Edmonton-Rutherford tabled earlier this afternoon, go into some detail on this, and I'll quote from it. “Grounded in the judicature provisions of the Constitution Act, 1867” – and just as, you know, to open a bracket here, we've heard the Premier variously go on and on about the founders, as if we live in America, and the integrity of our foundational documents, which is, of course, the Constitution Act of 1982 brought in by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, but she overlooks that because the rhetorical flourish makes, I guess, her feel better about what she's about to do – “both legislative and executive bodies are incapable of intruding upon the core jurisdiction of superior courts or infringing upon the independence of the judiciary.”

One of the reasons for this is, of course, that concern of federalism, which is always integral to everything that we do in this giant place we often call a country, but it's also because then it avoids the development of a shadow court system, a parallel court system; that is to say, there is only one place where decisions get made. So, for example, if you are the parent of two teenage boys, there is only one place where the decisions get made, and that is mom. In a liberal democracy there is only one place where those decisions get made in a final instance, and that is the courts. You can't go around making yourself a parallel system of justice. That doesn't work for anyone.

The rules apply to everyone, and they apply in the same way, and that's how they protect us all. That's the entire jurisprudence of what's called section 96 of the Constitution, and there are a number of Supreme Court decisions laying out all of the various ins and outs of this. One of those decisions was, in fact, around one of the Supreme Court justices writing for, in fact, the dissent in the carbon tax reference, wherein Suzanne Côté wrote that the “infringing upon the independence of the judiciary . . . includes the duty to maintain the rule of law and protect citizens from arbitrary action by supervising state action.” That is to say, there is a final arbiter on any capriciousness that may come out of the Legislature, as we are seeing right now.

Now, “Bill 1 may not remove a core jurisdiction,” as Bankes and Olszynski write, “from a section 96 court.” What it does is that it “contemplates the creation of a parallel court,” because in this Legislature, apparently, we will decide what is constitutional and what is not, and the entire Bill 1 then derives from that original trigger. I would argue that this attack on the judiciary, as I quoted that so-called free Alberta strategy, is, in fact, a feature and not a bug. This is of a piece of the entire – it's not even an ideology. It is a grab bag of ideas, but insofar as it is an ideology, it involves the attack on collective knowledge, on the rule of law, on liberal democratic institutions, and ultimately on trust, which is what our entire system runs on. From property rights to security of the person to traffic laws, our entire system runs on trust.



This is of a piece, and you know that because all you have to do is listen to this Premier. She has variously attacked science, public health, our national security establishment – oh, just asking questions about Ukraine, you know – flood mitigation, amnesty for people who broke the law. That’s not a thing in Canada, just so that we’re all clear. She’s just asking questions, just kicking down the foundations of everything that has led to the longevity, equality, individual liberties, protected us from reckless or feckless decisions by those in power, that protect our security of the person, our section 7 Charter rights, our property rights, all of it.

This is, too, an attack on every aspect of civil society. That amount remains unamended in this legislation. How do you know that? You look at section 1 of this bill. This is not a war with Ottawa. This is going to war with ourselves. It disrupts the activities of nonprofits, Crown agencies, housing authorities, municipalities, delegated authorities, police services. No wonder it’s so deeply unpopular. That’s just the politics of it, not even the constitutionality of it.

I asked one of my friends the other day – he’s a senior lawyer in Calgary, corporate and commercial. I said, “What do you think about this thing?” He said, “It’s ridiculous and it makes us look ridiculous.” I asked another friend of mine, a businessman in Calgary. I said, “What do you think about this?” And he said: “Don’t worry. May is coming, and that’s how we’ll deal with it.”

You know, I guess ultimately on the one hand this is very bad for democracy, and I will use a quote to talk about that from a member from across the way. Quote: to present to Albertans in any way that there is some magical solution that the Legislature could pass tomorrow that would somehow make all these problems – that is to say, fed-prov relations – go away is not factual. That person also suggested that the sovereignty bill would not only lead to uncertainty for business investment but also foster bad blood with party members and voters by promising something that can’t be fulfilled. Quote: the number one way to make Albertans mad at us would be to promise that you can do things with certain legislation that you cannot do and then not deliver; that will make them very upset. I would caution anyone who wants to lead the UCP to make sure they have all their ducks in a row.

That person also went on to say: I would be surprised if a bill as described would pass inside the Legislature; it would be calling for the breaking of the law, which is just not something the Legislature would do. Well, maybe not that member, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, who said those words during the campaign, but certainly, apparently, the Legislature will do it, and everyone will just get in line.

8:30

The proposal is no different, by the way. What those members were responding to and was actually put before us: there’s no difference. Ultimately, this is bad for democracy in the ways that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre – and I cannot believe I am saying this: I agree with him – describes here . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Whoa. Whoa.

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. Yeah. Everybody just hold on.

. . . because the fact of the matter is that it does make people mad to promise something that you can’t deliver. That is exactly what has happened, to try to do some sort of trickery to people that is bad for democracy. That is what’s happening here.

But I guess in terms of – I will go back to the feedback that I heard from many other people, which is, you know, democracy will speak in May. If the publicly available data set – folks were in the field from Leger between November 24 to 28 – is anything to go

by, before the bill was introduced to much hue and cry and exhortation everywhere, I think that the numbers will only be reduced at that time. Here we are: statistically insignificant difference between voters in Edmonton and Calgary at over 60 per cent, both of them, disagreeing with this bill.

There is no question that the amendment or set of amendments or whatever these several pages are do not save the fundamental unconstitutionality of this bill. It does not save the overpromising by the Premier. It does not save the fact that this is just a continuation of grievance politics by a fringe of the far right that has now adhered itself to the conservative movement in this province.

There is no question that this bill remains a fundamental attack on institutions and groups of people and decision-makers within the boundaries of Alberta, not outside. Ottawa is unmoved by this particular appearance of clown shoes on the floor of the Alberta Legislature. However, municipalities, Crown agencies, any contracted service provider: they are not unmoved. They are nervous. They have a lot of questions about the priorities of this government. They have not, obviously, been listened to, as the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has gone on and described at some length in terms of treaty rights. I think Albertans are noticing just what a devastating error this was, both an error in judgment, an error of priorities, an error in law, that this bill is and remains with the introduction of the amendment.

I will conclude with one observation, which is that there is a continuing sort of insistence from the government side within the context of this amendment but, of course, within the bill itself as well: oh, well, we said that we’re not doing anything illegal, and we won’t do anything unconstitutional; therefore, it’s not. This is the equivalent – and I think it was my very erudite friend from Calgary-Mountain View who said this – of driving down the highway at 200 kilometres an hour and saying: I’m not breaking the law. Well, now we have the amendment. We got rid of the Henry VIII clause, so now we’re driving down the highway at 190 kilometres an hour saying the same thing. It doesn’t matter that you say, “Oh, it’s not unconstitutional,” when it goes on to detail a number of ways in which it is unconstitutional. It does not save it. It matters what the bill actually does, just as in this life it matters what you do a little more than what you say.

What this bill does is distract us fundamentally from the really pressing concerns of our time. We face 40-year-high inflation. We just had another rate hike from the Bank of Canada. This is going to profoundly affect people’s bottom line right before Christmas and afterwards. We are going into a global recession. We don’t know what that means for the price of oil and so on and all of the geopolitical instability, the European Union’s price cap on Russian oil and how or if that is going to make any difference to global oil markets given that as it is, it’s not a question of supply or demand but whether Lloyd’s of London actually insures tankers, and they won’t over 60 bucks a barrel. It’s all very complicated.

We don’t know what the future holds, and Albertans are feeling that uncertainty in all of those headlines that swirl in the business news and in the reporting out of Russia and Ukraine and so on. What we know is that life is getting more complicated, that people have been to hell and back, many people have, during the pandemic through jobs and health and kids being home and all of these challenges. They feel like they are bearing down on us, and what is our government doing? I mean, you can’t even explain it to people. People say to you, “Like, what is happening over there?” And you say: “Oh, never mind. Like, tell me about your concerns about health care, about affordability, about economic development. Tell me about your ideas because I cannot even – you know, do you have a half an hour to go through the days of our lives of this particular bill?”

It is so far removed from ordinary people's lives. All they see is that once again we're into year 3-plus of this, a government that should be just focused on doing the business of health care and education, social services. All that's hard enough, folks. You can just stick to your knitting and do the hard things because running those systems is a big deal, and it matters to people. We have a government who won't do that. They're just wandering around all the time looking at their own drama, focused on themselves, talking about their own jobs instead of people's jobs, talking about, you know, their own weird ideas about health care rather than what we know in public health matters and what people are looking for and what doctors and experts and others are telling us.

It is for that reason – I mean, amend away this hot mess express, as I began my comments. It does not save it unless this bill is entirely pulled. Pass as many motions as you like, you know, government motions saying mean things about various people outside of the Legislature. If that's how you want to spend your time, that's also fine. That is completely within our role as legislators. When it comes time to really stand up to Ottawa, do that, too; also completely within the ambit of this Legislature. It's been done on both sides of the House.

But ultimately what needs to happen is that this bill needs to be pulled because it is not an appropriate signal to anyone that government is working for them, that democracy can actually solve problems in their lives, that our liberal democratic institutions matter, that the rule of law matters and, within that, the separation of powers matters, that treaty rights matter, section 35 of the Constitution matters. Let's focus on that, the really hard stuff, which is health care, education, keeping people healthy, helping. You know, I always say that the people's money is for little babies and old people. Let's focus on the really, really hard stuff, the important stuff that people are asking us to do, not this stuff that undermines the fabric of who we are and goes to war with our own institutions and our own ways of making sure that we are building a good life for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 1.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

8:40

### Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Time Allocation on Bill 1

14. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is

resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I rose in this House earlier this week to share how much time and effort has been put into this bill this fall session. I now rise again to highlight once again the fact that the opposition members continue to filibuster a bill that they made amply clear they had no interest in even seeing printed. Didn't want Albertans to see the bill. As a reminder, the Official Opposition also made it abundantly clear they had no interest in reading the bill before they voted against it. Members of the opposition have decided to prolong the legislative process on Bill 1, continuing debate over 14 hours. How much time do they need when they already announced that they would not support any amendments that the government put forward? If the opposition has no amendments to put forward in Committee of the Whole, then we are going to stop wasting the time of the Assembly and move on with the people's business of the province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anyone else wishing to speak to the motion? Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 14 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Copping	Lovely	Shandro
Dreeshen	Luan	Smith, Mark
Ellis	Madu	Turton
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Guthrie	Pon	Williams
Hanson	Rehn	Wilson
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
Jones	Schow	Yaseen
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Carson	Eggen	Notley
Dach	Feehan	Phillips
Deol	Irwin	Sweet

Totals:	For – 25	Against – 9
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[Government Motion 14 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (continued)

**The Deputy Chair:** The committee has under consideration amendment A1. Anyone wishing to add to debate tonight? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

9:00

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will try not to take very much time, but I was not quite finished when I last spoke to the many challenges that are embedded in the fact that this government is jamming forward this legislation this evening notwithstanding the clear opposition of the grand chiefs of the treaties here in Alberta and treaty leadership.

In particular, the minister himself acknowledged today: perhaps we didn't consult enough. Now, the answer to that obvious failure is to wait and to refer this to committee and then take the time to actually engage in meaningful consultation. Anybody who knows anything about engaging in meaningful consultation understands that there must be a little bit of back and forth. Perhaps you don't ultimately agree on everything, but it is not a mere notification process, nor is it a: we'll talk to you after we've done the thing we've already decided on and passed the legislation. That was the point I was trying to make.

Before I got a chance to make that point, the members opposite decided to engage in the motion of time allocation, limiting our ability to talk about this issue to a further one hour. Rather unprecedented. This bill was only introduced last Tuesday. Second reading began on Wednesday. We are now Wednesday night, and it will be jammed through all stages. That's incredibly unnecessary, particularly given the call from the treaty chiefs today contradicting the assurances made by the minister and by the Premier around whether they were ever consulted and asking that this bill be withdrawn.

So I would just like to take this moment. Given that instead of doing that, we are rushing forward at an unprecedented, unwarranted, accelerated speed to jam through this incredibly unconstitutional, disrespectful piece of legislation, I would like to take the opportunity to read into the record the quotes from several treaty leaders from today.

Chief Tony Alexis, who has been designated to speak on behalf of Treaty 6 as a whole, says: let's be honest; this all comes down to land and resources; we are yet again the inconvenient Indian standing in the way of unprotected resource extraction and other exploitation of treaty lands. End quote. He went on to say: the act puts a lot of uncertainty in investment; if you have a provincial government fighting with the federal government who is not including our First Nation, with a lot of disrespect within, it will not be easy to bring investment to this environment; it will hurt the economic fabric of our commerce in all regions.

A portion of Bears paw First Nation. Chief Darcy Dixon from Bears paw First Nation said this about the act, quote: this is a warning to Canadians; if you care about these lands, if you care about your country, you should care about this bill; it is not a First Nations issue; this impacts us all. End quote. He went on to say: Bill 1 is just part of a political game; that may be true, but we see in it a disguised attempt to disregard treaty and as a way to gain unlawful access to our lands without restrictions, similar to what they have attempted already with the Alberta Police Act, to overreach and attempt to gain access in jurisdictions where they do not belong and therefore cause more harm to communities.

We understand that the vast majority of treaty rights have, in practice, been honoured through the actions of the federal government. Today we have an uncertain declaration that this government will unlawfully interfere with any range of undetermined actions on the part of the federal government. They have done this without engaging with treaty chiefs. They have done this without consulting. They have now taken that error, and rather than trying to apologize and putting things off – say, for instance, like in Saskatchewan, where the whole matter has been deferred

until March – instead what we have is this group trying to jam it through through time allocation motions at 5 after 9 on Wednesday night, seven days after this bill first was introduced for second reading.

This is an incredible affront. It will spark an incredible deterioration in relations between the government of Alberta and treaty leadership across this province. It is a black mark on the record of this government with a government that actually has a lot of black marks on the record, but this one is pretty darn historic. I would once again ask members of the government opposite to vote with their conscience, to think about what the long-standing legacy of the relationship is with treaty leadership in this province and vote against this bill in committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to add to debate tonight? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the floor.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak this evening to Bill 1. What we've just witnessed is something that is pretty shocking and disappointing to most Albertans, who have a respect for these institutions that we serve, particularly here in the Legislature or our judicial system or our court system.

I know that traditionally, Mr. Chair, Alberta students in grade 6 will be invited to come to the Legislature to spend time here, to do the School at the Legislature to understand the workings of our parliamentary system, our Westminster system. Part of that day that they may spend here is spent in study of that Westminster system, and one of the guides they use used to be called *The Citizen's Guide* – now it's published by the Legislative Assembly – but part of that is now called the parliamentary education guide, and there's a PDF on the Legislative Assembly website which is quite instructive.

I wish that the members opposite, the government of the day, including the Premier, would've availed themselves of it because grade 6 students learn about this and our system of government and the separation of powers when they're here for the day. It would've been helpful as a guide, I think, for the Premier and her government, when they were drafting Bill 1, to follow, because they may have decided not to go through with it at all.

It's fairly elementary, Mr. Chair, because it is designed for elementary students to read, and it's an introductory system to our Westminster system of government, which goes on to say that in the Westminster system there's

a style of government with an executive branch (Premier and Ministers), a legislative body (made up of elected officials), a judicial branch (an impartial court system), and a ceremonial head of state (Lieutenant Governor). The name derives from the Palace of Westminster in London, England, where Parliament developed and remains today.

That's what our grade 6 students are taught about our Westminster system of government.

The next element of the guide. It goes on to talk about the separation of powers in Alberta. Of course, they outline and delineate the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch and the various responsibilities laden upon each of those branches of our parliamentary system.

In grade 6, Mr. Chair, we expect our students to grasp these tenets of our parliamentary democracy, yet our government doesn't seem to have them nailed down as the government of Alberta. Had they taken the time to even read the grade 6 parliamentary guide that's available on our Legislative Assembly website – I'll table it for them tomorrow if indeed they would like to read it. If indeed they'd

followed it, they probably would not have gone through with the legislation that they are now trying to salvage by amending it.

Albertans are ashamed and embarrassed about it. There may be an element of support for the legislation, but that's found in the fairly far extreme right wings of the UCP support for their party. I used to describe that transition that's taken place, Mr. Chair, as now the tail wagging the dog in just trying to describe how the party has been hijacked by the extreme right wing of their political caucus, of their political membership. In fact, I think I need to amend that analogy and suggest that now the tail has become the dog. In fact, if you look at the front benches to see who's closest to the Premier and the new arrangement of the deck chairs on the UCP *Titanic*, those closest to the Premier are, not surprisingly, the most extreme right flank of the former party known as Conservatives. Indeed, the deck chairs on the UCP *Titanic* have been rearranged, and what we have as a result of the leadership being taken over by an extreme right-wing flank is legislation such as Bill 1.

#### 9:10

Fortunately, part of it has been walked back. Now we're looking at another potential amendment, but the bill itself is critically flawed. On this side of the House we are urging all members of the government to reflect on what even a grade 6 student might say to them in analyzing what they've come up with as a piece of legislation, as their flagship piece of legislation, and to simply withdraw the bill instead of going to the extremes of limiting the debate on the legislation.

The time allocation that we've just seen imposed upon this Legislature of Bill 1, accusing the opposition of misusing the time of the House and therefore justifying time allocation: totally to the contrary, Mr. Chair. Indeed, it's a primary responsibility of all of us as legislators to protect our Charter of Rights and our constitutional rights and the rights we stand guardian for for our constituents. The government is acting with a total disregard for our Constitution because it suits their own political ideological agenda.

Cabinet was about to give themselves the right to make laws unto themselves without further passage by the Legislature of the pieces of legislation that were referred to cabinet for consideration. Indeed, they were given law-making abilities that were the prerogative of this Legislature. That, thankfully, has been amended and brought back, so the so-called Henry VIII clause was no more part of this bill, but it doesn't make it palatable, Mr. Chair, to have this legislation still contain elements which disregard the courts. That is one of the elements of our fundamental democracy, our Westminster system, the separation of powers that we expect a grade 6 student to understand.

Indeed, Mr. Chair, the power of the courts is still being circumvented by this piece of legislation, which, in the opinion of legal scholars such as Martin Olszynski and Nigel Bankes, there are still serious and persistent legal problems with the bill. Therefore, the bill remains unconstitutional and, as such, should be referred to the Alberta Court of Appeal to rule on the constitutionality of the bill. Why, in fact, would the government not be willing to do this? Why are we looking at imposing time allocation on such an important, fundamental piece of legislation? To the government, they see no need to proceed with caution. They see no need to refer it to the Alberta Court of Appeal to rule on the constitutionality of the bill, perhaps because they are trying to give the right to themselves in cabinet to determine what is constitutional and what is not.

We, in fact, as legislators here are not expected to be the court. We are a separate branch of government, Mr. Chair; we're the legislative branch. There is another branch of government, under our separation of powers in the Westminster system, that is the judicial branch, and that's our Alberta Court of Appeal, which is a

supreme court in Alberta, the Court of King's Bench, the Alberta Provincial Court, which I think is called the Alberta court of justice, which needs to be updated on this website.

In any case, Mr. Chair, the courts exist for a reason, and to circumvent the courts or attempt to do so to fulfill the political agenda that you have because it's inconvenient to do otherwise is a very sad commentary on the dedication or commitment to our parliamentary system, our Westminster system, that this government has. In fact, it's a total disregard for it.

I don't know, indeed, what, say, students coming to do their one-day tour of the Legislature tomorrow are going to face when those tour guides and those instructors and the teachers that are along with them are trying to explain what's happening in the Legislature now as they go to the parliamentary education guide and talk about our separations of powers in Alberta and they try to explain to students: "Well, you know what? This is the way it's supposed to work. This is the way it's laid out, but currently we have a government right now that's kind of mixing them up and looking at maybe giving this power of judicial oversight to themselves so that they can determine what indeed will become law without further oversight by the courts." That's something that a grade 6 student will probably scratch their head at, Mr. Chair, and wonder: well, how can they actually do that? Well, the fact is that it probably will be found not to be able to do that and that courts will actually be asked to rule.

This legislation is going to be held up in court for a long time, and I don't know if the government will be granted, if this legislation actually passes, the opportunity to have and continue while indeed the court passes judgment on it. But what it does create, Mr. Chair, not only in the minds of the grade 6 students trying to understand exactly what their government is doing in contrast to what the separation of powers the government's own website suggests should be done – listen to the comments of people most recently that I heard at the Piper law event recently, the Piper law winter reception.

I was there a little bit later on in the reception, which was held a few days ago at a local hotel. The Premier had given her speech and left, and I was in the wake of the Premier, listening to some comments about what folks who had listened to her had said. They were construction people at high levels; they were lawyers, fairly high-powered lawyers, investors, project stakeholders. The room had been packed when the Premier was there because they, of course, want to hear what's going on with such a devastating blow to democracy in the works. In fact, what people were saying to me is that it's up to the Premier to convince this crowd. This is the crowd that they have to convince. Well, I beg to differ slightly with that; I think the whole population of the province needs to be convinced.

But this crowd of lawyers, high-powered lawyers, project stakeholders, construction people, investors were waiting to be convinced that what the Premier was up to was in fact going to be useful and productive. They were not convinced, Mr. Chair. That room full of folks who went there hoping to have the Premier convince them remained skeptical and concerned. The people that I spoke to directly weren't of the opinion that their questions were answered and their fears were allayed. They're going to be continuing to look for more answers from this Premier and from this government which won't be found in the legislation that we have before us, even as amended.

Mr. Chair, the concerns of all of the province and, of course, the business leaders in the province are still out there. The fear is, of course, that it's going to be very difficult to make business decisions that will affect projects and that long-term projects may be delayed or postponed while this type of legislation is in the books because it's still unclear, even in its amended form, what the effect will be

on legislation that might affect their project or their company or their industry. You can't have that type of uncertainty and go ahead with multimillion-dollar projects.

Now, certainly, not everything in the province is going to stop, but there are lots of things, Mr. Chair, which can be postponed, and when you have a situation where a major project is being contemplated by investors who are seeking multimillion-dollar loans and financing for that project, the lawyers and the investors and the project stakeholders are all sitting on tenterhooks wondering whether or not the legislation that's before us is actually going to put the kibosh to their project, whether the court challenge is going to be the result of the intrusion by the province into the judicial process. That in and of itself has sent a chill down the spine of the business community in this province notwithstanding the reassurances of the Premier and other ministers who try to get up and say: "Nah, don't worry. They're okay with it; no problem whatsoever."

9:20

We've got the former governor of the Bank of Canada expressing concerns about this. You know, the government is trying to shoot the messenger on it, but the fact is that Mr. David Dodge was appointed and served under Conservative Prime Ministers as well, and his reputation is pretty unsullied. To have a former governor of the Bank of Canada tell the public and be willing to stand and say publicly that this is damaging to the economy, that it creates uncertainty, I think has to be taken pretty seriously.

Mr. Chair, I'm pretty concerned even about the legislation as it stands before us today in its amended form. I hope that the government still sees fit to pull it from the Order Paper and perhaps do as the government of Saskatchewan has done: take a time out and really address what the feelings of the population of the province are for real and respect indeed the opinions of legal scholars, of constitutional experts who are saying that this is going to be very, very damaging legislation. The government of Saskatchewan has seen fit to do that; perhaps they will back it out of the public view later on. Right now they've suspended their legislation until the spring.

I invite the government to do the same thing, and perhaps they can just simply let it die on the Order Paper or realize and respect the province's population that says, "This is not what we want; this is not what we expect" at a time when we have an unprecedented number of people occupying our emergency rooms, particularly children, when families are scared about having to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis, when the Indigenous population in particular is saying: "You're trampling all over our constitutional rights. You have failed to consult with us. It's a constitutional right we have; it's a treaty right that we have." The government is trying to explain that they did, but in fact the Indigenous population and leadership is saying: uh-uh, this didn't happen at all.

The fact that they're saying so in the face of denial by the current minister doesn't look very good for this government, Mr. Chair. The public knows who they're going to believe. For the Indigenous leadership of this province to have to once again come back and gear up for a fight with this provincial government after the provincial government, the UCP government, has tried to claim that they were making amends and following a path of reconciliation is pretty disappointing. It's evidence that they haven't learned a thing.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You can hear them talking about the relationship that they think they have with First Nations leadership and populations in the province when they announce partnerships on project A or project B, but those one-off projects, Madam Chair, are not reconciliation;

those are business partnerships. Indeed, overarching all of that you have to have a consultation process that is respectful, and that means an open dialogue and a back-and-forth exchange. We have a government here telling us that after the fact they're going to actually speak to Indigenous leadership. They're saying that tomorrow, maybe tomorrow afternoon, we'll go ahead and have deeper consultations.

In fact, if we add up the number of hours of debate that we might have left here, Madam Chair, there could maybe be total passage of this Bill 1 before the end of the night if the government decides to keep on talking tonight. That consultation is not going to happen. I can only imagine the legal battles and the money that's going to be spent, the wasted dollars on both the part of the Indigenous leadership and their organizations and in the government in trying to defend this foolhardy legislation. That's totally unnecessary. Absolutely unnecessary.

There's no way in the world that Albertans are looking at this government with respect and saying: this is what we needed right now. They're looking at their wallets, and they're saying: I can't afford rent. They're looking at their children and thinking: holy smokes, I hope to God one of my kids doesn't get sick and end up in the hospital, because there's, like, a 20-hour wait and potentially no bed for them to go into, into care. Children's hospitals are overflowing, the emergency wards. There's a trailer being used as a waiting room in one of our emergency wards in this province. It's unprecedented. It doesn't matter where you go in the province.

The government will say: well, goodness gracious, that's all over the country; that's all over the world. Well, tell you what: this government is responsible for what's happening in their part of the world – it's called Alberta – and they have to take responsibility and take action that's meaningful.

**The Chair:** Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is my pleasure to rise in the House and have the opportunity to speak to the bill, Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, on behalf of my constituents as well as concerned Albertans, particularly racialized Albertans. I will not be taking very much time as the government has imposed the time limit on this debate after avoiding spotlights for the full last week.

The government understands – like, for the past whole week I see this bill is not being debated at all during the day, because the government was avoiding facing the controversies and the questions and concerns and the opposition against this bill not only from opposition but the large majority of Albertans as well as from experts, economists, journalists, and business organizations. Sticking to and being so – I'm just trying to word it – stubborn to get this bill through this last phase shows, actually reflects, the lack of vision this UCP government basically has. Not only this; also, it reflects their lack of ability, actually, to, you know, have a vision at all.

This bill is being opposed by – we were discussing this morning, and my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-McClung mentioned the former governor of the Canadian bank David Dodge and the former senior economist with ATB. The biggest thing – the majority of the UCP leadership contenders did not only oppose it but got together, rallied together against this narrative and the Premier's leadership mandate to oppose this during the leadership debate. Not only this; this Premier, I hope, if she has the decency, would understand that she was not elected on this mandate. Not only this; during the race, when I'm looking at the first ballot, not even the UCP members, kindly we'll say, voted for this issue. The majority of the UCP

members in the race actually voted against the Premier on this issue. It is a surprise to see that the UCP is not willing to learn from their past experience. They're so intent to, you know, keep carrying their legacy as they have been in the past in this province, changing their leaders during their term. In the past four or five terms, I believe since 2012, they don't even have one single term where their leader actually completed his full term as the leader of the party or the Premier of the province.

9:30

Whatever their vision is, whatever they are trying to do in this House after being elected, it is not helping the majority of Albertans. Due to this, their popularity in the province sank, and every time there is, you know, pressure to leave the position. The same thing happened in this province not long ago. It was quite surprising to see some of these UCP leadership contenders sitting on Executive Council being tone deaf for the last three and a half years by not touching those issues that were important in the province during the leadership race. As soon as they came back to the cabinet table, they changed their minds again. They were discussing the issue of affordability. They were discussing the issues of health care, education, and as soon as they're back at the cabinet table, they seem to have changed their minds. They totally forgot their own weight, their own positions on this bill, and they're not speaking up.

This bill basically is not going to help Albertans. What I wanted to say is that it will not of course help the United Conservative Party and the government caucus members because Albertans are very upset, and they're waiting for May 2023 or maybe any time before. When they have an opportunity, they will definitely give their answer. That is what I'm hearing in my community, in my riding from my constituents.

The Premier is talking about sovereignty – and sovereignty, I would say, in inverted commas – within a united country. Sovereignty within a united country, similar to what the Minister of Finance said this afternoon: broad but targeted and focused. So with the surprising terms they are coming up with, it seems like they are not understanding what they are saying or what they are trying to do. You're talking about sovereignty of the province; that is not really what this bill is proposing. At the same time, you are not able to understand what Albertans and communities and minorities in this province are feeling when you're making comments like, "Unvaccinated people are the most discriminated against group in this province," not being able to understand the racialized and marginalized communities facing racism in this province and living in fear in their communities when racism is rising in the province big time and failing to understand what you're saying. When you were given the opportunity in this House, you failed to recognize that. So what exactly does sovereignty mean for those very people?

Immigrants are afraid. When they move here, when they move to Canada, when they move to this country, they don't certainly move to one province. There's a lot more to do to help those individuals so that they are not being exploited, so they feel safe, so they are able to contribute to our economy in their full capacity. Instead of touching on the real issues, the United Conservative government actually came up with this I would call it a political stunt, a political gambit that is not really going to help Alberta, the Alberta economy, and people looking for jobs. We know that 15,000 jobs have been lost since this Premier came into office, two months ago, last October. So people are scared, like: what will happen to the economy?

The Conservative government did not understand what they were doing in the past three and a half years. They were just, you know, wasting taxpayers' money, and the corporations were taking their

business out of the country, out of the provinces, to the east. The same thing will happen again, the Calgary business Chamber is warning, and business organizations are calling for it. But it seems to be that the government – I would say that some members actually don't have guts anymore to stand up on behalf of their constituents on what they were saying during the leadership debate, for those Albertans and those UCP members who trusted them and voted for them in that position. All of a sudden they came back to the cabinet table and they lost the whole interest in representing those views within their own party.

To be on the record, I wanted to use this opportunity in this House on behalf of my constituents, the majority of my constituents, and most of those who came to my office after seeing this bill moving forward and the people in racialized communities who are openly speaking against it. I want it to be on the record that we strongly oppose this bill. The reason for the opposition to this is that this is not helping Albertans. This is not helping the Alberta economy. It will destroy the economy, and as my colleague already said very effectively, it's against the mandate of the Westminster parliamentary process and procedures. That's what I've learned.

You know, I got the opportunity to be at the CPA, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, seminar in London, England, with some of the UCP members and also Conservative Members of Parliament, and that's not what was being discussed. We were discussing more about how to build collaborations, coalitions with equal representations on the committees to help the society at large. But this is not what we are seeing this bill doing. On the contrary, this is actually attacking that very process, our democratic process, that took centuries and centuries to come to this.

What this bill is trying to do is replace the role of the judicial branch to interpret what is legal and what is not legal and, more than this, to give unilateral power to the 1 per cent in the House, the ministry, to write what is legal and what is not legal and what is to follow, what is not to follow, and, further, to go beyond this and direct the provincial agencies to follow what it seems to them is not legal or to the benefit of, in the best interests of the province.

9:40

This is a very dangerous move. This is not supported by anyone, particularly not by the majority of Albertans, and Indigenous leadership is not even frightened but very angry about how this bill is trying to impinge on their treaty rights. This move is very much misguided. This is not a benefit to the province. It will kill our economy; it's killing jobs already. It will not help the UCP at all.

With this, I conclude my remarks. I will request, actually, the members of this House, on both sides, to look once again at what we are debating here. It's going to change the political direction in this province for the next six months. That will be very harmful for the province and for our future generations. Think again, and oppose this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I just have to acknowledge that I'm speaking here from Treaty 6 territory. I don't typically do a treaty acknowledgement before I speak, but I think it's quite fitting given the absolute infringement on treaty rights that is happening with Bill 1, which I'll get to shortly. I usually give a shout-out to all the people tuning in at home, and usually it's just a couple, so it's a joke. You know, it's the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's mom, that sort of thing. But tonight I

actually know that there are a whole heck of a lot of people tuning in because they've told me that they are, including folks from Indigenous communities, including folks who've written us as MLAs, calling on us to oppose Bill 1. I'm grateful for those people who are tuning in tonight. Like I said, I know that there are a lot of them. They're watching. Albertans are watching, and in fact people from across Canada are watching, and they're paying attention to what's happening here in Alberta.

You know, that's part of why we took the not unprecedented but rare step of voting against Bill 1, the sovereignty act, at first reading.

**Ms Hoffman:** Heck, yes.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. You know what? The Member for Edmonton-Glenora just said, "Heck, yes." You know, I can say that there were people that right away responded to us saying: well, why would you do that? We knew – we knew – that it was going to be damaging. We knew that it was going to be dangerous. Did we know that it would be this incredibly damaging and incredibly dangerous to Albertans, to the future of our province, to investors who are speaking out, to business leaders, to chiefs, as I alluded to earlier? I don't think any of us predicted it would be just this bad.

Now, this is, in fact, my first time speaking to this bill. Gosh, it's hard to know where to begin. You'd think that in a fairly thin bill there might not be a whole lot to speak about, but there is a whole heck of a lot. For those folks watching, this is the UCP's Bill 1, so you know it's their most important, their flagship sort of bill. Gosh, I have to admit it was quite surprising to me that at a time when we are in the midst of an absolute crisis in health care, particularly in pediatric health care, in children's health care, at a time when all of us are hearing from our constituents about the affordability crisis, about people who are struggling to make ends meet, this was this government's priority.

We've asked the members opposite multiple times why they refuse to speak to the crisis that is health care. What did we see on Monday in the span of a few minutes? First of all, that was our first opportunity as the Official Opposition to address what had broken on Friday night. That was the news that Rotary Flames House, which supports children who are needing palliative care, respite services, the list goes on: those services were going to be paused, and children receiving respite services were going to be discharged. We heard that news. It broke on Friday night. People were absolutely up in arms. People were heartbroken to hear that news.

At the first opportunity we had when this Legislature sat again, Monday afternoon, our members, in fact my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre, stood up and demanded that we have an emergency debate on this absolute crisis in children's health. What did this government do? They denied it.

A few minutes later the Official Opposition leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, stood up with her opportunity to present Bill 201, which was her private member's bill, that would address some of the serious crises in health care. It was her opportunity as a private member to try to support and, in fact, collaborate with this government. What did they do? They killed that one, too. Absolutely. They moved it down the Order Paper. Basically, they deprioritized it, so we won't even get to that bill.

We asked the members opposite: why won't you speak about health care? Why won't you address the crisis that you are all hearing from your constituents on? They're silent, and they continue to be silent.

At a time when health care is being ignored, like I mentioned earlier, affordability is probably – probably for me, from the conversations that I've had with constituents – second to health care, people struggling right now. It would have been a great opportunity

to – I don't know – address the affordability crisis, do more than just reverse the cuts that this same government already made, like the reindexing of AISH.

But, no. They chose instead to go with Bill 1, the sovereignty act. Sorry. The Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry. The job-killing sovereignty act.

**Member Irwin:** Sorry. The job-killing sovereignty act, more accurately. I don't know if we've got to that amendment yet, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

But, truly, it says a lot. It says a lot about this government's priorities. I had an opportunity the other night. I don't know. Clearly, I still don't have enough of a social life. I had the opportunity to tune into the debate that was happening in this Chamber, and some of our members were talking about Bill 1. One of the members asked another member if, you know, they were hearing about the sovereignty act at the doors. One of the members said: no, actually; to be honest, I haven't heard much about it.

I can say that – you know what? – I hadn't. Like, organically nobody would ever. I always, when I door-knock, come to a door and ask: what issues are top of mind for you? Nobody organically, prior to this bill being introduced, would have ever said: oh, you know, I'm really worried about Alberta's sovereignty. No. Not at all, and that that's the honest truth. [interjection] Exactly, right?

I can say that from not just Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. You might say: well, you're in an orange paradise there in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I am. You're correct. But I've door-knocked in Edmonton-South West. I've door-knocked . . .

**Ms Notley:** Everywhere.

**Member Irwin:** I've door-knocked everywhere. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for giving me a boost tonight.

I've door-knocked a lot. All over this province. That's a fact. Medicine Hat, where the Premier currently – I was going to say currently resides, but that's not true. She doesn't live there. She does represent it, though. I think she visited a couple of times during the campaign.

**An Hon. Member:** Has she even been there since?

**Member Irwin:** I don't think since she's won the election. That's unfortunate.

I can tell you that I door-knocked five times with our amazing candidate Gwendoline Dirk there and had a lot of conversations with people. Health care, education, affordability: top three issues, absolutely. The Member for Lethbridge-West: same thing. She door-knocked there. She can corroborate that.

I have one story from door-knocking in Medicine Hat that sticks with me. I'll tell you. I walked up with a volunteer, and – I can picture the house still – there was a big truck backed up into the driveway, and I thought: okay; this will be interesting. You never know. You never want to assume. I'm like: let's check this one out. Get to the door, a young guy, hat on, answers the door. I was like, "Hey," you know, do my little spiel. "We're out with Gwendoline Dirk. She's running to be your MLA here. What issues are top of mind?" I swear to you – and you can ask that volunteer. What did he say to me? He said, "You are getting our support, the NDP, because I'm an Albertan and I'm a Canadian, and it's Alberta, Canada." That was his message. And we said, "Oh, so you're talking about sovereignty." He's like, "Absolutely." And I asked him, I said, "Have you voted NDP in the past?" He said, "No, I never have." So it did come up at the doors, but not in the way that this government would hope.

9:50

I tell those stories because – you know, I can give the example of door-knocking recently in Edmonton-South West. Same thing. I had a long time . . . [interjection] The Member for Edmonton-South West is noting something as well. I had a long-time conservative who said that he's alarmed about the sovereignty act as well. And I think everybody – I see my colleagues on our side of the House nodding their heads, right? You're hearing . . . [interjection] Sorry. I'm getting some heckles, that I'm not quite hearing, from the Member for Edmonton-South West, but I'm sure he will join debate here shortly. I'm certain he will do that and share his thoughts.

**Mr. Williams:** No time. No time.

**Member Irwin:** No time. No time because this UCP government, the same UCP government that is putting forth what has been called the most undemocratic piece of legislation in Alberta's history, is also – is also – implementing time allocation, which means they're limiting debate on this very bill that countless Albertans, including that Member for Edmonton-South West's constituents, have spoken out against. So I would give this perhaps as a warning to that member and other members on that side of the House, that they might want to start listening to their constituents. If not: early retirement. [interjection] He continues to heckle me, for those folks watching at home who can't quite hear that.

It's not just long-time conservatives in that member's riding that are concerned. It's economists. It's constitutional law experts. It's the former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who many people have spoken about today, who shared his concerns on that bill as well. It's their own MLAs. It's their own cabinet ministers who've spoken out but have suddenly changed their minds. You know, the same cabinet ministers like the Deputy Premier, who said . . .

**Ms Notley:** That cabinet pay bump is very convincing. Very convincing.

**Member Irwin:** That cabinet pay bump, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona says, must be enough to change their minds, because one of the Deputy Premiers, which is hard enough to say, with a leader in a government that claims to care about small government – largest cabinet in history as well. The now Deputy Premier from Lethbridge-East said that no one person should be able to enact regulations without consultation. The Finance minister called it an economic time bomb. The jobs minister called it a fairy tale. The Municipal Affairs minister called it anarchy, and the minister of trade said it was like shooting ourselves in the foot. Those are just some. There are many more quotes that I could share but, again, not enough time.

Those are just some – some – of the quotes from this government's own cabinet ministers, and when asked and when pressed by us in question period about why they've changed their minds, what's changed for them, we didn't get clarity. I'd welcome the opportunity for any of those ministers to clarify for us: what changed? Don't tell me it was just the pay bump. What changed? [interjections]

It is so interesting. Again, I know the people watching at home can't quite hear everything that's going on here, but it's so interesting that you get a lot of heckling from that side of the House, but they're not willing to stand up and defend their position on this bill. I guarantee – I don't know if any of them are knocking on doors, but I guarantee you that they are going to be hearing from their constituents if they do. How could you support Bill 1? How could you sit silently, other than heckling, in that Legislature and not get on the record?

One of the things that I'm most concerned about when it comes to Bill 1, the sovereignty act, is the fact that Indigenous folks have not been adequately consulted, and that became very clear – very clear – today by noting that the Minister of Indigenous Relations has completely dropped the ball on this file. I mean, we're not totally sure if it's fully him or if it's the Premier as well, or perhaps it's other members of cabinet.

**Ms Notley:** It all starts at the top.

**Member Irwin:** It all starts at the top. As somebody who was Premier, she understands that, you know, you would apologize, and you would take a hit. We don't see that from this government.

That minister basically said that he had consulted those Treaty 6, 7, and 8 chiefs when, in fact, he hadn't. And what did we hear from Chief Alexis, who's speaking on behalf of Treaty 6? He said: "Let's be honest. This all comes down to land and resources. We are yet again the inconvenient Indian standing in the way of unprotected resource extraction and other exploitation of treaty lands." Wow. Some pretty powerful words. What else does he go on to say? "This act puts a lot of uncertainty in investment. If you have a provincial government fighting with the federal government who is not including our First Nation, with a lot of disrespect within, it will not be easy to bring investment to this environment. It will hurt the economic fabric of our commerce in all regions."

That should be alarming to these UCP members. That should be absolutely alarming. I'd love to hear the MLAs from the area that Chief Alexis represents go on the record and explain how they could possibly support a bill when the treaty chief for their area is raising the alarm. Unbelievable.

Chief Darcy Dixon is from Bearspaw First Nation. Chief Dixon says: "This is a warning to all Canadians. If you care about these lands, if you care about your country, you should care about this bill. It's not just a First Nations issue; this impacts us all." Wow. It's not just a First Nations issue; this impacts us all. He goes on to say: it's part of a political game; that may be true, but we see it as a disguised attempt to disregard treaty and see it as a way to gain unlawful access to our lands without restrictions, similar to what they have attempted with the Alberta Police Act, to overreach and attempt to gain access in jurisdictions where they do not belong and where they cause more harm to communities.

Wow. Powerful words from the chief from Bearspaw First Nation, and he's right. He's right. We'd be . . . [interjections] Yeah. Sorry. I'm getting heckled from one of the members over there, one of the same members who we never seem to hear from in this Chamber.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt so late into your speech. Just a caution to speak through the chair.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Oh, yes.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you for that warning, Madam Chair. I just find it so interesting that we've seen this multiple times in the few days that we've been in the Chamber. This government claims to care about so many of these issues – like health care, like sovereignty, apparently, like property rights – yet they're not standing up and defending their positions. I don't know.

Okay. I've got a few more things that I want to say on the record. I don't know how much time I have left, but I could go on for hours. Luckily, we will. Well, only for hours, unfortunately.

**Ms Hoffman:** One.



**Member Irwin:** One. That's right.

One of the other – you know, I guess I want Albertans to know, because there are a lot of Albertans watching from home who are concerned and rightly concerned about what they see in this bill. I want Albertans that are watching to know that there is hope out there and that this is, unfortunately, a short blip that we're all going to have to deal with but that change is closer than it's ever been, because Albertans are asking for stable and responsible and honest leadership. You know, we had the opportunity not long ago to present an alternate Speech from the Throne. That was our opportunity to say to Albertans . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 14, agreed to earlier in this Assembly, I must now dispose of Bill 1 in Committee of the Whole and put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Copping	Lovely	Schow
Dreeshen	Luan	Shandro
Ellis	Madu	Smith, Mark
Fir	Neudorf	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Pon	Williams
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Jones	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Rowswell	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Irwin
Carson	Feehan	Notley
Dach	Goehring	Phillips
Deol	Hoffman	Sweet

Totals: For – 27 Against – 12

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** Now I'll call the question on Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 1 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Copping	Lovely	Schow
Dreeshen	Luan	Shandro
Ellis	Madu	Smith, Mark
Fir	Neudorf	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Pon	Williams
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson

Jones	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Rowswell	Yaseen

**10:20**

Against:

Bilous	Eggen	Irwin
Carson	Feehan	Notley
Dach	Goehring	Phillips
Deol	Hoffman	Sweet

Totals: For – 27 Against – 12

[The remaining clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 1.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of an amendment considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise on behalf of the hon. Premier to move third reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

If passed, the act will become a tool, a shield that allows the Alberta government to push back on federal legislation, policy, or measures that are unconstitutional or harmful to our province, our people, and our economic prosperity. Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of Canada provides sovereign, exclusive jurisdictional powers to the federal government and the provinces. They are called exclusive federal powers and exclusive provincial powers.

Alberta has its exclusive provincial powers that are sovereign, and the federal government is not allowed to legislate in those areas. The federal government is not allowed to hide under any pretense to intrude on exclusive provincial powers. These three foundational legal documents taken together constitute the Constitution of our

country: the Constitution Act, 1867; the Constitution Act, 1930; and the Constitution Act, 1982, otherwise known as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to reiterate to our fellow citizens that the rights and powers granted to Alberta by this constitutional document are not subordinate to the government of Canada. To the contrary, exclusive provincial powers outlined in sections 92 and 92A include: “Property and Civil Rights in the Province,” laws respecting “Non-renewable Natural Resources, Forestry Resources and Electrical Energy:”

- (a) exploration for non-renewable natural resources . . .
- (b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural . . . and forestry resources . . . including laws in relation to the rate of primary production . . .
- (c) development, conservation and management of sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of electrical energy

and laws respecting exports of nonrenewable natural resources from one province to another. These are exclusive provincial jurisdictions. Of course, Mr. Speaker, section 93, that deals with education, and indeed the concurrent powers in section 95 respecting agriculture and immigration.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 is therefore constitutionally structured in a manner that gives Alberta the legislative framework and a democratic approach to affirm and defend the federal-provincial division of powers while absolutely respecting Canada’s Constitution, the court, and indeed the treaty rights that are constitutionally guaranteed. A review of Bill 1 will show clearly – and I’m going to read directly from the text of Bill 1. It affirms in section 2 that nothing in Bill 1 affects the treaty rights guaranteed in the Constitution in section 35.

For decades and despite Alberta’s best efforts to get the federal government to respect our jurisdictions and ensure equal and fair treatment to all provinces, the federal government ignores the cries and pleas of our people and government. This unfortunate state of affairs has been made worse by the current Liberal government under this Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. As if that is not bad enough, the Trudeau Liberals now entered into an unholy alliance with the socialist federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh.

Mr. Speaker, this alliance has been devastating to Alberta’s economy. We have seen how total disregard of the constitutional order has harmed Albertans, our way of life and economy, from the cancellation of Energy East, Northern Gateway, and Keystone XL to the passage of bills C-69, C-48, and the imposition of the carbon tax, that has made life more expensive and less affordable. The devastation that this federal Liberal government has caused on our oil and gas sector is unimaginable.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition brags about the Trans Mountain pipeline, but I’ve got news for them. The Liberals and the NDP have effectively ended private investment in pipelines. The Trans Mountain pipeline was proposed by the private sector. All of us members of this Legislature must be worried when a government that is in the business of public services decided to chase away private investment to occupy that particular field. That is the reason why till today we are still not sure when the Trans Mountain is going to be completed. I would, rather, prefer that the government that is in the business of public services stay in its lane, allowing the private sector to do what they know how to do best.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot also forget that when Albertans voted, with a supermajority of 62 per cent, to remove the principle of equalization, the Prime Minister ignored Alberta, and to this day has never made any attempt to acknowledge, to meet, to discuss the expectations of Albertans. Instead, the Prime Minister gave us the worst and most hostile minister to Alberta, minister of environment

Steven Guilbeault, whose mission is simply to undermine the largest subsector of the Canadian economy, the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, the previous government have tried and Albertans have been exceedingly patient. The former NDP Premier and Leader of the Opposition imposed the now infamous multibillion-dollar carbon tax on Albertans, that she and her party did not campaign for in 2015. The NDP, the former NDP leader’s excuse was to buy social licence. Instead of social licence, Alberta’s economy was devastated by that Leader of the Opposition and Justin Trudeau, her friend and ally at the federal level.

**10:30**

Mr. Speaker, here are a few ways that that quest for the so-called social licence has paid Alberta: 183,000 Albertans lost their jobs while the Leader of the Opposition was the Premier of Alberta; multibillions of dollars in deficit, more than \$70 billion in debt, that the Kenney government inherited in 2019; collapse of commodity prices and an economy that was brought to its knees by the dangerous combination of the federal Liberal policies and the provincial NDP policies right here in Alberta. We must never allow that to happen again in this province. We must shield Alberta and say: enough is enough. The federal government must stay in their lane, as our founding fathers and the drafters of our Constitution had envisioned.

It is important that I am clear on what the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act will not do because we’ve seen a lot of fearmongering on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and indeed the NDP MLAs and their allies across the province. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act would not do the following. It will not allow Alberta to defy Canada’s Constitution. I want to reiterate that to our viewers watching back home. Despite all of the fearmongering and all the division that the NDP has attempted to perpetuate, this bill, if it becomes law, will not defy Canada’s Constitution. It would not allow Alberta to ignore decisions of our court. It is important to reiterate that once again, but that’s one of the misinformations that we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and her MLAs and indeed, again, their allies across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will not also allow Alberta to separate from Canada. I recall, when this bill was first proposed, that they jumped on that, that this is a separation bill. It is now clear that all of that was all misinformation and fearmongering.

Mr. Speaker, this law will also not allow cabinet to issue unconstitutional orders in council. It will not allow cabinet to direct private individuals or corporations that are not provincial entities to violate federal laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is not true that this bill will chase away investors. It was the NDP, while they were in government between 2015 and 2019, that scared away investors and devastated our province. In fact, the threat that Alberta faces today is from the NDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, despite the fearmongering by the Leader of His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition and her NDP MLAs and their allies, the above remains true today, and it will also remain true tomorrow.

Premier Smith has taken onboard . . . [interjections] Apologies, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Premier has taken onboard the concerns of our caucus members and indeed the concerns of Albertans. An amendment that addresses those concerns has been put forward in this Assembly. I am glad that we took onboard the concerns of Albertans and, with that, strengthened this particular bill to achieve its original intention. To be clear, if a resolution of this Legislative Assembly identifies an amendment of a statute, it will allow the normal legislative process, and ultimately a bill will be tabled in this House by the responsible minister.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote to pass Bill 1 in defence of our province, in defence of Albertans, and in Alberta's best interests.

With that, I move third reading on behalf of the hon. Premier.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm always honoured to have an opportunity to rise in this House and speak to legislation. I think that the bill we're considering is slightly less honourable. Nonetheless, we're here tonight to debate the job-killing, democracy-threatening sovereignty act.

In terms of democracy threatening, we've already seen the current government choose to bring in closure on this bill, that they know is so deeply unpopular, that they're trying to ram through. I will give, you know, the members of the cabinet a lot of credit. One of the reasons why it is so unpopular is because they spent months telling people how dangerous this bill would be if it came forward to the Legislature. Every single UCP leadership candidate other than the now Premier was very clear that this was a threat to our economic security, that this was damaging to Alberta's international and national reputation, and that it would have grave consequences for the people of Alberta. You know what? They were right. They were right, absolutely right.

And that, through you, Mr. Speaker, is one of the reasons why, when members come to this House and they say, "Well, Albertans didn't vote for blah, blah, blah, whatever it is" – Albertans certainly did not vote for this bill to come forward to this place because only 1 per cent of the actual population voted for this Premier; 99 per cent of Albertans did not endorse the plan that the current Premier has to come into this place and bring forward a piece of legislation that is killing jobs in the province of Alberta, that is hurting our economy, that is threatening our international reputation. Ninety-nine per cent of Albertans did not give you the authority to come forward into this place and bring forward a bill that's so damaging to so many Albertans.

For anyone who wants to throw around the term "sovereignty" – and we've seen the Deputy Premier do it here tonight quite successfully; thrown around the word "sovereignty" many, many times, the Premier has. It's definitely been batted about in this Chamber as well as on debates and in news conferences. When you think of the word "sovereignty," I hope that you also ponder other times in my lifetime and yours when sovereignty has been front and centre and what the economic impacts were of that debate at that time, because I can tell you that there are still downtown towers in Montreal that used to house head offices for major corporations that moved to Toronto. I can tell you that there are businesspeople in Calgary, there are businesspeople in south Edmonton, southwest Edmonton, in fact, that are deeply concerned about the impacts that this bill will have on investment that they are desperately trying to attract from the region and nationally and internationally.

I can tell you that one of the things that they are concerned about is that when we have a Premier that is such a loose cannon and a cabinet that shows no spine, when they've spent months campaigning against this very bill, come in here and all of a sudden decide that they're going to, you know, stand up multiple times to endorse and support it and, in fact, bring in closure at multiple stages to try to ram it through in the wee hours of the night or the early hours of the morning, it speaks to the kind of ambition that the current Deputy Premier, multiple Deputy Premiers, or other people around the front bench show in the lack of conviction for the words that they spouted just a few short months ago, some just a few short weeks ago.

I can say his name now. Former Premier Kenney, to his credit, just a few short hours after this bill was introduced, resigned his seat – resigned his seat – because I suspect that he didn't want to be one of the people who was forced to come into this place and stand up over and over and over again to vote for something that he knew was going to damage Alberta and Alberta's reputation. He was very clear throughout the summer and into the early fall that he felt the sovereignty act would have detrimental impacts, detrimental effects on the future of the province of Alberta and economic investment for this province, and he's right. He is right, Mr. Speaker.

I also have to say that there is a specific clause in here that gives me great pause, and that's the fact that the government wants to write in the clause, has written in the clause, and didn't amend it out – in fact, they added even more opportunities, even more leeway for themselves to be able to vote on things in here and then go behind closed doors and do what they so choose. The clauses under resolution 3(b)(ii): if a motion is passed that the members believe causes or is anticipated to cause harm, they can go into the backroom, and they can write a bill that doesn't see the light of day, and they can change the law unilaterally. Well, that is obviously very bad for democracy, Mr. Speaker, and in turn very bad for investment in the province of Alberta.

To reiterate, 99 per cent of Albertans did not vote for this Premier. There were many, many members of this caucus and, in particular, the current cabinet who campaigned very aggressively against this bill, and they should be showing that again, the courage of their convictions, to be able to stand by the words that they so eloquently spoke just a few short months ago when begging and pleading for votes around the province, when talking about the kind of threat that this would impose on our province.

**10:40**

I can also say that when I am spending time connecting with Albertans right across this province, many are talking about affordability, about public health care, and about the economy. This, Mr. Speaker, does nothing to support any of those three pillars, and in fact it erodes them in significant ways. The government wants to pass a bill in this place and then be able to go into the backroom. If they think something in the Canada Health Act causes harm or may possibly be perceived to cause harm, they can go into the backroom and they can rewrite legislation here and fail to impose.

When we were in the very first briefing with the media – not a briefing; actually, it was Q and A with the media – it was very clear that there were serious concerns being raised about the lack of legality that this bill would have. The sponsoring minister, the current Minister of Justice, decided to ask the deputy minister to come out from the backroom and explain his legislation, because clearly the deputy minister and the Premier either didn't understand it, couldn't explain it, or they didn't care. They wanted somebody else to be on the news, not have to carry water for their terrible bill that they were bringing forward to this place.

To the deputy's credit – I wouldn't want to be in that position. They are failing at a political press conference because they've put politics before the economy, they've put politics before democracy. They are failing, they are floundering, and they try to call the deputy in to come and defend them. Mr. Speaker, that is embarrassing. That does not give anybody a sense of confidence that the front bench knows what they're doing, that the front bench has any sense of stability, that the front bench cares about what the key issues are for Albertans right now around affordability, the economy, and public health care.

Also in that initial press conference, questions were asked about the role of the RCMP and this implication around the RCMP

through this bill. It was clarified by the current Justice minister that the RCMP is seen as a contractor and that contractors would apply to this legislation. So if there are issues with contractors, the front bench can go back down the hall into a quiet room, and they can write themselves another piece of legislation that could infringe on relationships with contractors, that could break those relationships. They're a contractor, the current Justice minister said, in relation to the federal government being essentially their employer.

We know that it is hugely unpopular. Every time members of the front bench, including the current Justice minister and the former Justice minister, have talked about messing with the RCMP, Albertans aren't keen on that. Albertans know that that is a huge boondoggle economically. I can tell you that as a kid who grew up in a small community in northern Alberta, we had a lot of RCMP come in for their two years from across the country, serve their time, and go on to other communities. How would we be able to attract and retain in a model like that, Mr. Speaker? We absolutely wouldn't. We relied on those RCMP members from across the country to come and serve our community and the region in the north to make sure that we had stability in terms of policing. I imagine the Member for Lesser Slave Lake knows exactly what I'm talking about.

This bill has the potential to cause grave economic harm, and we're already seeing from many employers – the Premier has been asked day after day to name just one CEO who thinks this bill is a good idea, and the best she can come up with is that some representatives of some organizations say that they don't think it'll be that bad. But nobody says that it'll be good. Nobody says that this is going to move things forward, that this is going to help. Nobody is willing to put their business's reputation on the line for that.

Why are we here, Mr. Speaker, if not to do things to make things better? The former Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who in turn resigned her seat to give the Premier a seat, talked about coming to this place like we do when we go camping, that you want to leave the campsite better than the way you found it. This does not make things better for democracy than the way we found it. This erodes democracy, it hurts our economy, and it is damaging to our national and international reputation.

I call on the cabinet ministers who so eloquently campaigned against this bill all summer and into the fall to stand by the courage of their convictions, to stand by their words when they were talking about wanting to give stability back to the people of Alberta. If you won't stand by what you said just a few short months ago, you're going to have to stand on the record in this place and every single time you voted for this. I'll tell you that it's not popular. People don't like it. That's why you're trying to ram it through here in the middle of the night, because you don't have the confidence to do this in the middle of the day, in the light of the public eye. You know that this isn't right.

Earlier today, when our leader said, "You know, if this gets rammed through today before the treaty chiefs, the grand chief and other treaty chiefs, have an opportunity to engage in a meaningful way, you're doing a disservice to the treaty; you're breaking the treaty," there was a point of order called by, I think, the Government House Leader saying, "Oh, how dare you assume that we're going to pass this bill today," and here we are. Here we are at almost 11 o'clock at night, and I have a feeling that they're going to bring in closure yet again, because they've done it already multiple times, because they don't want people to stop and think about what they are trying to ram through.

But guess what. They're already thinking about it. Your Premier Jason Kenney, your front bench, many of whom are still on the front bench who were running for his job over the summer, made it very

clear that everyone knows exactly where Alberta stands on this issue and that Alberta will be hurt by even considering the job-killing sovereignty act. That's why they want to do it fast. They don't want to have to stand by their vote. They don't want to have to stand up and defend what they've done and how they've rammed this through.

Congratulations on being so effective in communicating all summer and into the fall about how damaging this was. You were right. In fact, it's even worse than you said that it was going to be. It has huge dictatorial powers that have been embedded in it as well.

So please take a few moments. Stop and consider exactly what you want your record to be, because your record will be put forward to the people in just a few short months, less than six months. I remember standing in this place and saying that the second half of your term goes faster than the first half. That's my experience. In the first half of your term you feel like you've got lots of time, lots of opportunities. This is either the last or the second-last Bill 1 you'll be bringing forward to this place. And this is what you want to run on? Feel free. I can't wait. I can't wait to take this and health care and affordability and economic impacts at large to the voters of the province of Alberta, and if you can't wait either, then call the election.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak to Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has stood.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 1, but I do so with deep, deep disappointment that we have gotten here at all and, secondarily, that we have gotten here in this terrible way of having closure invoked continuously on each stage of the bill so that we cannot hear what people need to say about this bill.

We know that certainly people are talking about this bill out in the community. We are seeing repeated calls for this government to stop this bill from people who normally would be considered to be supporters of this style of government that is offered by our current government, people that are considered part of their community coming out repeatedly saying: "This is not good. This is bad for the province of Alberta."

The thing that I'm concerned about is that as these people come forward, people who have, you know, built reputations in this country over years for the work that they've done, the response they get from this government is not to listen to them but, rather, to disparage them. We've seen, for example, David Dodge, who was the governor of the Bank of Canada, a position that is incredibly important in this country, being described by this Premier as a Liberal appointee when, in fact, he was the governor of the Bank of Canada, and he served under Prime Minister Harper at one point. You know, to take someone who has done the work that David Dodge has done in this country and to try to find ways to disparage him because they don't happen to like what he has to say is really unacceptable to me.

10:50

We also saw this Premier make comments about the CEO of CAPP and the CEO of the Calgary Chamber, saying, "Well, they obviously haven't talked to their members," insulting them by saying that they don't know what they're talking about or that they don't represent the people they, in fact, do represent. Again today we see this Premier and other members of this cabinet and this government disparaging the leaders of the First Nations by saying to them: oh, they're only doing this because the NDP is scaremongering. That's what they

said earlier today, that this is just a reaction to scaremongering, which, I can tell you, the First Nations tell me is a very insulting thing to say to them. What you're saying to them is that they're too dumb to figure it out for themselves and that they're only doing it because they're being scared by somebody on this side of the House. How can you call a whole group of people stupid by saying that they don't have a clue as to why this may be a bad bill on their own terms, in their own right?

That's what we've seen continuously in this House. We've seen the disparaging of people who have done incredibly important things in this country because they don't agree with this bill and they don't agree with it on very substantive bases. They don't agree with it because it's been demonstrated repeatedly by scholars in the area that it's unconstitutional. It's been demonstrated repeatedly by people in the community that it is an ideological bill which is not supported by the majority of people in this province because it does not address the issues that are important to the people of this province. It's about shoring up the base for people who are deeply afraid they're about to lose the next election, and that's it. So I think it's very important that we spend some time talking about what it is that all of these people, these many hundreds of thousands of people who are objecting to this bill, are actually saying.

We've had an opportunity in this House to read out some of the comments by the CEO of CAPP or the CEO of the Calgary Chamber or by David Dodge, and we've had an opportunity to hear some of the comments by some of the chiefs from treaties 6, 7, and 8 about this bill, and I think it's time that we actually stop this whole bill, that we do not move ahead in this third reading, and that we actually go back and do the consultation that should have been done.

As a result, I am bringing an amendment into the House. I'll wait a minute until I get permission from the chair.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just give us a moment to get the paperwork, and then I'll have you read it into the record.

Hon. members, this will be amendment RA1, and I'll ask the hon. member to read it into the record for us, please.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I am bringing notice of this amendment on behalf of the Member for St. Albert to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a third time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has not discharged its legal duty to consult with First Nation and Indigenous peoples in respect of the potential impact the bill's provisions, if enacted, would have on their rights and treaties.

Thank you.

Now, I think it's very important that we bring forward some of the words of some of the representatives of the First Nations at this particular time so that it isn't about what I might have to say or what the NDP might have to say but that we are providing voice to the thousands of First Nations people who have been very concerned about this act and have been asking repeatedly for this act to be stopped.

We have the words of a Treaty 8 grand chief. He said, quote, the sovereignty act undermines the authority and duty of the sovereign nations that entered into treaty. We have the words of Chief Tony Alexis, who is the designated representative on this topic for Treaty 6, who says: "Let's be honest. This all comes down to land and resources. We are yet again the inconvenient Indian standing in the

way of unprotected resource extraction and other extrapolation of treaty lands."

We have the words of the Chief Darcy Dixon from Bears paw First Nation, who says: "This is a warning to Canadians. If you care about these lands, if you care about your country, you should care about this bill. It is not a First Nations issue; this impacts us all." Chief Dixon goes on to say, quote: "Bill 1 is just part of a political game. That may be true, but we see in it a disguised attempt to disregard treaty and as a way to gain unlawful access to our lands without restrictions."

These are the kinds of statements that are being made. Today we saw chiefs from literally across the country gather at the Assembly of First Nations to talk about this bill and a similar one out of Saskatchewan, and we saw these chiefs, many of whom I have quoted today, and many other chiefs, including the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Archibald, stand up and say that there is no fix for this bill, that this bill must be withdrawn at this time and stopped. The primary reason is that there has not been the fulfillment of the legal duty for consultation with First Nations as this is going to affect their rights.

They're very concerned that this is a backdoor way for the province to undermine treaties that have been signed in this country for over a hundred years with the Crown, currently represented by the federal government. They feel that if this government has the chance, they will rescind the work that has been accomplished by these nations through the courts over the last hundred-plus years to ensure and to enshrine their rights both in the Canadian Constitution and in practice every day in this province.

There is a lot at stake here in this debate for First Nations, and they are not concerned about this because somehow the NDP have scaremongered. They are intelligent people who have their own ideas and their own opinions and have access to significant resources in the legal field, and they have consulted those legal authorities and have determined that this bill is deeply problematic for them.

Although there are many issues, the primary issue is the total failure to consult. Now, what would they say if they were being consulted? What they'd say is that we are deeply concerned that our treaty rights are going to be undermined. Now, we know that the bill makes the attempt to say that it won't undermine treaty rights, but we also know that an analysis that's been done by Bankes and Olszynski on that refers to it as "a constitutional fig leaf"; that is, it doesn't actually protect the constitutional rights of First Nations people; it just pretends to do so. It hides what happens later in the bill with a statement earlier on in the bill that purports to protect the rights but does not within a legal framework protect the rights.

So that's where we are. We're at a place where these nations have been working for generations to ensure the well-being of themselves and their future generations – their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren – and this government is finding a way to subvert that.

11:00

Now, they know that the government says, "Well, you will continue to be allowed to have hunting and trapping rights, those kinds of things that are protected under section 35 of the Constitution," but they're also concerned about the well-being of the land and the air and the water. Their concern is that the very purpose of this bill is for this government to prevent a federal government from protecting the environment. It's a primary concern that any time the federal government comes in and says, "We want to protect these waters; we want to protect these animals," this

government will say, “No; we’re afraid we’re going to lose some money if we do that, so we’re not going to do that.” That’s what . . .

**Mr. Madu:** That’s the fearmongering.

**Mr. Feehan:** Here we have the chirping from across the floor where again they’re insulting the chiefs who have specifically said: when you say that we only do things because the NDP fearmonger, you’re telling us we’re too stupid to figure it out for ourselves. That is considered ultimately insulting yet is being repeated in this House minutes after I expressed that opinion by the chiefs. They’re not listening; this is proof again that they have failed to listen. They continue to not listen. The chiefs have said that there is no way forward now because you haven’t listened, because you haven’t participated in the processes that the courts say you must participate in.

Then there’s no way we can fix this. We have to stop this bill, and that’s why I brought in this amendment. This amendment does exactly what it is, what the chiefs from across Canada at the Assembly of First Nations asked us to do today, to stand up against this government and say: you are wrong, you have failed, and it is time that you took responsibility for your failure and come back into this House, withdraw this bill, and do so now, because you have a duty in the law to consult with First Nations, and you have failed to do that.

I think we should do exactly that. We should listen to the nations. We should hear them for apparently the very first time in this process of Bill 1 in this House. They haven’t been asking for anything that the courts haven’t already determined that they have a right to. They aren’t asking for anything exceptional or new. It’s already been established, all the way up to the Supreme Court of Canada, that they have a right for appropriate consultation, and the very nature of this bill is that it will be used against them.

I can tell you that they’re terrified because they know that the last time there was a Bill 1 in this House, in this Legislature, under the UCP government, the bill that was called protecting critical infrastructure act, it was designed specifically to attack the ability of First Nations to defend their rights, the ones that they had earned in the courts. Grand Chief Noskey from Treaty 8 has said: we know it was designed only to attack First Nations because it certainly wasn’t used when the infrastructure was being blocked on the Coutts border by people who are related to . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Motions

*(continued)*

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

### Time Allocation on Bill 1

15. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, through you to all the members of this Chamber: we have had quite a bit of time now

discussing Bill 1, and I would think that nobody would argue that point. We are now coming upon 17 hours of debate for this bill. That’s plenty of time to get points across and make it clear how you feel about it.

It’s interesting. We have known the intent of the members opposite from the very beginning when they chose not even to debate it at all, voting against it in first reading, something that happens rarely and having never happened in the history of our province after a throne speech. But that is also not surprising given that this morning, as a press conference was held by the members opposite, their key adviser from Ottawa had acknowledged he hadn’t read it either – hadn’t even read the amendment – so I’m not sure how someone like that could give any educated opinion on a bill if they haven’t even seen it.

I imagine members opposite, if they had the opportunity, would actually want to debate this bill all the way up until Christmas. That’s not the kind of present that I want to give my kids, not being there. I would rather do what’s best for Albertans: get this bill through this Chamber so that we can continue on their duty and continue on their errand. I encourage healthy debate as it is an important part of this Legislature. It’s part of our job, but there comes a point when the same message gets repeated over and over, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, is a bit disingenuous. I felt this way from the moment the members opposite voted against it in first reading.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any members of the opposition wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, again my comments on the other movements to closure apply to this one. Again it’s clear that this UCP government has created a flagship bill that is consistently driving in the ditch from the very first day that it came out. Here we are several days later, and it’s continuing to flounder, not meeting the needs of Albertans, even considering what the bill purports to do or tried to do, which is, you know, to stand up to federal intrusion. It’s only through sheer incompetence it fails to do that either.

You know, really, it’s best that we clear the air about that, because I know what this government is going to try to do now is invoke closure in the middle of the night and then try to respin this whole sorry mess into something that better suits them when we need to clear the air, clearly, around all of the shortcomings of this bill. The amendment that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just brought forward is just the latest development that has only more clearly shone a light on the Assembly of First Nations and their universal condemnation of both this bill and some version of it in Saskatchewan, and people need to know that.

The way by which we do those things is to use the Legislative Assembly. You know, part of the criticism of Bill 1 was the subversion of the Legislative Assembly. What double hypocrisy and irony – that’s irony, actually – of this government, that they would use the shutting down of this Assembly to debate a bill which would subvert the authority of this Assembly, right? It just goes on and on. In the strongest terms I would urge all members to not vote for this request for closure, and instead we will continue with a fulsome debate, starting with the wonderful amendment that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brought forward on this bill.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 15 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:09 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Copping	Lovely	Shandro
Dreeshen	Luan	Smith, Mark
Ellis	Madu	Turton
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Guthrie	Pon	Williams
Hanson	Rehn	Wilson
Hunter	Reid	Yao
Jones	Rowswell	Yaseen
LaGrange	Schow	

Against the motion:

Bilus	Eggen	Irwin
Carson	Feehan	Phillips
Dach	Goehring	Sweet

Totals: For – 26 Against – 9

[Government Motion 15 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others on amendment RA1?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on the amendment RA1.

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are on third reading of Bill 1. Is there anyone wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to third reading of Bill 1 and the opportunity being granted to the government side to save their ship by His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. This caucus is held together by we're not sure what these days. Perhaps it's fear of loss, but indeed we have six leadership candidates, five of whom lost, and, of course, the Premier won, so five of those individual leadership candidates who are still in the UCP caucus voted with their voices against the sovereignty act as it was being proposed by the Premier during the leadership debate, yet after that vociferous and very loud condemnation of the act, here we have a situation where all five have fallen into line and are standing up to salute the new leader and supporting this version of the sovereignty act. Indeed, not much has changed since the first version came out although there has been an attempt to make the bill palatable.

However, Mr. Speaker, I've been watching politics for many, many years, and as a youngster I do even remember watching John George Diefenbaker, then Prime Minister of Canada, Conservative Prime Minister of Canada, staunchly defending one issue or another on black and white television when I was only five or six years old, and I can tell you with certainty from my own watching of that man, Mr. Diefenbaker, that he had a very, very devoted love for our parliamentary institutions and would be, I believe, a most staunch defender of those institutions that many of the people in this room,

particularly on the Conservative side, might have ever seen. I believe wholeheartedly that Mr. Diefenbaker would be turning in his grave right now listening to the type of attacks that we're seeing by the Conservative Party, at least the Conservative Party in name, that sits across from us in this Legislature. They are seeking to do anything but conserve our democratic institutions.

Further to that, at a time when we're supposedly in this country seeking to fulfill our obligation to address all 96 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reconciliation is not what we see from the government with respect to this piece of legislation, their flagship Bill 1. It indeed is a time, Mr. Speaker, when we are discovering thousands upon thousands of graves of children that are being discovered across Canada on lands adjacent to former residential school sites. At a time when we are going through this shuddering time as a nation, we're finding that the government of the day here in Alberta is choosing to forget and turn their back on our obligations not only under TRC but in their own provincial legislation.

*11:30*

Once again I turn to our own Alberta government website, where we're looking at the requirement to consult with First Nations, Mr. Speaker, and indeed what's happened is that there has been no consultation. Even though the government tries to deny this, explaining that they have spoken a little bit or they're going to speak later to Indigenous organizations, it's spelled clearly out in our own legislation and the website that the Aboriginal consultation office, or ACO, has guidelines, specific guidelines, varied guidelines, huge numbers of pages of guidelines unto describing exactly the process for Aboriginal consultation that has to take place under the rules in this province that exist. Yet none of them were followed by this government when it came to bringing forward this sovereignty act.

The First Nations chiefs have come forward to protect their rights, which they feel are very much under threat. That's not any surprise, but it is really, really disappointing and shameful that at this point in time in our history, when we're going through a period of recognition of our obligations under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, when as a nation we're looking at thousands of children's graves being discovered, the First Nations chiefs are unanimous in their opposition to this bill. They're also very upset that they had to go to this extent to protest this threat upon their rights that they see embedded in this piece of legislation. Their opposition is being met with dismissive reactions by the government, where they'll say, "We'll talk about it later" or "We'll talk with them tomorrow; we'll consult afterwards; don't worry, it'll be okay." Well, indeed, Mr. Speaker, our obligation legally, under our own laws in this province, is to consult in advance and have meaningful consultation.

There are other communities, Mr. Speaker, who feel threatened by this legislation, and one that has not been really brought forward, though, is the francophone community. La communauté francophone ici dans la province de l'Alberta a grand peur de ce projet de loi. They fear very much that any legislative gains that they have made in order to promote the French language and French language education in this province are potentially going to be under threat should the provincial government decide that indeed they don't want to support federal government directions in francophone education or supporting francophone services in Alberta. So there's great fear in the francophone community that we're hearing about as members of the opposition. That's one thing that we'll be following up with more in time to come.

There are so many holes in this boat, Mr. Speaker, that we're trying to give the government of the day an opportunity to save their leaky boat, but it doesn't seem as though they're listening. Let's give them an opportunity to take a breath and reload and perhaps

think about this for a while. I therefore have an amendment that I'd like to propose.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this amendment will be referred to as HA1.

If you'd like to go ahead and proceed, you'd be welcome to do so.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll proceed with the introduction of the amendment, brought on behalf of the hon. Opposition House Leader, to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

This, as I said, will offer a life preserver to this government to save their sinking ship and to perhaps tell Albertans that they've heard them loud and clear and will be able to perhaps completely withdraw this legislation six months hence, once they've really gotten their act together within their own caucus and perhaps been able to inform their leader of caucus, the Premier, that they fear for their political lives if indeed the decision is made to go forward with this piece of legislation.

I'm not going to speak at length to the amendment. I'll leave that to other members of caucus. Suffice it to say, Mr. Speaker, that I remember times when we were in government and the opposition suggested indeed that we should look at something a little more deeply, and there were times when we should have. This is an opportunity for this government to really take a good look at what they're doing and perhaps save their leaky ship.

I'd invite them to come up and speak about the amendment we brought forward and, hopefully, support it to give themselves an opportunity to breathe some fresh air and really think about what they're doing in terms of the political liability that they're giving themselves and the economic damage that they're doing to our province by bringing forward this undemocratic legislation.

**The Speaker:** On amendment HA1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will speak for my full time, and that won't be long enough. First, I can say to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul that there were times in our government where we did bring in amendments to our own bill, and there were times that we admitted when we got it wrong. That's something that I'm proud of, to have the humility and the ability to be able to do that. I wish the current government would do that. What I'm about to speak to is my frustration of the members opposite and some of their level of arrogance as to the impact of this bill.

Now, I will commend the members opposite. When we were government, there were times that they warned our government of unintended consequences. That's what I'm going to focus on right now, Mr. Speaker. We can go back and forth and name all the different people that have validated the bill or have unvalidated the bill. Great. We can bring forward a list. The problem is the unintended consequences of this bill. If it does chase away international investment, I don't want to stand here in six months from now and say, "I told you so," because we, the province of Alberta, lose. I'm not opposing this bill because I don't think that Alberta should stand up for Alberta. I do. I do not believe, from the conversations I've had with international investors, that this is the right mechanism.

Here is a question for the government. Have you conducted a risk matrix by introducing this bill? Have you introduced a risk matrix? [interjection] Please don't change the subject. The answer is yes or no. If you have introduced a risk matrix, then please table it because every company that does business internationally or is thinking about doing business internationally will conduct a risk matrix. My fear and the reason – at every reading that I've spoken to this bill and I've spoken against this bill has not been because I don't believe we should stand up for Alberta. Check *Hansard* over the last three nights. I agree that we need to stand up for Alberta. I agree that the federal government has at times overreached. [interjection] I appreciate the Deputy Premier is chirping.

11:40

We have stood up for this province time and time again. I will get the Premier to check the fact that the first pipeline to tidewater in 50 years is being built because the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the former Premier stood up for this province. How many pipelines has your government built to tidewater? None. [interjections] Please. Please. I have the floor.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Bilous:** None. None.

Here's the biggest concern. For a government that is supposed to be conservative – and I'm saying that it's supposed to be – in their risk analysis, my friends on the other side, you are risking the future of Alberta for the next 30 years with this piece of legislation that is to appease 1 per cent of the population.

The irony in the fact that this government introduced the most undemocratic, dictatorial piece of legislation . . . [interjection] No. Please don't "come on" me. No other government introduced a piece of legislation that allows them to unilaterally change any legislation, statutes, or regulations in the province behind closed doors. If that's not undemocratic, I don't know what it is. Well, other than introducing closure, but of course when they were opposition, then they cried, and now that they're government, it's okay.

**An Hon. Member:** You set the precedent.

**Mr. Bilous:** The irony of a member saying that we set the precedent. You're right, because we've been government since 1920. Wait. No, we haven't. No. That was Conservative governments who used closure for the last 75 years.

**Mr. Madu:** My party built this province. In four years you destroyed it.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Bilous:** Deputy Premier, I will invite you to speak, and I'm happy to get into an exchange, sir, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course.

The issue I have with this and my frustration is that members can claim, including cabinet, that this will not risk future investment. Here's the reality: you don't know that. You don't. This is the challenge with introducing legislation having unintended consequences. The problem is that it may take six months or 12 months before we see the impact of this legislation, but what we've been told – and I get that you don't want to take our word for it. Fair enough. The international investors I've spoken to have said that they are looking at other jurisdictions, no longer looking at Alberta. Why? Because Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada outside of Quebec – I'll talk about the impact of Quebec. Believe me.



If we want to follow Quebec, let's just follow the headquarters of all of the major financial institutions. Members who have been in the House the last two nights have heard this. All of the major financial institutions had their headquarters in Montreal until Quebec introduced their sovereignty act, and then where did they go? They left Quebec because, they said: we're not about to play by two different sets of rules between the province and the federal government. They all went to Toronto; 40-plus years later they're all still in Toronto. They're not moving back to Quebec, and Quebec is just now starting to recover from introducing a sovereignty act.

Now, I appreciate members opposite are saying that we're fearmongering. I'd like to think that what we're doing is trying to provide caution to the government from what we've heard from the international community. You know what? If we're wrong, and this doesn't impact international investment and investment into Alberta, I'll stand up and apologize, and I'll say that I got it wrong.

**Mr. Madu:** I commend you for that.

**Mr. Bilous:** But here's the problem. If we are right . . .

**Mr. Madu:** You won't be right.

**Mr. Bilous:** The Deputy Premier keeps talking as if he is God or he has some kind of globe that can predict the future. Through you, Mr. Speaker, with all respect, you don't know, and you haven't conducted a risk matrix. If you have, table it.

The problem is that if we are correct and this bill has long-reaching implications of chasing away investment, we will find that out in the long term. But the problem is that damages will be done. I don't want to stand up and say that we were right. We're cheering for Alberta. The problem is that the risk-reward of introducing the sovereignty act – it's not going to do what the government says it's going to do. It's not going to protect Alberta any more than the avenues we already have of going through the courts.

In fact, it's about to risk the hundreds of millions of dollars the federal government has committed to housing, to municipalities, to child care, a number of initiatives. If the federal government says, "You want to play hardball, Alberta? Great; you get nothing," how are we ahead? We're not. I want to see our province prosper, but I'm worried about this, and I'm worried about this from conversations with international investors. I'm not making this up. The potential downside and risk of this bill far outweigh the benefit.

That's why the opposition has opposed this bill right from the start. Now, I get that it was unprecedented for us to vote against first reading. I'm not a fan of that tactic, but I can tell you this. We had already heard from international investors when the Premier was talking about a sovereignty act months before it was introduced. There were consequences. Companies had said: we're going to put Alberta on pause until we see what's in the sovereignty act. That was months before it was introduced. Companies are not going to wait around to make investment decisions. Boards will make their decisions, and if Alberta is deemed risky, they will go somewhere else. It's already happened.

So the fact that now we're about to enshrine a sovereignty act into legislation – I will tell you, from the investors I've talked to, that it doesn't matter what's in it. The fact that you have a bill that tells the globe that the province of Alberta has a different set of rules from the federal government is a disincentive for investment. It's an additional risk, and for all the businesspeople on that side – and I know that there are several – investments don't like risk, and they will go to the jurisdiction that has the fewest risks and the most certainty. The reason I'm opposing this bill is that it presents risk and uncertainty.

As I've said, if I'm wrong and in a year from now there has been zero investment flight and zero impact, I'll get up and say that I was wrong. The problem is that if it's true, what the investors and the international investment community are telling us, that this will be a disincentive, then we are putting Alberta at a disadvantage, and I love this province too much to support a bill that could do that. I honestly also don't believe that the bill will deliver what the government thinks it will.

Again, I'm happy to have a conversation about: what are other mechanisms or tools that Alberta can implement to stand up to the federal government when they overreach? I'm happy to have that conversation. In fact, I think we should bring together several round-tables, including members from the business community, and let's talk about that: what can we do?

**11:50**

But I also think that politics is all about relationships, and the fact that this bill could have other unintended consequences like risking committed federal dollars for other programs, including housing and child care, is valid. We need to be able to deliver for the people that we represent. I don't think that this bill or that the approach that this UCP government has taken over the past four years have delivered for Albertans, and I mean that sincerely. As I've stated, I'm happy to sit down and have a conversation on: how do we deliver? Is there a way for the opposition and the government to agree on initiatives where we can go together to the provincial government to say, "You need to do ABC, and here's why"? But I cannot support this bill because of the potential risks and implications that come with it. It honestly makes me nervous for where we're going to be in a year from now.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to halt this bill. Vote in favour of the hoist.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I want to very quickly respond to the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I must admit that I actually appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview making the comment that he's now prepared to sit down with those of us on this aisle to think about how we work together to make sure that we prevent the constant attack by the federal government, something we have not heard from the members opposite since I have been in this Assembly.

This bill, Bill 1, came about as a result of the constant, relentless attack on this province's economy, our people, our vital economic interests. For years the members opposite, rather than siding with Albertans, have always sided with their friends at the federal Liberal government and now their federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh. Mr. Speaker, this is at the root of why we have gathered in this Assembly tonight, to make sure that we have a tool that will allow the government of Alberta to say to the federal government: you can't be relentlessly attacking our vital economic interests and our people's overall well-being and expect us not to respond.

We saw that between 2015 and 2019, when the members opposite were in office, in government. They imposed multibillions of dollars in carbon tax that they did not even bother to run on. They did not tell Albertans that they were going to impose multibillions of dollars in carbon tax. I wasn't in this Chamber then, Mr. Speaker, but I recall the people of Alberta protesting that decision. In fact, it is the decisions of the members opposite that ultimately led me into politics. I did not envision running for public office until the members opposite formed government, in 2015. Then they began their attack on our economy, and they refused to listen to the people of Alberta.

They pursued policies that undermined our exceptional economic advantage to the point where Alberta was nearly on its knees.

Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. By the time they were done with Alberta, 183,000 of our fellow citizens were out of work. They brought in that carbon tax, that made everything so expensive and made life less affordable for the ordinary guy. They ran a deficit for every single year, in the billions of dollars, that they were in office. They took our debt, the entire provincial government debt, from \$13.9 billion to over \$70 billion in short order. Before they formed government, we were spending a couple of hundred million dollars to service the provincial government debt, all of our debt. By the time they were done with Alberta, we were spending \$2.2 billion to service the provincial government debt.

Mr. Speaker, that is \$2.2 billion we could have invested in education, in health care, in social services. Instead, we are paying out this interest to bond masters who are not even in this country. They are headquartered in Tokyo, in New York, in Paris, and in Beijing. Those of us on this side of the aisle would prefer to spend that \$2.2 billion on our people right here at home to develop our communities. They didn't end there. We were constantly being downgraded by the rating agencies.

They befriended Justin Trudeau and claimed that they were going to buy social licence to be able to protect our economy. Instead, we got Bill C-69, the so-called no-more-pipelines bill. We got Bill C-48, that singularly targeted Alberta's bitumen. We then got a carbon tax. Alberta was under attack. Federal legislation after federal legislation by the Trudeau federal government was being imposed and rammed through against Alberta's economic interests. Our people were crying, pleading with the opposition to work to defend Alberta. They lifted no finger, Mr. Speaker.

We now have, in my view, my humble view, the worst environment minister in Canadian history, a radical who wants to end the largest sector of the Canadian economy, the oil and gas sector. Mr. Speaker, there were rallies by the members opposite across our province with radicals that wanted to end fossil fuels. There were photographs of members opposite . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. However, I have been personally part of a point of order in this Assembly as a member with respect to the use of the word "radical" and directing it at other members of the Assembly. I would encourage the Deputy Premier to make other choices.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to the federal environment minister, not to the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we are now at a point where Alberta, as a province, as a people, must defend this province's vital economic interests; hence, this critical bill. That is exactly what this bill is meant to accomplish, nothing more, nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment HA1, put forward by the members opposite, would essentially say that this bill should not proceed. That is shameful. On one hand the members opposite finally – at least I want to give credit to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for acknowledging that there is a need for us to come together to protect our province and our people, but it is too late. What have they put forward on how they think we can make this bill better achieve that? Their intention is to ensure we have no tool whatsoever to be able to say to the federal government: you've got to stay in your lane.

**12:00**

They don't want to do that because that is not their interest. It has never been their interest. Otherwise, at this moment in time in our history, when we have rising inflation, high cost of living, at a rate

we have never seen in a decade, you would think that their first order of business would be to call on their federal NDP leader to work with his friend Justin Trudeau to end the carbon tax or to put forward measures that will ensure that the people of this country are not being hammered by their policies. That is not the case. So, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. The bill as crafted with the amendment that has been made before the floor of this House achieves that, provides that tool for us to be able to say no to the federal government.

I also heard, you know, an argument that this violates treaty rights pursuant to section 35 of the Constitution. Nothing could be further from the truth. To the contrary, Mr. Speaker, this bill in section 2 makes it clear that the treaty rights enshrined in our Constitution are preserved. It is there in black and white. Rather than the members opposite standing with us to inform Albertans and to speak with our First Nation communities that there's nothing in this bill that impairs their treaty and Aboriginal rights, they have been fearmongering.

Mr. Speaker, let me say a word or two to our First Nation communities. I have had the honour of serving in four different ministries. I've worked closely with them. I value them, and this government values that strategic relationship. In my time that I served in those ministries, I have carefully listened to them and worked with them to move forward their agenda.

**Member Irwin:** On Bill 1?

**Mr. Madu:** There is nothing in Bill 1 – to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood: there's nothing in Bill 1 that impairs their treaty and Aboriginal rights, and it is high time you stop fearmongering. These divisive politics need to come to an end at some point for the sake of our province.

Mr. Speaker, you know, many people here don't know – I often don't talk about my own history. Our First Nation communities are so dear to my heart, the chiefs, because my own parents, both my mom and dad, are also Aboriginal chiefs from where I come from. So I understand the issues that they confront and they deal with, and all of us must have an interest in making sure that we work with them to confront them. I want to say once again to them: we hear their concerns. We hear their desire for us to work with them, but the bill currently being debated in this House, in the most respectful manner, takes into consideration the need to protect and preserve their Aboriginal and treaty rights. This government will continue to dialogue with them, work with them to ensure economic opportunity in a manner that furthers true reconciliation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote on this proposed amendment.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide a few comments on why this bill ought not be considered by this House at this time. We have had a number of conversations in the media and elsewhere. We've seen many, many people weighed in on the risks to our investment climate, certainly our economic future, our economic resilience, and there is no question that part of that is because it represents a full-throated attack on the stabilizing principles of liberal democracy, namely separation of powers and primacy of the judiciary. It's useful to consider why the centrepiece of this legislation is actually to have this Legislature take the role of the judiciary. I have indicated that, certainly, when one consults the architects of the free Alberta strategy, one sees a politicization of the federal judiciary, a distrust of the judiciary, and – it is a feature, not a bug – a co-ordinated political attack on the role of the judiciary and their independence.

Now, here's the thing: why? Why is that there? And why is this sovereignty act essentially indistinguishable from what was campaigned on and what is contained in the free Alberta strategy? In fact, it was quite interesting to me that there wasn't a pivot, as was widely anticipated a week or eight days ago. A number of people had begun to comfort themselves out in the investment community and so on that perhaps the province, given the deep unpopularity of the legislation and the fact that we know that the government and the various leadership candidates heard loud and clear from the business community that this sort of misadventure was, in fact, a deeply problematic, destabilizing proposal coming from the now Premier.

If we examine the words of the free Alberta strategy and the architects of it – architect is actually the people who wrote things down in a legal document that makes Rudy Giuliani look like a legal scholar. Barry Cooper, June 21, 2022, writes that the free Alberta strategy and the sovereignty act in particular were meant to be unconstitutional because what can flow then, from the passage of a sovereignty act whereby the Legislature takes up the role of the judiciary, is the following. Here's what they can then do. Interim measures are things like getting rid of the RCMP, an Alberta pension plan, Alberta unemployment insurance, a new Alberta banking law, and "opting out of federal programs that interfere with provincial jurisdiction, chiefly in the areas of health, education, resources and [environment]." All of those aspects are in fact enabled, emboldened, by this act.

Then Mr. Cooper goes further. Other measures that flow from the passage of a sovereignty act require the passage of this act in order to get to the following: "replacing Canada in negotiating international trade agreements... ensuring all judicial appointments in the province are made by Alberta," which is a clear section 96 violation of the Constitution right there, "expanding and enhancing Alberta's financial institutions to protect Alberta businesses"; in other words, just simply violating the Bank Act, I guess, and enabling this Alberta revenue agency to divert taxes from the federal treasury to Alberta and granting immunity from federal enforcement through the Canada Revenue Agency.

I am struggling to think of any business that would want to invest in a place where you don't know if there are health and education transfers, infrastructure transfers, what the banking laws are, where you're going to remit your taxes and how much. Given that the sovereignty act is virtually indistinguishable from the free Alberta strategy and the free Alberta strategy authors have indicated that this is the next step, it is no wonder that we have heard from business loud and clear. They need to know what the rules of the road are.

### 12:10

The public, I think, has come to accept that politics permeates and saturates most of life now, and there are fewer and fewer areas, slivers, within that Venn diagram upon which, in a polarized political environment, political parties can come to agreement. But I think Canadians and Albertans do not accept that what's right and wrong is political. It's not. I don't think that Albertans accept this idea, that there isn't just one set of rules for everyone. I don't think that people think that there's room for politics in that. I don't think that Albertans think the idea that we can just politicize the judiciary, usurp their role, undermine the authority of the courts, undermine basic rules of trade and commerce, of banking, of taxation – I don't think Albertans believe those things are political. They're not up to the feckless inclinations of an unelected leader. I don't think that Albertans or Canadians, but certainly Albertans, expect that we politicize the basic traffic signals of our democracy. We just don't.

These stabilizing principles are what give us the good life. I have said this many times. They're what give us equality, dignity of the person, individual liberty. They are what govern our property rights transactions, trade, and commerce. They are what govern scientific advance, development of knowledge, dissemination of knowledge, widespread literacy, even. It is the type of society that allows for people of working-class backgrounds whose parents never went to university to come and, you know, achieve a couple of university degrees and then stand in a Legislature and represent their constituents for now almost the end of two terms. They are the foundation of who we are, and they're also the foundation of who we are going to be, because this is ultimately a fool's errand that will be stopped in its tracks by Albertans.

It already has been. They didn't even need to see – the reason why we voted against first reading on Bill 1 was because we had already heard that it had driven out investment. We had already heard from Albertans that they were entirely uninterested in this particular caper. They had rejected it, in fact, and they agreed with the now Minister of Finance, who called it an economic time bomb. They agreed with the current jobs minister, who called it a fairy tale. They agreed with the now Municipal Affairs minister, who called it anarchy, and the minister of trade has said that it was like shooting ourselves in the foot. We shall see in the coming weeks from the publicly available data that comes out just how much more Albertans agree. We already know that over 60 per cent of Calgarians do not think that this is an appropriate way for the provincial government to be spending their time.

I have heard over and over again a number of excuses made, chiefly among them this idea that we should be more like Quebec. "Oh, Quebec gets to do these things. Why not us?" When the Parti Québécois began these ridiculous misadventures of separating from Canada and so on and so forth, hundreds of thousands of people left the province of Quebec. There was a capital flight unlike anything we've ever seen in the history of the country. It is only very recently, in the last four or five years, that Quebec has returned to stable economic growth. They have had some very good news coming out of, in particular, the city of Montreal in terms of attracting new investment and new industries, economic diversification, and so on, and it is only since they essentially left behind the fractious politics of federalist first and sovereigntists that had dominated the landscape for so long.

Legault made himself a coalition of centre-right parties, essentially, with the sole goal of moving beyond the cul-de-sac that the sovereigntists and separatists had driven the province into for the previous 40 years. They took power, and they rewon it.

The Parti Québécois is, I want to say, the third party, I'm pretty sure, and they compete with the Québec solidaire, after the last election that was in September, I think, for, like, fourth-party status. They are barely a ripple in Quebec politics anymore, but it took that long. It took that long. Meanwhile, as my hon. friend indicated earlier, the capital flight was staggering. It would be impressive if it wasn't so depressing for the people of Quebec and so destabilizing to the Canadian economy more generally.

We don't need that. I'm pretty sure we don't want to replicate that. When you even look at the economic performance between Alberta and Quebec per capita GDP and so on, I'm pretty sure we don't want that, because that would mean a reduction in our standard of living here in Alberta. We don't want to be like Quebec in those ways. I don't think you think what you think you think.

What we do want is to create a resilient economy for the future, where we welcome investment, where we can quite easily say: yes, the Bank Act applies here, and when you pay your taxes, you know where it's going to go. When you put in a Water Act permit, you

know what's going to happen. If you're an oil sands operator, you know what the future of the joint oil sands monitoring agreement looks like. You understand your obligations under both navigable waters, federal species at risk, and the lower Athabasca regional plan, both federal and provincial. The rules are clear. The expectations are obvious. The investment climate is stable. The only way we get there is by rejecting this hot mess bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has risen.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank . . .

**The Speaker:** My apologies. I'm sorry. You actually moved the bill, or third reading was moved on your behalf, which means you've actually already spoken. My apologies. You're unable to speak to the bill.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, what a delightful surprise, Mr. Speaker, to be able to likely wrap up our final opportunity to speak to this absolutely terrible piece of legislation. [interjection] If somebody just wants to send me a note if I need to – okay. Wonderful.

Mr. Speaker I've had the opportunity to sit through the majority of this debate on the job-killing sovereignty act, Bill 1, that this government put forward, a flagship . . .

**The Speaker:** Sorry. My apologies. We're on the hoist. Because we're on the hoist, this is possible. If we were on the actual reading, we wouldn't be allowed.

She has five minutes or whatever time she would like to take.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope I can get everything in in five minutes. I understand that the members opposite have been trying to derail any discussion of this bill from the beginning. They didn't even want to read it when it was first introduced. They voted against it in first reading. Then they asked the Prime Minister to weigh in and revoke the bill, denied, of course, doing that. I think they understand why it is that people reacted so, so badly in asking for the federal government to come in and interfere in our jurisdiction, because that is exactly what they and their party leader at the federal level have been enabling with the coalition they have in Ottawa for the last number of years.

I find it so remarkable that they've been talking about investment like capital flight, saying that it has been – they're projecting that there would be unprecedented capital flight. Well, that would be hard to beat because there was unprecedented capital flight when they brought through the climate leadership plan. That was once again partnering with our enemies who want to shut down our industry to try in some flawed way to get appeasement with Ottawa. I don't know why it is they felt that they needed to suck up to Ottawa. It's not like Ottawa is a national government. The way our country works is that we are a federation of sovereign, independent jurisdictions. They are one of those signatories to the Constitution, and the rest of us are signatories to the Constitution and have a right to exercise our sovereign powers in our own area of jurisdiction.

12:20

The problem that we've seen over the last number of years – and when I talk about the loss of investment that occurred because of this failed attempt at trying to chase after federal approval. The climate leadership plan brought in a carbon tax which – three aspects: carbon tax, phase-out of coal, and an emissions cap. One of the things that occurred, of course, was that Northern Gateway ended up getting cancelled, cheered along by the members opposite.

They never supported Northern Gateway, which would have done so much to help advance our economy. Energy East, once again, also got shut down with no support from the opposition. Koch Oil announced that they had two oil sands projects that they walked away from because of the uncertainty being created by the climate leadership plan. We also had the Keephills plant, a coal plant in operation for just six months when the actions of the members opposite forced it to shut down.

We still have uncertainty in the electricity industry and in creating new generation as a result of those decisions. I was just meeting with a group of energy leaders in the retail side yesterday, talking about how in the future, after 2035, it's uncertain how we're going to develop new natural gas plants because of the new requirements being brought in at the federal level. This is again a violation of our provincial jurisdiction. And then, of course, Western Feedlots also shut down. They only reopened when the UCP formed government again.

In the year after they got elected, there were 7,200 businesses that shut down. That's what capital flight looks like. It was caused by the actions of the members opposite. So, really, they should spare me any discussion about how much they care about the investment climate, because if they cared about the investment climate, they wouldn't have started this track in the first place. The reason this track is continuing is because of their coalition at the federal level, and this is part of the reason why they keep on trotting out Ottawa-based pundits to support their view, because this is the way they think the country ought to work, that Ottawa ought to come in and tell us how to run our own affairs.

The members on this side feel the opposite. It's because of hit after hit after hit that we have taken as a result of the process they started. Bill C-48, a tanker ban on the west coast that is designed strictly to land-lock Alberta's bitumen, came in under their watch. Bill C-69, which is an historic invasion of provincial jurisdiction – we already have a court judgment telling us so. We have 10 provinces onboard with fighting it, because they inserted themselves into every area of provincial jurisdiction when it comes to creating projects. Any power plant more than 200 megawatts has to be approved by the federal government. Any stretch of highway 75 kilometres long has to be approved by the federal government. On anything that they determine is federal jurisdiction, even if it's 100 per cent within our borders, they can intercede and tell us: sorry; you can't build that. That is such a violation of provincial jurisdiction.

When you look at the fact that we had an equalization referendum, 62 per cent of Albertans voted in favour of pushing back against Ottawa, and I think that was only one aspect of us trying to start a conversation so that we could get a fair deal out of Ottawa after we did the Fair Deal Panel all across the province. What did we get instead? We got environment minister Steven Guilbeault, and what has he done since he got into the position of environment minister? Has he come with an open hand and said, "Hey, let's work together; let's try to find ways that we can export more LNG; let's find ways that we can work on carbon technology; let's find a way that we can develop the hydrogen economy; let's work together on getting more of your resources to market"? No. The exact opposite. He announced an edict that we were going to be moving to an electricity grid that does not allow for any fossil fuel based power to be on that grid after 2035.

We've got 90 per cent of our electricity in this province generated by natural gas, and the cost associated in this short period of time of trying to develop new power with carbon technology and carbon capture – just in such a short period of time to enable more of that development. This is too short a time frame to be able to achieve that. What's going to happen when we hit 2035 and they're now telling us we can't build power plants, when we talk about, as well,

that they came in and said that they want to phase out combustion engine vehicles so no more can be sold after 2035? That's only 13 years away. What in the world do they think is going to happen?

Have the members opposite even talked to anybody about the impact it would have, what it is that we need to have to increase the capacity of our electricity grid to be able to accommodate . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will come to order.

The Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Have they even talked to anybody in the electricity business about what it would cost to upgrade the power grid in order to put a hundred per cent plug-in vehicles on the road by 2035? I was in Wainwright, and I talked to somebody who wanted to put two Teslas in his home. It would have cost \$20,000 to upgrade the electricity system just to plug in those two vehicles. [interjections] Our current electricity system . . .

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Smith:** . . . only allows for us to have six vehicles on a single block plugged in before, all of a sudden, we have to do a massive investment in our power grid. Are they even – how are we going to do that if the federal government is dictating to us that we're not allowed to add new power? They also began the just . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** They also began the just transition task force. What is the just transition? Well, when it was applied to coal workers, it just transitioned coal workers completely out of work. They want to have a just transition, as they call it, of oil and natural gas workers completely out of the business as well. This was also started at the federal level.

In addition, what have we seen? As we were going through our leadership contest, they announced that they wanted to have an emissions cap on fertilizer of 30 per cent. They put a warning label on beef, for heaven's sake. It was only because of massive push-back on the industry that they finally relented on that and realized that they had to consult more. They've announced an emissions cap just prior to our leadership race even being over. We're right in the middle of choosing a new Premier, and on September 30 they put forward a policy consultation to put an emissions cap on our oil and natural gas emissions that would reduce emissions 42 per cent by 2030, right in the middle of our leadership contest. What disrespect for our process here. It isn't even their area of jurisdiction.

Now, of course, our Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has spoken eloquently as well about the . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt – and I do apologize to the Premier for neglecting to recall that we were on the hoist amendment at the beginning of her remarks – but pursuant to Standing Order 21 the time allotted for this debate has concluded. I am . . . [interjections] Order. Order. Order.

I am required to put all questions to the Assembly to dispose of the items before the Assembly with respect to third reading of Bill 1, Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:28 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Phillips
Carson	Irwin	Sweet
Dach		

Against the motion:

Copping	Loewen	Shandro
Dreeshen	Lovely	Smith, Danielle
Ellis	Luan	Smith, Mark
Fir	Madu	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Pon	Williams
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Jones	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Schow	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 27
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[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:45 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Copping	Loewen	Shandro
Dreeshen	Lovely	Smith, Danielle
Ellis	Luan	Smith, Mark
Fir	Madu	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Walker
Hanson	Pon	Williams
Hunter	Rehn	Wilson
Jones	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Schow	Yaseen

1:00

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Phillips
Carson	Irwin	Sweet
Dach		

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 7
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[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think a lot of great work has been accomplished this evening. I'd like to congratulate all members of government caucus and the Premier on passage of Bill 1. I look forward to doing more great work on behalf of Albertans, but at this time I move that the Assembly adjourn until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:02 a.m. on Thursday]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 8, 2022

Day 7

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
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Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
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Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

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(UC)  
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Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 8, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King, to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Hon, members, please remain standing for the singing of *God Save the King*.

### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal was awarded to only 7,000 Albertans in recognition of significant contribution to the province. This commemorative medal, designed to mark Queen Elizabeth's unprecedented 70 years of service, is even more relevant given her recent passing and the outpouring of appreciation and respect shown for her distinguished dedication to the people of the Commonwealth.

It is my great honour to present this medal to you today and thank you for your service to our province. This medal serves as a moving reminder of our responsibility to serve with the same strength and humility that was demonstrated by Queen Elizabeth herself. The front of the medal shows an effigy of the Queen and on the reverse the shield of Alberta and our provincial wild roses. The placement of the shield on the medal should be a reminder that our service is not about us but about the advancement of our province and the communities in which we serve. Just as Queen Elizabeth II served to see others lifted up, I trust that this award will renew our commitment to building our communities and improving the lives of Albertans.

Congratulations to each and every one of you.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a visitor.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature Marilyn Buffalo, the CEO of the Nechi Institute and the elder who gave blessings at the unveiling of the official portrait of the 17th Premier of Alberta today. Please rise and accept the warm greetings of the House.

**Member Irwin:** I'm so pleased to rise today to introduce Ray Martin, former MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, former Alberta NDP leader and school board trustee. I just awarded him a platinum jubilee medal for his decades of service. I'm so proud to be his MLA. Please join me in welcoming Ray Martin.

**Ms Hoffman:** I am welcoming Edmonton-Glenora constituent and former MLA Alex McEachern. Alex was first elected in '86 and again in '89. His commitment to social democracy and ensuring all Alberta students get a quality public education are two of the reasons I'm so fond of him. Alex also received a platinum jubilee. Please join me in welcoming him.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has an introduction.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce you to some of the hardest working public servants in this province, 30 constituency assistants from each corner of Alberta. They are here today for training. I was able to join them for dinner last night, where I reminded them that every time I screw up, I know that they're the first ones to hear about it, so I thank you deeply for the work that you do. I invite you to join them and me at the tree-lighting ceremony later this afternoon, but in the meantime I ask you to rise and provide them all a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the chief government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three grade 6 classes from Beau Meadow school from the city of Beaumont. Thank you for being here. It's so great to see so many students back in the Assembly. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize, to you and through you, the grade 6 students from l'école par élémentaire of Fort Saskatchewan and their teacher Mr. Spencer Dunn. Welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a guest.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Welcome Jose Angeles, a Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal recipient. Please rise. His record of service includes president of the Congress of the Philippine Associations of Alberta, publisher for the *Alberta Filipino Journal*, and for 40 years he's co-ordinated the Philippine pavilion at Edmonton heritage days. Jose is joined by many members of his friends and family. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sara-Lyn Quist, who hails from the second-most beautiful constituency in the province. You might know which one I'm referring to. Sara-Lyn is a community builder and an asset to many in her hometown of Three Hills. I've come to know Sara very well, and I'm glad that she could join us here today.

## Members' Statements

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

### Affordability Plan and Inflation Relief Act

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a result of increasing costs and record levels of inflation, Albertans have been struggling to heat their homes and feed their families. These are things that they should never have to worry about. This affordability crisis is one that our province can't solve on our own, but due to our balanced budget and strong fiscal position our government is able to offer significant relief to Albertans who are struggling.

To prove this, an entire ministry has been created to help weather the storm. The Ministry of Affordability and Utilities is working hard and has already taken a number of steps to make life more affordable. Through Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, our government is demonstrating our commitment to support Albertans. The extension of the fuel tax relief program will help Albertans save 13.6 cents per litre every time they fill up. The natural gas rebate program is providing price protection throughout the winter months so families can heat their homes with peace of mind, and the electricity rebate program will help alleviate some financial burdens we see Albertans facing until April.

Those financial burdens are the reason we are also indexing personal income taxes to the inflation rate retroactive to 2022. As a result, money is being put back into the pockets of Albertans. Furthermore, our government is providing financial assistance to food banks and other not-for-profits across Alberta. They've been experiencing increased demand, and we are ensuring they have what they need to ensure all Albertans are being supported.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the affordability crisis is at the forefront for every Albertan. In a time of high inflation the affordability action plan and inflation relief act will help ease the burden on people across the province. Our government is committed to providing relief for Albertans and businesses while also charting a better, more affordable path forward for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, with apologies to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore because he was the first member's statement today, and it was my error.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Mr. Nielsen:** I, like many Albertans, am deeply concerned about the passing of the job-killing sovereignty act in literally the dead of night, so I wanted to remind the Assembly and Albertans that there were members of the government who had been vocal opponents of the sovereignty act since its conceptualization. In fact, there are too many quotes from members of the UCP against the sovereignty act to fit in my statement today, so I have included some of my favourites.

**1:40**

The Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism said, quote: there is nothing about the sovereignty act that makes sense. She also said that it was "an unconstitutional delusion." The Minister of Finance said that the act "requires Albertans and Alberta business to risk their livelihoods." The MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore said that she rejected the act because it was "abandonment of the Canadian principle of Constitutionalism." The Minister of Municipal Affairs called this, quote: the anarchy act. The Minister of Environment and Protected Areas said that this act caused "instability and chaos." The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development said: the legal,

economic, and political turmoil produced would be the last thing Alberta needs. [interjections]

Why is it these members all abandoned their beliefs, abandoned their principles, and surrendered to the Premier? How can they speak out against a bill that Albertans do not want, just to turn their backs on their constituents and vote in support of the sovereignty act? These members of the UCP are afraid to stand up to the Premier, but the NDP is not afraid, and I promise we will continue this fight.

**The Speaker:** A reminder to members that Members' Statements are an opportunity for members of the Assembly to speak for two minutes uninterrupted, and I encourage members to ensure that they have that right.

### Cost of Living and Affordability Plan

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are struggling; in fact, many Albertans are struggling. The cost of everything has skyrocketed: \$6 for a head of lettuce. One restaurant owner told me that he is concerned. He said that seniors, who make up a big population of his clients, are not coming back. They stopped coming because of COVID, and now, because of the price shock, they can't come back.

What has brought us to this point, how long is it going to last, and is there anything that can be done to lessen the pain? These are the questions that I hear most. What brought us to this point? Well, for the past 30 months governments all over the world have printed an extra \$6.72 trillion and flooded the world with extra dollars. That money has to flow through the economy before we see any real softening of inflation. The other problem is supply chain issues caused by governments' COVID response. China has been chasing a zero-COVID policy for over two and a half years. Whole cities have been shut down. The unrest we are seeing in China and worldwide supply chain problems are a result of these policies.

The truth is that we are just a little fish in a big pond. We didn't create the inflationary problems, but we are privileged to be in a position to be able to help. Our government's affordability relief package is a whopping \$2.4 billion. It entails a retroactive reindexation of income taxes, \$600 for every person on AISH and PDD, and \$600 for seniors and children in Alberta with household incomes of \$180,000 or less. The fuel tax, 13.6 cents per litre, is gone for the next six months. Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be nice if the federal Liberals and their NDP allies would get rid of their portion of the fuel tax as well instead of hiking it? Food banks are getting \$15 million to help our most vulnerable. Lastly, every Albertan will see a \$200 relief on their utility bills, for a total of \$500 in relief since July.

That's a whole lot of Christmas cheer going around in Alberta, and Albertans could really use it.

### Homelessness

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the other night the Government House Leader rose to interrupt one of my colleagues who was speaking passionately about the need for more housing and government support for Albertans struggling to make ends meet amid an inflationary crisis. He literally tried to claim, in this very House, that the provincial government does not bear responsibility for people dying on our streets in the freezing cold, for people whose limbs are being amputated due to extreme frostbite, for people who are dealing with addiction, who are feeling lost. These are Albertans. They're our neighbours, friends, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers.

Not the UCP's responsibility? Let's look at the facts. As of this month there are almost 3,000 people experiencing homelessness in



Edmonton, half of them outdoors, sleeping rough, or using shelter spaces. There are hundreds in the Premier's riding, hundreds in Lethbridge, 2,000 in Calgary. Doctors are seeing patients with injuries that just won't heal, who are already missing fingers and limbs, and people who have exposed bones because the tissue has frozen off. Shelters are operating at or beyond capacity, and additional spaces promised haven't come through despite the UCP government's bragging about them. Shelters' highest occupancy rates are on the coldest nights of the winter. This has been brought to the UCP's attention year after year, and shelters are just one piece of the puzzle. The best solution is permanent housing.

These are the facts. None of this is a surprise. People are dying because of wilful choices by the UCP government. What is the price of human dignity? How do you measure the right to live? Each person who dies while experiencing homelessness is more than a fact, a number, a statistic. This is the responsibility of the provincial government.

I look forward to the election, where Albertans will have a chance to elect a government focused on ending homelessness, not avoiding the responsibility of dealing with it.

### Job Creation

**Ms Rosin:** Well, Mr. Speaker, after all we've been through these past few years, I often tell myself that nothing can surprise me anymore, but the NDP have proved me wrong. They really have. This week they are now referring to this government as job killers. Job killers. Yes. The same members who are – right now the same members whose economic track record included losing 200,000 jobs, \$3 billion of corporate tax revenue, and achieving an astonishing unemployment rate of 9 per cent have referred to this Conservative government as job killers.

I thought I just might take the opportunity to set the record straight on this government's job-killing record. What have we accomplished so far? Over 200,000 jobs created, 20 per cent of the country's total job creation from a province of only 4 million people; a multibillion-dollar increase in corporate activity; the highest number of employed Albertans in history; seven credit upgrades; the best year of oil production on record; a diversified economy; the fastest growing green energy market in the country; and the fastest growing tech sector in all of North America.

We have lowered income taxes. We have cut corporate taxes. We've slashed regulations. We've balanced the budget. We've invested in our communities. We have fought for our industries at the Supreme Court of Canada. We have created sector strategies for hydrogen, lithium, petrochemicals, plastics, hemp, recycling, agriculture, irrigation. We've signed forest management agreements. Mr. Speaker, we've seen the number of tech start-ups double year over year. We've ushered in the biggest Hollywood production in Canadian and HBO history, and we are now leading the country in economic and GDP growth. That is this government's economic track record.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP can call us job killers all they want, but Albertans know the truth, and deep down I think even the NDP know the truth. After three short years of a United Conservative government Alberta is the strongest and most diversified it has ever been, and we are well on our way to becoming the most attractive market in all of North America and the world for job creation. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Nurse Education in Wainwright

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have all heard about shortages of doctors. There is also a problem of a nursing shortage in rural Alberta. In order for the health system to operate effectively, we need a complete team working as a unit. Nurses are a critical part of these teams. The question, then, is: why is there a more pronounced shortage of nurses in rural Alberta? One of the reasons is that students need to go to major urban centres to get their nursing degree and then likely wind up staying there when they complete their program.

Yesterday our government was proud to celebrate a new four-year bachelor of nursing pilot program at the Wainwright health centre that began last year. It's the first program of its kind and a big step forward for our rural health care. This program will help people that want to become nurses but want to stay in their own community for their training and to follow their own dreams. If you want more people to work in smaller communities, the best thing you can do is train them there. This program is an excellent partnership between the University of Calgary, Alberta Health Services, our government, and the Wainwright health centre. With our continued funding the school will continue providing online courses, labs, and clinical practice in person.

Eight students started the program in September of 2021, and a second cohort of eight students began in September of 2022. The fact that both cohorts were filled easily is an indication that rural people want to join the medical field. It's just the latest step in building up the health workforce. If this pilot project is successful, this will be a great model for the rest of rural Alberta to follow.

### Postsecondary Tuition and Student Loans

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, in the midst of an affordability crisis students and recent graduates are seeing their costs rise exponentially, yet this government has provided nothing, zip, zilch, in the affordability plan. Worse than that, the government of Alberta has piled costs onto students and recent graduates. Due to the cruel cuts to postsecondary by this UCP government tuition costs have reached to new heights. How are students going to make those payments? With student loans. But here, too, the government is bleeding the stone dry.

1:50

The current Alberta student loan interest rate is 6.9 per cent daily. Here's some quick math for the Chamber and folks at home. A four-year program at the University of Alberta with tuition and books is \$10,000 a year, a total loan of \$40,000. You'll see more than \$2,000 interest added to that loan every single year, not to mention housing, food, and transportation.

The slogan Students Are Our Future may be overused, but it is definitely true, yet this government has time and time again chosen to leave them behind. With the affordability plan the government had the opportunity to provide much-needed support for Albertans seeking higher education. It is no surprise that we are seeing young people leaving our province.

So tell me, Mr. Speaker, where is the Alberta advantage? Our young people deserve better, a government that funds postsecondary education properly, that supports affordable education, listens to young people, and takes action to keep them here. That will be the focus of an NDP government come 2023. I look forward to being a part of it.

Thank you.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

### Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act

**Ms Hoffman:** Now that the job-killing sovereignty act has passed, the veil has fallen. The chief architect of the sovereignty act now says that our Constitution is broken, and he warns of an independence referendum. With this bill the Premier encourages separatist chaos, which undermines Alberta's economy and does nothing to address the affordability crisis and endangers our already under threat public health care system. The Premier has two choices. She can stand in this place and denounce the words of her flagship bill's author, or she can admit that her separatist agenda is the real heart of her job-killing sovereignty act. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** Well, the name of the bill is the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. It says right in the bill that this is about being within a united Canada, and I have to tell you that it has already achieved the objective that we set out to do. We wanted to reset our relationship with the federal government. Let me tell you what Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said today in Ottawa. What he said was: we are not going to get into arguing about something that obviously is the Alberta government trying to push back on the federal government; we are going to continue to work as constructively as possible. That is exactly what we wanted to. . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, Barry Cooper wrote the bill, and he says it's about an independence referendum.

Mr. Speaker, last night the UCP rammed through their job-killing sovereignty act by invoking closure and shutting down debate. They passed their flagship bill last night in the dark while most Albertans were sleeping. They did this because they know that their bill undermines the rule of law, attacks treaty rights – nothing to laugh at – and it hurts jobs and investment in Alberta. Today the UCP are celebrating their own incompetence. Is the UCP seriously so cash strapped that the Premier is willing to sacrifice Alberta jobs just to raise a few bucks off her base?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act has nothing to do with leaving the country; it has everything to do with resetting the relationship. It was our Justice minister who wrote this legislation – it wasn't some outside party – and we got independent advice from constitutional lawyers to make sure that it fell within the confines of the Constitution. We have quote after quote after quote from constitutional lawyers who have said that we met that target. All it simply does is that it restates that Alberta's constitutional authority should be respected.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier conceived, introduced, and passed this bill all in bad faith just to appease her fringe base. There is no reason it had to pass last night. There was no reason to shut down debate. The Premier rammed it through because she's scared, because she wants to change the channel. The truth is that this hurts our public reputation, and it damages investor certainty. This bill will be challenged by First Nations, likely immediately upon proclamation. If the Premier is so confident that she is right, will she review the bill to the courts before it's proclaimed?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there were 18 and a half hours of debate on this bill. Nothing was rammed through. It was fully debated. The

problem was that the Official Opposition was not prepared to be constructive about this. They broke convention and voted not to even read the bill. Then they asked their friend Justin Trudeau to try to revoke the bill, and then on top of that whatever they put forward in amendment was to eliminate any of the clauses in the bill. If they wanted to take part in a constructive process, we were more than happy to do that. They weren't, and that's why we're proceeding with it. It's going to preserve Alberta's constitutional rights.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Last night, while most Albertans were sleeping, this government cut off debate and imposed their job-killing sovereignty act on Albertans. They did this in spite of warnings from economists, Indigenous leaders, chambers of commerce, and constitutional experts that this bill is dangerous for the economy, dangerous to democracy, and unconstitutional. Will the Premier finally agree to do the right thing and submit this bill to the courts so they can determine its constitutionality before she proclaims it?

**Ms Smith:** The constitutionality of this bill is not in question. Supreme Court Justice John Major looked at it, and he said that he doesn't find it alarming. What's so terrible about the province saying that if you want to impose on us, you've got to be sure to do it constitutionally? Leighton Grey, a lawyer with the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, said this: it is only because the federal government is violating the Constitution that the sovereignty act is even necessary; indeed, in a properly operating federation, this bill would be entirely superfluous. This is about pushing back on Ottawa, keeping them in their own lane, and it appears to be working.

**Mr. Sabir:** Yesterday the chiefs of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 all called for the bill to be abandoned. Not amended; abandoned. The government has a constitutional obligation to consult with Indigenous communities when bringing in legislation that could impact their treaty rights, a duty that this Premier and Indigenous Relations minister have ignored and don't care about. Indigenous Albertans deserve to be heard. Will the Premier allow the court to test the constitutionality of the bill, or will she force Indigenous leaders to take her to court?

**Ms Smith:** I was delighted earlier today to meet with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council and Chief Ivan Sawan from Loon River, Chief Albert Thunder from Whitefish, Chief Gilbert Okemow from Peerless Trout, Chief Billy Joe Laboucan from the Lubicon Lake, and Chief Isaac Laboucan-Avirom from the Woodland Cree. We had a very constructive conversation about how our relationship is going to be going forward. They know that I am committed to making sure that we address some of the foundational social issues in their communities but, more so, that we are committed to working with them in economic partnership, and I'm delighted to get started.

**Mr. Sabir:** The job-killing sovereignty act will add chaos to our economy and threaten investment. We have already seen Alberta lose 15,000 jobs last month. There are billions of dollars' worth of investment decisions for major projects in Alberta pending right now. Section 26 of the Judicature Act allows the cabinet to refer any matter to the Court of Appeal for consideration. Will the Premier take this option to protect Alberta's jobs from her failed sovereignty act, or is she now sovereign from the rule of law?

**Ms Smith:** We had such a great member's statement from the Member for Banff-Kananaskis. Let me remind the member opposite of what our actual record is: 200,000 jobs created in the last year, 20

per cent of the country's total job creation from a province of only 4 million; a multibillion-dollar increase in corporate activity; the highest number of employed Albertans in history; seven credit upgrades; the best year of oil production on record; a diverse economy; fastest growing green energy market; fastest growing tech sector in all of North America. I can tell you that that is a massive turnaround from the nearly 200,000 jobs lost when those guys were in office.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Just yesterday the Minister of Indigenous Relations said, quote: "Should we have done more consultation? Absolutely." This is a clear admission that this hon. member didn't do his job, yet the sovereignty act was passed last night. It passed after the government admitted that they did not fulfill its legal requirement to consult with First Nations. Why would the Premier support a bill to pass through this Legislature when she knows and her minister knows that they did not do their job and consult with First Nations?

**Ms Smith:** I consulted with my transition advisor, Chief Billy Morin, who alerted to me the fact that it was vitally important to make sure that we put in the legislation that we would respect all treaty and First Nations rights as guaranteed by the Charter. That was the reason why it was the framework for the entire bill. Any time we have to bring forward a motion, of course, we're going to consult with the First Nations communities. This just sets the framework for the kinds of things that we might be able to take forward to push back against Ottawa. There is no impact on treaty and First Nations rights. That's the truth. [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Not only did this government not consult with First Nations; they completely ignored their calls to scrap the bill entirely. Yesterday Onion Lake Cree Nation joined other First Nations in calling for the sovereignty act not to be passed. The letter stated, quote: we call for its immediate retraction and for you and Alberta lawmakers to consult with us before enacting legislation that attempts any reconfiguration of the sovereignty within a united Canada. Can the Premier please explain why she jammed through the unconstitutional sovereignty act when she knew full well that her government failed to properly consult and ignored First Nations calls to withdraw the act?

**Ms Smith:** The mischaracterization by the members opposite has continued on for a couple of weeks, and let me just set the record straight. This does not reset the constitutional relationship. It does not rewrite laws. It just affirms that we are going to vigorously defend the areas of the Constitution that have been assigned to us under sections 92 through 95, and as a signatory to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms we're also going to make sure that we put up a shield so the federal government cannot interfere in our jurisdiction or the rights of our citizens. It's affirming the Constitution, affirming the Charter, of which Aboriginal and treaty rights are essential.

**Mr. Feehan:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations, whose main duty is to consult with Indigenous peoples, admitted that he failed. Already this morning Mikisew First Nations condemned the actions of the government. "We will not stand by while the province goes after our Treaties and our lands . . . To add insult to injury, the government limited debate [on Bill 1]". Comments from the

Mikisew alongside treaties 6, 7, and the Assembly of First Nations show a clear and utter failure of this government and this Premier. To the Premier: will she remove the minister from his role as Indigenous Relations minister since it is clear that he has failed, or will he do the right thing and resign? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** Is the member opposite kidding me? The Indigenous Relations minister is doing a fantastic job. He had a meeting with five chiefs this morning, where we talked about the Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. The focus of the discussion, actually, was working together on projects like infrastructure and transportation, the ongoing commitment we have to work with them on child welfare and education, the need to engage with First Nations on economic corridors that benefit all Albertans. This is the new, constructive relationship we have with our First Nations, and I'm so pleased by it.

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

### Health Care Workforce Vaccination Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our province is in the midst of a significant health crisis and Albertans deserve leadership, yet all the UCP have to offer is to throw the system into further chaos. That chaos is continuing with the resignation of the two deputy chief medical officers of health, a fact that the Premier tried to avoid this week only to have it reluctantly confirmed here yesterday by the Health minister. Can the Premier tell this House why Albertans should trust her government to protect their public health when she can't even bother to be up front when two-thirds of the public health team resign?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are up front. You know, when asked the question, we provided the answer in terms of in that regard. We are working to be able to provide the health care services that Albertans need and Albertans want. I'm very pleased to work with Dr. Joffe, and we are ensuring that he has the support that he needs to do his job and continue to – I'd like to inform this House that we are having success on our flu campaign. I spoke about it yesterday. We've had an increase in 3 and a half per cent of people who've gotten flu vaccinations. That's great. We need to do more, and we'll keep doing more.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, while this government carelessly guts the leadership of Alberta's public health team, the Children's hospital in Calgary is under huge pressure. Recently nurses at the Alberta Children's hospital have been referring to having a, quote, black Sunday. That's a day that the hospital was so overwhelmed, they were worried a child could die in the waiting room. Alberta's nurses are being put in an impossible situation. There's a worry that this situation could drive even more nurses to leave the profession, much as these deputy chiefs chose to leave their jobs. What specifically is the Premier, the leader of this government, doing today to ensure nurses have the support they need to protect the health of sick kids?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this important issue. Our hospitals, particularly our children's hospitals, are under strain. We see this here in

Alberta, as it is across, quite frankly, the entire country. Working diligently with AHS, which is supporting our tremendous job that's being done by our nurses and all our health care professionals in the hospitals, bringing more resources in on the short-term basis to be able to manage through the current spike of the flu. In addition, we are investing in our health care system significant dollars to hire more people to support our great front-line . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton–City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear the Premier doesn't take this seriously. She won't even speak to health care unless she's reaching out to directly interfere in it. These are, after all, the same workers who this Premier disgustingly accused of manufacturing a capacity crisis during the pandemic. Shockingly, this Premier still will not even stand and encourage Albertans simply to get vaccinated for the flu or COVID-19 to help support these workers. I'll give the Premier one more chance. Will she rise today and join me in encouraging all Albertans to simply get vaccinated to protect themselves and their children from the dangers of influenza and COVID? Premier, simply stand, recommend to Albertans to . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be crystal clear that our Premier, who leads our government, supports our government in having kids get vaccines and flu vaccines, to have families make that choice to get vaccinated. As I said, we are actually having success on our campaign to do so. I'm sure members opposite received the text to go get your flu vaccine that our government put out. We're in the middle of running a campaign right now. I'm sure they've seen the letters put out and the press releases put out by Dr. Joffe, and I'm very pleased that we've been able to increase, over the last two weeks, flu vaccinations by 3 and a half per cent.

#### Affordability Plan

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, our government announced many measures to combat inflation and help Albertans through the time of adversity. It's clear that there are strong supports in place for families with children. There has been less focus in the media on the supports for couples without children and for young people. Can the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please share with the House what supports are available to couples without children and to young Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nine hundred dollars. That's the estimated support average Alberta households without children will receive through the affordability action plan and the inflation relief act. This includes up to \$500 alone in electricity rebates, hundreds in potential savings on gas and diesel through the fuel tax relief program, and continued natural gas price protection. We are providing \$2.8 billion in relief to make life more affordable for all Albertans while targeting families, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans hardest hit by the affordability crisis.

**Mr. Panda:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that inflation has negatively affected all of us in different ways and considering that the needs of seniors in care facilities are often unique from other seniors and can even differ significantly from facility to facility or between two seniors in the same facility, can the minister please inform the House of what anti-inflationary supports are available to a widow or widower residing in a care facility?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost-of-living crisis is particularly challenging for those on lower and often fixed incomes, including many of our seniors. In addition to significant broad-based relief, our affordability action plan includes targeted relief for seniors, providing six \$100 monthly affordability payments from January to June of 2023. All seniors 65 and up with household incomes below \$180,000 will be eligible. We also recently announced indexation of the Alberta seniors' benefit and other core support programs to address long-term affordability. We are focused on providing additional relief to support those most severely impacted by inflation. To our seniors: help is on the way.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that my constituents are telling me every day about how expensive filling up their vehicles has become and given that increases in fuel costs are also putting a significant strain on many small businesses and given that one of my constituents now has a thousand-dollar bill for fuel that used to cost him \$600, can the same minister inform us of how long the fuel tax will be scrapped for and what other actions the government is taking to address fuel affordability issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that high fuel prices are creating hardship for families, farmers, and workers. Through our fuel tax relief program Albertans are already benefiting from their own resource, saving every time they fill up. If passed, the inflation relief act will make the fuel tax relief program permanent. Beginning January 1, Albertans will save the full 13 cents per litre on gas and diesel. The estimated annual fuel tax savings for a commuter or oil field worker filling a pickup truck once a week is up to \$600 or more. While NDP-Liberal policies and the carbon tax increase costs for Albertans, we are providing relief and making life more affordable.

#### 2:10 Electric Utility Regulated Rate Payments

**Ms Renaud:** A pre-election utility payday loan for Albertans: that's what this UCP government included in their affordability act. It's another piece of legislation drawn up on the back of a napkin, and Albertans are going to pay the price. No Albertan on an RRO is going to save a penny, but they will be paying nearly twice as much under this UCP government than they were under the NDP, and for that privilege they get a 19-month loan. This plan is a disaster, plain and simple. Why is the minister forcing utility customers into a payday loan scheme that will have Albertans paying more in the long run?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans are struggling under high electricity prices. That's why since July we've been providing monthly electricity rebates to 1.9 million homes, farms, and small businesses. In recognition of the affordability crisis and cold winter months ahead we're extending the rebates to April 2023, bringing total electricity relief through this program to \$500. Customers on the RRO are facing extreme pricing and volatility. We're responding with a temporary 13 and a half cent kilowatt price relief and deferral from January to March, which will provide relief while smoothing and stabilizing bills next year. In addition, we'll be evaluating the RRO.

**Ms Renaud:** Clearly, this minister hasn't done his homework or even read the bill.

Given that if some Albertans get off the RRO due to high costs, the RRO pool will shrink, leaving these customers with higher costs to pay off the loans, and given that this utility payday lending scheme will leave countless Albertans holding a bag of toxic loans that will cost them a fortune and given that this scheme will result in what U of C economist Blake Shaffer described as a “death spiral” of mounting costs of utility costs in the RRO, what was this minister possibly thinking when he set up this utility payday lending scheme? It doesn’t make sense.

**Mr. Jones:** Customers on the regulated rate option, or RRO, are facing historically high rates, and Albertans are concerned about their ability to budget and pay their bills this winter. The proposed RRO ceiling and deferral ensures that RRO ratepayer bills are manageable by deferring electricity costs above 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour from January to March and spreading those deferred amounts over future lower cost months. The government is also providing no-interest loans to providers . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jones:** The government is also providing no-interest loans to providers of the RRO so that both providers and ratepayers can enjoy this relief with no interest related to the deferral.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this utility payday lending scheme would result in many Albertans leaving the RRO option in April and given that those who remain in the RRO will be shouldering more and more of the loans, which will be paid through higher and higher utility bills, and given that this scheme is more of a scam, a scam that will punish Albertans for 19 months with higher and higher utility costs, and given that that looks like a borderline reverse Ponzi scheme but one that is being forced onto utility customers by an incompetent UCP government, can the minister explain to Albertans how this government managed to design such a disastrous utility payday loan scheme?

**Mr. Jones:** The NDP rate cap shifted additional costs from some ratepayers to all taxpayers and avoided the underlying structural volatility inherent in the RRO. By comparison, while the NDP rate cap over the same period would cost taxpayers \$375 million, the net cost to government of the pricing and deferral is estimated at around \$12 million. We will provide electricity relief to Albertans, particularly to those exposed to extreme volatility on the RRO. We will work with RRO providers, experts, and Albertans to improve electricity affordability and stability.

### Women’s Shelters and Affordable Housing

**Member Irwin:** Thousands of Albertans fleeing domestic violence don’t have a place to go. A report released yesterday by the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters showed that Alberta’s shelters had to turn away over 11,000 women and seniors and over 6,000 children because there was no space, and an additional 7,000 women and seniors and more than 3,000 children were turned away because of staffing shortages or lack of resources. This is deeply troubling, and this government needs to take action. Why won’t this government address the chronic underfunding of shelters and treat this like the absolute crisis it is?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working to address the challenges that we’re seeing across the social sector, not

just in women’s shelters but shelters and PDD and across the board. It was actually part of my mandate letter from the Premier, and I’m very thankful to see that it’s a part of it. I will continue to work with the sector to make sure that we’re addressing the challenges we’re seeing right across the social sector, specifically on women’s shelters.

I want to make sure that we know that anybody fleeing domestic violence will find the help that they need. If you are looking for help, please call the family violence number: 310.1818. [interjections] We’re here to help.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Irwin:** Given that in response to the report yesterday the executive director of Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, Jan Reimer, said shelters are, quote, under extreme strain due to chronic underfunding – she went on to say that some shelters are even considering closing their unfunded beds despite being at full capacity every single night. Front-line workers, who we should all be praising for their incredible work in the toughest of circumstances, have been urging this government to address that underfunding. Will this government finally recognize that we’ve hit a critical breaking point? Fund these shelters, do the right thing, and do your jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are funding women’s shelters. During the pandemic, as well, we did increase funding for women’s shelters because we knew there was going to be an increase in demand. I look forward to continuing to work with the social sector, with women’s shelters, to make sure we’re meeting this increased demand.

Again, I want folks to know that they can get the help that they need, today if they need it. We do have our \$15 million hotel program, so if there isn’t space in a women’s shelter, we will make sure that there’s a space for you today. Please, if you need help, continue to reach out and ask for help.

**Member Irwin:** Given that affordable housing is desperately needed in our province and has also been underfunded by this government and that the UCP doesn’t seem to believe that they’re responsible for the Albertans who are out on the streets, for those who’ve been turned away from homeless and women’s shelters, especially rural and Indigenous women, who are disproportionately impacted, when will this government recognize that housing is an important piece in the path to keeping Albertans safe? Stop ignoring the situation, and start investing in safe, affordable housing for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Building more housing is a top priority for this government. It’s why we implemented our stronger foundations plan. It’s why yesterday I had the opportunity to be able to announce 55 million new dollars towards helping to build housing, but we haven’t just started with housing. This has been a priority of this government since we took office.

For example, \$4.9 million for Swan River First Nations housing; Paul First housing, \$3 million; Neoma housing, \$2.5 million; Gilchrist Gardens, \$30 million; YWCA Banff, \$2.6 million; YWCA Calgary . . .

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

### Highway 28 Capital Plan

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you are no doubt aware, I've been advocating for improvements to highway 28 since I was first elected in 2015. Highway 28 is the main highway through my constituency, a constituency that produces 30 per cent of the bitumen royalties for this province. To the minister of transportation: does the economic benefit of a region influence decisions into allocation of funding for highways and infrastructure?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul for his question, especially today, which is a very exciting day for the NDP as their coalition partner just appointed their new Liberal leader, John Roggeveen. It'll be interesting to see what deals come out when the new Liberal leader meets with his NDP counterpart. But, yes, I'd like to inform the member and his constituents that his persistent advocacy of the economic benefits of improving highway 28 has paid off, and he has made it perfectly clear how his riding contributes to Alberta's economy and why they need to have a strong road network to help . . .

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 28 was the subject of a feasibility study in 2018 and given the study was projected to take approximately three years and was to be completed in 2021, to the minister: can you provide some detail as to the scope of the project once approved?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. His constituency is more than just a vital economic corridor that's home to hard-working families; it represents a strategic military importance as well to the Cold Lake air base. Obviously, getting supplies in and out and having a safe, reliable road network for the base is all vitally important to our country. The importance of highway 28 will be considered going into budget 2023 in February, but the best I can say right now is that Christmas is 17 more sleeps away; Budget 2023 is 78 more sleeps.

2:20

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course, for the answers. Given that this highway is crucial to supplying our thriving oil and gas industry as well as our famous 4 Wing air base in Cold Lake and many communities on the route from Edmonton to Cold Lake, to the minister: I know that there are highways across the province in much need of repair just like highway 28, but can you commit that highway 28 will rise up the priority list, recognizing the economic benefit to the province of this very important region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have completed a highway 28 study from Edmonton to Cold Lake. It recommends improvements to intersections, grade widening, safety, rest areas, and more. Albertans can't afford the risky NDP and their costly Liberal coalition. Here's just one example of why. The NDP are planning to bring in restrictive contract arrangements to block construction companies from bidding on provincial projects, and this just reduces competition, creates longer delays and increased costs to taxpayers. The NDP will always put their big union bosses ahead of Albertans. Apparently, big union bosses like Gil McGowan . . .

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

### Municipal Governance and Funding

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This disdain that the UCP government has for our municipal leaders has reached a new level under this newest leader. She supports the same rejected municipal policies of the previous Premier, like a provincial police force. Only days ago the Premier made her views of municipal leaders clear when she told CBC, and I quote, municipalities get their power from the provincial government. End quote. In her mind there are only two levels of government, federal and provincial. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain if she shares the views of the Premier that the democratic, elected municipal leaders have no rights, powers, or standing under this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stated a fact that municipal governments do get their authority from the province. But it's a government. We're going to work with municipal leaders as we have over the last three and a half years to ensure that we're bringing solutions forward for all Albertans. I know the minister is engaged, the Premier is engaged, this government is engaged.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has also refused to rule out the ridiculous UCP policy that elected municipal leaders and councillors should be treated as lobbyists when dealing with the provincial government and given that while our party has proposed real partnership with municipalities, the UCP has rammed their job-killing sovereignty act through this House, which gives cabinet dictatorial powers to issue directives to municipalities, treating them as subordinates to be ordered around rather than as elected representatives of Alberta, can the minister explain why she wants to be the municipal dictator rather than a partner?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, of course, none of that is true, Mr. Speaker. Of course municipalities are partners of ours. We have been working with them throughout our time in government, throughout the last three and a half years. We'll continue to do so. We've been consulting with municipalities throughout the last three and a half years on a number of issues that the member has raised, including whether or not to end contract policing, over the sovereignty act. We'll continue to engage municipalities individually and through the RMA and Alberta munis and will continue to do so for the remainder of this term.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has refused to adequately fund affordable housing in its entire time in office, meaning that municipalities have had to rely on the federal funding, and given that under the current text of the act municipalities could be directed to stop accessing funds used to support affordable and social housing from the federal government and given that we are tragically seeing homelessness and Albertans dying from the cold, will the minister of housing explain why he supports the sovereignty act that could jeopardize municipalities' efforts to care for some of our most vulnerable Albertans just so the Premier could have political . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to clarify again because they obviously weren't listening yesterday. Bill 1 has nothing to do with that, and it will not put at risk our housing strategies. Actually, we are working with the other provinces, the other housing ministers, and the federal housing minister to make sure that our housing strategies align, that we're working together to make sure we're addressing these issues and also working with the municipalities, the municipal leaders as well as our not-for-profits and private providers to make sure that we are expanding the supply of affordable housing, and we're making progress on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Francophone Rights

**Ms Renaud:** Alberta is home to a diverse francophone community that's growing. Outside of Quebec Alberta has the largest number of francophones. While this should be something that a government celebrates, this government, through their sovereignty act, is creating great concern. The sovereignty act doesn't acknowledge the specific rights of francophone Albertans, which is creating some worry that this government could use the act to unilaterally override them. Why does this Premier's signature act fail to acknowledge the rights of francophone Albertans? Was this another mistake or a clear view on how the UCP views the francophone community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Francophone Albertans make up a very important part of our province. I was very pleased. I met with the president and CEO of the francophone association of Canada yesterday. We did exchange views about their thoughts on where we're going. Let me tell you this. They're pleased with this government. We're working together with them. We're having more meetings set up in the coming months. The report of the francophone policy committee is going to be released, the annual report. I'm looking forward to working with them.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government's disdain for francophone Albertans was seen clearly with their decision to slash funding for Campus Saint-Jean, the only French language postsecondary west of Manitoba, and given that the UCP was more willing to go to court than fund francophone education and given that now they're trying to give themselves power to ignore francophone rights in the sovereignty act, if she was more interested in respecting francophone Albertans, the Premier would apologize about the attacks to Campus Saint-Jean and commit to ensuring that they have all of the funding they need so nobody has to go back to court.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about Campus Saint-Jean. As you know, and as I think I've reiterated to this House on numerous occasions, the government of Alberta provides funding to the University of Alberta, who then distributes that funding to the relevant faculties and programs, including Campus Saint-Jean. That being said . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister has the call.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** . . . the government, of course, recognizes the value of francophone education, which is why we've worked with the federal government to secure an agreement that provides direct

funding to Campus Saint-Jean over the next few years to ensure their sustainability, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government abandoned any semblance of respect for the francophone community by eliminating the position of the secrétaire parlementaire pour la Francophonie and given that now many francophone Albertans don't feel like they're being listened to by this government, something reinforced by the exclusion from consultation on this job-killing, francophone-rights-trampling sovereignty act, will the Premier admit that this was a mistake by ignoring francophone Albertans? I mean, you have so many parliamentary secretaries; why not one more?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I find it rich coming from the other side, the opposition, when they themselves eliminated the position within my department to look after the directorate for francophones. We started the newly created French language service branch to continue to work closely with our francophone community. We added \$5 million to the francophone equivalency fund. We're looking after francophone students and parents and, of course, the community as a whole.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan is next.

### Calgary Cancer Centre

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Calgary-Peigan it has been fulfilling to watch the city I call home continue to develop. Calgary has been host to a number of important infrastructure projects in 2022. The Calgary cancer centre is among them. This centre will provide increased accessibility to cancer treatment services for Calgaryans and Albertans. Can the hon. Minister of Infrastructure tell the House more about this project and the value it brings to the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Building the vital public infrastructure that Albertans need, creating jobs, and attracting investment is key in our province's economic development. I'm proud to say that the \$1.4 billion investment in the Calgary cancer centre will make life better for Albertans by providing comprehensive cancer care services in a first-class facility. I'm also proud to say that this project has been an economic driver in Calgary, creating over 8,000 well-paying construction and construction-related jobs throughout its duration. In fact, last summer it peaked at 1,650 workers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has the call.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks, through you, to the minister for that great answer. Given the clear value of facilitating world-class cancer care in Calgary and given that such an important project has been met with much anticipation from residents, especially those struggling with cancer, can the Minister of Infrastructure inform the House of what progress has been made on the project thus far?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to say that this project has reached substantial completion, meaning it is ready for AHS to take over from here and install the vital technology, furnishings, and other items they need to provide excellent care and

services to Albertans. While the hospital is not ready to open its doors just yet to the public, it is a huge milestone in the construction process and a huge milestone in providing world-class cancer care right here in Alberta. I'm looking forward to joining the Minister of Health as well as others in the official ceremony to hand this centre over to AHS tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, thank you to the minister for his dedication to improving our province. Given that the Calgary cancer centre is currently the largest government infrastructure project in Alberta and given that such projects require significant financial investment, can the hon. Minister of Health advise the House on the services we can expect to see at the centre?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Approximately one-half of Albertans will be diagnosed with cancer some time in their lifetimes. The Calgary cancer centre will be life changing for countless Albertans in their battle with this terrible disease. From the beginning this place was deliberately designed to create an environment that encompassed the whole of cancer. From prevention, screening and early detection, research ideas and collaboration, treatment, development in clinical trials to supportive patient care and education, this world-class facility will offer cutting-edge cancer treatments and provide the services Albertans need.

#### **Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity Chief Medical Officer of Health**

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, last year I was so privileged to become a new father, but like so many parents across Alberta, I am terrified of what might happen if my son ends up needing emergency health care. Children's hospitals have been at capacity for weeks. I know the minister will stand and explain that maybe we will see off-brand Tylenol on our shelves a month from now, maybe further, but that is not going to solve the crisis that we are seeing in the emergency departments across the province. Why does the government continue to stand by and do nothing while our hospitals are in crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the new father across the way – and congratulations, by the way – and I also want to assure all Alberta parents that health care will be available when they need it. Yes, our system is under strain, but we are providing more resources to the hospitals. AHS is working incredibly hard to actually pull in the resources they need to ensure that Albertans can access them. Again, I was very pleased, with the Premier, to be able to announce 5 million bottles, a shipment of acetaminophen and ibuprofen coming in, that will help relieve the pressure on the hospitals. And I'll speak more to that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that Dr. Paul Parks, former head of the emergency section of the AMA, said that children's health care is in pure chaos and is in disaster mode and given that Dr. Shazma Mithani said that the government's lack of response to the crisis has been deafening and that their lack of leadership is driving down morale on the overrun front lines of our hospitals and given that it has been months since the last CMOH briefing, why aren't daily public health briefings being provided so parents can get the information they

need? Can the minister explain why this government stays silent while parents and front-line health care heroes are crying out for help?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government hasn't stayed silent. I was very pleased that Dr. Joffe put out a news release to all Albertans about how to manage through this very challenging respiratory virus season. Dr. Joffe also put out a letter to all parents of children in terms of how to manage and urging them to make the choice to get flu shots. I'm very pleased that over the last couple of weeks, given our flu campaign and including the text messages that were sent to all of our phones, the number has increased by 3 and a half per cent, and we'll continue to do more. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that Alberta families deserve a Health minister that understands their file and knows whether or not important public health officials are still working through this unprecedented health care crisis and given that while the minister told the House yesterday that deputy CMOH were still working after their resignation – their voice mail said that they had stopped working nearly a month ago – and given that with a volunteer CMOH and two deputies who may or may not have stopped working several weeks ago, Albertans want to know when these important roles will be filled and why the minister's statement contradicts the timeline of the deputy CMOH.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I commented in this House earlier, the two deputy CMOH have resigned. You know, when asked that question, I did provide the input on that. I understand that they still are on the payroll although they may have actually taken vacation to get to the end of it, which may have caused the confusion in my answer yesterday. The point is that we are going to fill those positions. We have a new CMOH. He is active in his role right now. We are ensuring he has the resources that he needs to do his job, and we'll continue to support Albertans through this challenging time.

#### **Nechi Institute**

**Ms Sigurdson:** Part of the UCP's appalling record on Indigenous issues is their treatment of the Nechi Institute. Since 1974 Nechi has trained mental health and addictions counsellors with an Indigenous perspective. An estimated 15,000 people have been trained at Nechi and gone on to do critical counselling work in their communities. But in 2019 the UCP evicted the Nechi Institute from their premises at Poundmaker's Lodge. Last month the UCP evicted Nechi from trailers they had set up on the grounds of Poundmaker's. Why is the UCP so determined to shut down the Nechi Institute and their vital work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure has risen.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working collaboratively with the Nechi Institute and the Poundmaker's Lodge to try to find a peaceful resolution to this challenge. We did have to send them a letter. The trailers that they were in were dilapidated and need work, and the Poundmaker's Lodge was asking us if we could find a way to access the site for ground-penetrating radar to look for possible sites of people that were buried there. We have been ongoing working with them. We have sent them a letter. We have yet to hear back from them, but it is my understanding that they co-operatively were moving to a new site, and we're continuing to work with them.



**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the Nechi Institute executive director, Marilyn Buffalo, is with us here today and given that in his October eviction letter to her the Minister of Infrastructure threatens to fence off and dismantle Nechi's trailers and even potentially arrest and criminally charge Nechi Institute staff, why did the Minister of Infrastructure make these threats towards Indigenous Albertans who were training their peers to do important mental health and addictions work in communities which are disproportionately affected by the drug-poisoning crisis in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very thankful for the work that the Nechi Institute has done, and it is my understanding that after that letter was sent on November 11, 2022, the Nechi voluntarily vacated that site. We have sent them a further letter, and we have asked if they need help with further work on accommodations. That offer still stands. We are waiting to hear an official response. We continue to hope to work with them and provide them the help that we can to help them into a new site.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that when the UCP evicted Nechi from Poundmaker's buildings, the Minister of Indigenous Relations promised that he would find them a new location – in fact, almost exactly three years ago, on December 3, the minister told this house, and I quote: we will find other space for the Nechi Institute. End of quote. Three years have passed, and the Nechi Institute is homeless. Why did the minister break his word in this House to Marilyn Buffalo and to the Nechi Institute?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have sent a letter still reaffirming that promise to help them find a location and to provide them new trailers to help them continue to do that work. We are at this time still waiting for an official response to continue that work with them. We thank them for the co-operation that they have shown by voluntarily vacating the site so that we can do the essential work that we need to do, the ground-penetrating radar, to find if there are any burial sites there. We continue to wait for their response.

Thank you very much. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

### High School Construction Project in North Calgary

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education is an important subject for all Albertans. As Calgary's population continues to grow, more students are entering into the education system, thereby increasing demand for new schools. I am happy that construction for a north Calgary high school is under way, making members of my community very happy and excited. However, I am concerned that the current inflationary environment may have impacted this project. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please provide an overall update on the north Calgary high school project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the member said, the north Calgary high school is currently under construction and is actually over the halfway point in that process. Right now construction of the building envelope is under way, HVAC and sprinkler installation is ongoing, the interior framing is under construction, and other interior finishes are on track as well. As a former contractor and project manager I understand the member's

concern about inflationary impacts on projects, and I would like to say that this is something that has always been monitored by the department of infrastructure and accounted for throughout the building process.

2:40

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that rising inflation is an ongoing concern in Canada and a significant issue in Alberta as well and given that Alberta is also experiencing supply chain problems and further given that Alberta is currently going through labour shortages, to the same minister: can you please provide an update on the cost of the north Calgary high school project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget for this project is \$70.5 million, which, on top of providing a new school, has provided about 400 construction and construction-related jobs. Each individual infrastructure project in Alberta varies in terms of supply chain impact, which is a global problem. However, Alberta Infrastructure continually monitors inflation and cost-escalation trends to ensure that anticipated cost escalations are calculated into our project budget right from the planning stage and all the way through construction. Project teams, contractors, consultants, and suppliers are also actively working to mitigate risk of delayed structures, schedules, and cost implications.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that detailed answer. Given that the Calgary board of education is one of the busiest and largest school boards in western Canada and given that high schools near north Calgary are already reaching capacity while more students are continuing to enrol and further given that parents in Calgary-North are eager to send their kids to this new high school, can the Minister of Infrastructure please give an update to this House on when parents and students can expect the grand opening for the north Calgary high school? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. One thing I can assure the members down there on that corner of the Assembly is that the hon. Member for Calgary-North listened intently while you asked questions. Perhaps you would show him the same courtesy.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of my mandate is to work closely with the Minister of Education to build more schools in our province, and that is exactly what we're doing. The Calgary north high school will be able to accommodate up to 1,800 students. We are expecting to see construction finished during the summer of 2023, when it will be handed over to the school district to prepare for the students' arrival at the start of the '23-24 school year. Our government is focused on creating jobs, providing the facilities and spaces communities need, and ensuring that all Albertans have access to quality education. This project accomplishes that goal.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Bill 6  
Police Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is a privilege for me to rise today and introduce the first reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022.

Alberta is a much different place than it was in 1988, when the current Police Act came into being. This is the first major update of the Police Act in over 34 years. This act would improve accountability and public confidence in the police by establishing an independent commission to handle complaints against police, creating new governance bodies that will give communities greater say in setting policies, priorities, performance targets, building police services that better understand their diverse communities and are more responsive to their distinct needs. I encourage members on both sides of this House to support this legislation, and I ask that we move first reading of Bill 6.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Bill 203  
Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties)  
Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022.

The purpose of this bill is to improve traffic safety by reducing unsafe, excessive speeding and stunt driving. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues and encourage all members in this House to support Bill 203.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

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

**Bill 204  
Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

In 2017 I introduced the private member's Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. It was patterned after an Amber Alert, which enabled police to issue a notice when a senior or adult with a cognitive impairment went missing. The Assembly passed the bill. The bill received royal assent but was never proclaimed due to the powers it could grant police in disclosing information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. Private member's Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, will address the concerns by working within the MPA and amending the disclosure section to make clear that silver alerts do not contravene the Missing Persons Act and therefore allow police to be able to access a silver alert to help find a missing senior.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling. I rise to table six copies of a letter from the Member for Peace River requesting early consideration of Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

**Statement by the Speaker**

**Private Members' Public Bills**

**The Speaker:** However, members, before we proceed to the remaining items of the Routine, I have a matter to address with the Assembly that has to do with the tabling that I just made. The Member for Peace River has requested that the private member's bill that he's sponsoring, Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022, be granted early consideration and be called in Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 12, 2022. I have just tabled this letter.

Since this type of request has not occurred for some time, in particular during the 30th Legislature, I would like to speak a little bit about what the request entails and what past Speakers have said about such requests for early consideration. Currently Bill 202 is on the Order Paper with a due date of day 12 of session, which equates to Monday, December 19, 2022. The member's request is that Bill 202 be considered in Committee of the Whole this coming Monday, December 12. There is a protocol in place, that has existed since 1997, that a member may request early consideration on their bill so long as it has passed the previous bill stage. In this case, that has occurred. Bill 202 received second reading this past Monday, December 5.

The other aspect of the protocol is that the bill for which early consideration has been granted must not bump another private member's bill where debate has been adjourned, the committee has not completed the work on a bill, or a bill is due according to the rules. Currently there are no other bills that fall into any of these categories. Accordingly, following the practices and precedents of this Assembly, Bill 202 will be first up for consideration in Committee of the Whole on Monday under private members' bills.

2:50

I'd like to make a few remarks regarding early consideration of private members' bills. My predecessors repeatedly called upon House leadership to review the procedure for early consideration. This has not happened, and I'm mindful that the early consideration process might jeopardize the ability of private members' bills to proceed through the legislative process as expeditiously as possible. Therefore, I renew previous calls of Speakers, including Speaker Wanner, Speaker Zwozdesky, and Speaker Kowalski, for such a procedure that ensures that the consideration of private members' bills be as fair as possible for all private members.

For additional information – and I'm sure you'll be reading up on it this weekend – on the matter of early consideration of private members' bills I refer you to Speakers' statements from December 3, 2014; November 18, 2013; March 15, 2012; November 23, 2009; November 27, 2001; and lastly, February 11, 1997.

That brings us to Ordres du jour.

**Orders of the Day**

**Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 2**

**Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Bill 2 is a priority for Alberta's government as it recognizes the affordability crisis facing Albertans and enables us to provide additional support. Many families are struggling with rising grocery bills, power bills, mortgage payments. Seniors are facing tough choices about whether to fill their prescriptions or buy fuel for their cars. Rising inflation impacts everyone, especially those living on fixed incomes or facing higher costs such as families, Albertans with disabilities, or those out of work.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

Our government has moved quickly to put our affordability action plan into motion, but legislative changes are needed to enable us to provide quick and effective supports. It is my privilege to present this bill and to move it through second reading in the House. If passed, these legislative amendments will enable us to deliver affordability relief to all Albertans struggling under the burden of increased costs and crippling inflation. Through Bill 2 our government will deliver critical affordability measures that are designed to provide both broad-based support and targeted relief across the province. Most significantly, this legislation makes necessary changes that will enable our government to deliver upcoming targeted relief to millions of Albertans.

Bill 2 will amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to enable us to deliver six nontaxable monthly payments of \$100 to seniors, families for each child under 18, and vulnerable Albertans receiving AISH, PDD, and income support. We wanted to ensure that all low- and middle-income families received the support. Approximately 80 per cent of families with children will be eligible based on the \$180,000 income threshold, which is the same threshold we use for child care subsidies. Legislating this program ensures that the payments are nontaxable and do not affect other benefits. Passage of this bill is a critical and necessary step to enable these payments early in the new year. We remain committed to the legislative process, and more details will be outlined through regulation if the legislation passes. We look forward to updating Albertans as quickly as possible.

Through this legislation we will also index both personal income tax and the Alberta child and family benefit. The Alberta Personal Income Tax Act will be amended to resume indexation of nonrefundable tax credits and tax bracket thresholds in the personal income tax system, retroactive to 2022. With this change, many Albertans will owe less tax or receive a higher refund come tax time. They will also benefit from lower tax withholdings on their paycheques next year. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, will also index the Alberta child and family benefit program to inflation, increasing quarterly benefits to low-income Alberta families by 6 per cent.

This legislation will also provide temporary price protection on electricity costs through the newly named regulated rate option stability act. Right now approximately 800,000 Alberta homes, farms, and small businesses purchase electricity through the regulated rate option, or RRO. They are facing record-high electricity rates this winter. To protect them from price spikes, we will set a temporary price ceiling of 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour, lasting from January through to the end of March. For January, February, and March any electricity costs above the 13 and a half cent ceiling will be deferred until and spread over lower price months. Other changes to the act will ensure this price protection is provided as fairly as possible, including for consumers served by rural electrification associations and for municipalities not regulated by the AUC. The

city of Medicine Hat is included as well to make sure that its residents also benefit from this price stabilization.

To ensure providers can shoulder any added costs, the government will offer no-interest loans to RRO providers needing to finance the deferrals created by the price ceiling. Providers will pay back the loans through future RRO rates from April 1 to December 31, 2024. This measure is temporary and necessary. It will provide price protection for consumers when RRO rates are expected to be the highest. This price ceiling combined with the electricity and natural gas rebates will provide real support for millions of people and businesses facing high utility costs.

The high cost of fuel impacts all of us. That's why we will also amend the Fuel Tax Act to expand fuel tax relief and save Albertans money every time they fill up at the pump. To provide immediate help, we will implement a temporary suspension of the fuel tax on gasoline and diesel from January through to the end of June 2023. These legislative changes will enable us to pause the full 13 cent fuel tax for the next six months and make the fuel tax relief program permanent, with ongoing reduced fuel taxes during periods of high oil prices. Details on oil price thresholds and methods for calculation will be outlined in the regulation.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 2 we are taking decisive action to enable broad-based relief that helps millions of individuals, families, farms, and small businesses during this affordability crisis. Measures we have taken in the past to pay down provincial debt and put our fiscal house in order made it possible for our government to be there now to support Albertans when and where they need it the most. This legislation appropriately balances the need to provide both broad-based relief and targeted support for those most impacted by soaring costs. Alberta's affordability action plan is the largest of its kind in Canada. If passed, this legislation will ensure that desperately needed financial support is delivered quickly and effectively.

I hereby move second reading of Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other hon. members looking to speak to Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, at second reading? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak at second reading of Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I'm thankful for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 2. Much of what's in this bill has already been announced.

You know, before I get into my comments about the specifics of the bill, I would just like to say something about the rollout of this piece of legislation. This is perhaps for everybody in this Chamber to hear and understand. This particular piece of legislation touches the lives of a lot of Albertans that perhaps don't understand what's being rolled out or what's being announced by the government. What that does, if there isn't clarity in answers or a place for people to go to get more information immediately when something is announced: it creates fear and uncertainty. Because this piece of legislation will touch tens of... [interjection] Excuse me? Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the minister was saying, but okay.

Anyway, where I was going with this is that because this piece of legislation touches the lives of disabled Albertans, many of which struggle to understand what this piece of legislation structurally means to them, there's a lot of panic and fear. So my suggestion is just, in future rollouts that we know are going to impact the lives of people that are particularly vulnerable and maybe struggle to understand, that there be some clarity, that there be more clarity, and that there be some thoughtful process involved to understand that – you know, we're just going to have to take more care to

explain things. I know my office has just been bombarded with: "When is the money coming? When will it go up? Am I eligible?" It's just fear, and it's fear from a lot of very desperate people.

I'm going to move on to my comments. What's new in this bill should be deeply concerning to Albertans. Much like the Premier's signature sovereignty act, that was written in crayon, it looks like this legislation didn't get the benefit of due diligence, that or this government is actually intent on delivering the most poorly designed plan on utilities that this province has ever seen.

3:00

In this legislation the UCP government set a temporary ceiling on the price of electricity for customers on the regulated rate option. That rate is set at 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour, nearly twice as high as the hard cap under the previous NDP government.

That egregious doubling of the ceiling is actually not the worst part of the bill. For reasons passing understanding, this government is forcing RRO customers into a utility payday lending scheme. Folks on the RRO get three months of temporary relief but then end up paying more over the next 19 months to pay off the loan. These loans, let us be clear, could come with interest.

We have a bit of a scheme here, but this scheme is very poorly designed. Everyone on the RRO is meant to be paying back these loans through higher utility rates over the next 19 months, but after March this government has created a huge economic incentive for people to leave the regulated rate option. Albertans with good credit who can sign up for the market price option will leave the RRO. Who are those people with poor credit? They're very vulnerable people, usually. Hence, the pool of Albertans paying back the loan will shrink, forcing utility prices higher and higher. This is a terribly designed scheme, what some have called a reverse Ponzi scheme, that will lead to disaster.

University of Calgary economist Blake Shaffer, perhaps this province's leading expert on the electricity market, has called this design feature of this scheme "a death spiral." Now, members opposite heckling may think they know more. They do not. This is someone that has studied this and is an expert, and I think that we need to listen to the experts, not to conspiracy theorists and not to hecklers. The UCP utility payday lending scheme is a trap. It will trap Albertans who can't get off the RRO into paying even higher utility costs. In other words, there will be some Albertans left holding the bag, a bag full of toxic loans, paid back with higher and higher utility rates.

It's been less than 24 hours since this legislation was introduced, and already we can see how deeply flawed it is. It looks like the same level of due diligence and careful thought that went into the job-killing sovereignty act, and that's a pretty low bar. Albertans deserve better. They deserve much better. Instead of delivering a utility payday lending scheme that's designed to fail, the government should get back to basics. We're in an affordability crisis. The solution is simple. In the short term we need a real program that protects Albertans from these price spikes, and in the longer term we need a real solution to drive down those prices.

We're near the end of this government's mandate, yet they've given next to no thought on a real, long-term plan on electricity. The only thought they've got is a reverse Ponzi scheme or, put another way, a utility payday lending scheme that really is designed to fail.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on from this payday lending debacle. There are other things that are missing from this bill that should be highlighted: absolutely no action on sky-high grocery items; absolutely no action on sky-high auto insurance rates, rates that this government knows are set to jump again.

In the view of the opposition, it's time for this government to start listening to Albertans, to their needs. Albertans are under enormous financial pressure right now. The health care system is on the brink. Kids can't get good access to hospitals when they need them, but the priority of this government and its focus and its energy is entirely on the sovereignty act, an act that two-thirds of Albertans don't want. Listen to that: two-thirds of Albertans do not want the sovereignty act. Investors tell us that it will drive away investment in this province, and still government members think they know better. It's time for this government to get their priorities straight and to focus on what really matters.

Let me conclude and reflect on one of the cruelest decisions made by this government, and by that I mean the decision to stop indexing AISH and other critical benefit programs to inflation. Let me be clear. For years this government weaponized inflation to punish the most vulnerable in our society. It was a heartless decision, and it did real harm.

The UCP government can't undo the suffering people experienced for years, but perhaps they could have decided on a go-forward basis to reverse their cruel cuts. Unfortunately, this legislation also fails people on AISH. The UCP government could have just adjusted payments for all of the years that it was frozen, but they chose a different path. Even after the changes in this act, an AISH recipient will still be \$3,000 worse off than with the previous NDP government, had we remained in power. They lost three years.

The Premier has a \$12 billion surplus, a record \$28 billion in natural resource revenues. There's apparently money to set up an Alberta revenue agency at a cost of \$500 million per year and another 5,000 civil servants, a 20 per cent increase in that workforce. There's money for an Alberta provincial police force at a cost of billions, but there's not enough money to undo the egregious harm that they've done to people on AISH, some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Now, I want to stop and tell you that I remember in 2019, when the deindexation – we found it in the omnibus piece of legislation, and we warned that it would be a problem. Then for the next three years, Mr. Speaker, we continued to warn that it was a problem and that people were suffering. We warned at that time that this would increase poverty, the stress and the cost of poverty. Make no mistake: there is a massive cost to poverty; there is a massive cost to government systems when people fall further into poverty. We said: this is going to harm people.

And what do we see now, three years later? Certainly, we have had COVID and inflation and deindexation, and what we see is enormous pressure on Alberta food banks, enormous pressure all over the place. I represent a community that is fairly wealthy on the whole, St. Albert, and even their food bank is breaking records. The pressure is all over the province. I'm sorry, but the food bank plan announced by the minister is insufficient. It talks about matching funding over three years – let me be clear: there is an election in six months – and that is insufficient to fund the hole, really, that food banks are experiencing as a direct result of benefits being deindexed. We warned that homelessness would increase, and what do you know? It has skyrocketed. It has skyrocketed all over the province. Shelters are full. Shelters are turning people away regularly. That is a problem.

Still, these are the things that we warned about when these benefits were deindexed, and since that time I am quite sure that many members in this House have received e-mails from all kinds of people talking about the struggle that they've had with AISH, trying to manage on AISH over the last three years. I know that I'm just completely overwhelmed with phone calls and e-mails and letters, handwritten letters sometimes, from people telling me their stories, telling me their stories that they live in their car, that they lost their apartment, that they live in their vehicle with their

daughter. I've heard of people in unsafe situations renting an apartment with an abusive spouse: they have no funds to leave; they have nothing; they can barely afford food. People that were using the food bank before are now going twice as often, and they're eating unhealthy food. They are getting sick in many cases because of the lack of nutrition in their diet.

And it's not just the payments that people are getting or the income benefits; it is so many other things in AISH that are not going to be fixed with this piece of legislation. You know, I have a number of questions that, when we get to that stage of debate, I will ask, but I'm just so alarmed by the lack of thought that goes into this government's legislation.

For example – here's just one little, tiny example – they talk about reindexing benefits for AISH, which is assured income for the severely handicapped, and PDD, which is persons with developmental disabilities. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you know this, that most if not all people that receive PDD supports are on AISH. So what does that mean? Did you intend for them to get this benefit twice? Did you intend for the amount being indexed to double? I don't know. How many people receive PDD support that aren't on AISH? Tell me. I don't understand that. PDD is not a direct payment support to Albertans. PDD pays for staff to support people with disabilities, so I'm not quite sure what this act intends to do.

There is so much that has gone on over the last three years. You know, I got a little emotional yesterday when I heard an answer from the minister about AISH, and the reason that I got upset is because for the last three years that is what I've spent my time doing, listening to people and listening to the struggle. To hear this government really boast about what they're doing and how they're helping people and helping the most vulnerable – you did the bare minimum. Let's be clear. You did the bare minimum. You started indexing from here on. What they need is for you to make up that difference, and that isn't even going to cut it because they have fallen further into poverty over the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to talk about one other program that is in this piece of legislation.

Can I get a time check, Mr. Speaker?

3:10

**The Acting Speaker:** About seven minutes.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you.

One of the other benefit programs that is mentioned in this piece of legislation is income support. As you know, income support is very much like AISH except it is an income replacement for people. There are two strains of income support; there's barriers to employment, and there's expected to work.

I'm going to talk about barriers to employment. People that are receiving income support, barriers to employment, very often have chronic illnesses. Very often they have disabilities, and they're just not on AISH yet, or they've been denied AISH benefits. Very often these are people with disabilities and very serious concerns or issues that prevent them from financially supporting themselves.

Now, this government indexed those benefits, and it went up a little bit. It's still under \$900 a month. Can you imagine trying to live on \$900 a month, that you demonstrably have problems working so you need income replacement, that you get income support and it's \$900 a month? Now, at one time people in Alberta had the ability to apply for supplemental benefits to income support. There was a whole host of them. A couple of them in particular that I'll talk about are accommodation or rental support. There was some extra money to help with rent. As you can imagine, people can't live on \$900 a month, so there was this extra \$300 benefit that

people could apply for to help with rent, and that would help quite a bit.

But this government, Mr. Speaker, has systematically kicked people off that benefit. Well over a thousand people lost that benefit. I know directly of probably, like, at least 15 or 20 people that lost their housing because of the loss of that supplemental benefit. Then, to make things worse, when they would appeal this decision – so they would literally go to the Appeals Secretariat to appeal the decision that this government made to reduce income support, get rid of accommodation support, that \$300. They would appeal it, but here's the rule: they had to have an address, they had to have a home to be able to appeal that decision. But these guys are the heroes of red tape reduction. That's just one example of the things that have happened over the last three years.

The other one is medical transportation. People literally lost a little bit – it was about \$100 that people on income support lost for medical transportation. Now, keep in mind that these are people with chronic illnesses, diseases, disabilities. Clearly, they are unable to work because they're receiving this benefit. Nobody wants to live on \$900 a month on income support if they can help it. They lost medical transportation. You know who it harmed? People in rural communities and suburban communities. They can no longer afford to get an Uber or a taxi to get to the Cross or to get to their doctor or to get to a program because there isn't very good regional transportation. Those are the people that were harmed.

I received letters and calls from people all over the place, primarily Red Deer county, weirdly enough, and the Bonnyville area. People are struggling not just because these benefits were deindexed but because of the systematic withdrawal of benefits for people that are extremely vulnerable and people that have disabilities. And then this government has the gall to say: we're stepping up; we're helping. You're vote buying. But you haven't done enough. You haven't made whole these people that suffered for over three years, that lost all kinds of things. All kinds of things. So I have a really hard time being thankful for this because this isn't really progress; this is doing the bare minimum. These folks have struggled.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot be the only constituency office that receives this kind of correspondence. I know because I'm copied on many of the e-mails that go to your offices. Every single constituency has people with disabilities and has people that are low income and has people that are vulnerable and has low-income seniors. It's not enough. Do you know how much the low-income seniors' benefit went up thanks to this bill? Do you know? Did you read it? Seventeen dollars. Seventeen dollars for low-income seniors. That's what it went up. So you have a \$13 billion surplus, and low-income seniors in Alberta get \$17 extra a month. That's not good enough. That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I will ask in future debate – there are so many things that are unknown. Now we have indexed certain benefits, but what about all the thresholds, then? Okay. So what about if someone needs legal aid? Have you changed those thresholds? Have you thought about that? Is there any plan whatsoever? My experience with this government is that they do things, they make bad decisions, and they maybe consult after the fact, if you're lucky. Rarely do they correct the mistakes properly, and then they continue.

Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that through debate on this bill this government will realize, "Maybe we didn't get it right; maybe we didn't fix enough; maybe we didn't go far enough," and they will entertain some amendments that will actually improve life for people in Alberta that are vulnerable, that are low income, or that are disabled, because what is in this bill is not enough. It doesn't undo the years of damage.

You know, I want to say one other thing about this. It is one thing to index AISH, but all of these other things have happened over the last three years specifically to AISH recipients and income support recipients. They deindexed, and then there was a systematic attack, so removing the supplementals, making the application process even more difficult for people to apply for AISH and income support. Now you have to do it online. You don't even know how many calls I get from people way up north that have poor connections, don't have computers, and don't even have the ability to go find someone to help them to apply for benefits online, so they're calling my office. There's no access for people. It's just shocking to me.

The application process for AISH: there is no clear timeline for how long things are taking. There is no benchmark where we can say to the ministry: are you meeting your targets?

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to add to debate this afternoon? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans are facing an affordability crisis right now, and that's why I am proud to support Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. The UCP government has already announced affordability measures, but these, in conjunction with Bill 2, will undeniably help Albertans during this difficult time.

The provincial NDP has supported the excessive federal spending that we've seen from the Trudeau government. The unnecessary, inflationary carbon tax has made things substantially worse for everyone as well. You know, Mr. Speaker, even though we can't repeal Justin Trudeau's carbon tax and we can't convince the NDP to lobby their ally Jagmeet Singh to support their affordability measure, there are things we can do in a timely and targeted manner. Through Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, we will be able to help the most vulnerable and make life more affordable.

Unlike the NDP, who couldn't make up their mind when they opposed the UCP government's cut of the fuel tax in April and then supported it in September, our government has acted decisively to cut the fuel tax by 13.6 cents per litre on every litre of gas and diesel. Bill 2 acts to authorize the current program retroactive to April 1, 2022, and extends it to June 30, 2023, regardless of oil prices.

With Bill 2 our government will support the most vulnerable by reindexing AISH, PDD, income support, the seniors' benefit, and the Alberta child benefit. For families with children under 18, seniors aged 65 and up, and families with an income below \$180,000, they will be provided a targeted \$600 by our government. We know that many of these families live on a fixed income, so these payments will be structured as refundable tax credits, making them nontaxable and making sure 100 per cent of these supports go to the Albertans that need them the most.

You know, Mr. Speaker, my mom is a senior, and, as many Albertans do, I help her manage her finances. I can see how she is struggling and is being forced to tighten her belt. But what I see in our measures here is not only seniors' benefits being reindexed, but I also see an extra \$100 a month for her for six months. I also see her electricity bill having rebates attached to it, lowering her monthly payments for her electricity. That's important for seniors. That's important for seniors, and it's a heck of a lot more than the base \$17 that the Member for St. Albert seems to think is a big nothing burger.

3:20

You know what else? As a mom I raised two boys, and I can tell you first-hand that when finances get tight, the first thing you do is decide whether or not your child is going to be able to play soccer or go to dance lessons, and it's an incredibly hard decision as a

parent to have to make a decision like that. Right now, after everything that kids have been through in the pandemic, they need activities, really, more now than ever. These are tough decisions. So that's why we're going to help parents with children. A hundred dollars a month makes the difference between being able to put your child in soccer or not in lots of cases. Given our strong provincial financial position I strongly believe that it's our responsibility to support Albertans and families who are struggling to pay their bills, and I'm really happy to see our government doing this.

Mr. Speaker, the use of food banks has also gone up 73 per cent between March 2019 and March 2022, which is why our government will provide targeted support to those in need, and that's also why we're funding food banks. You know, the Member for St. Albert seems to think that \$20 million is insufficient. I'm going to point something out: this is the first time ever that food banks have received funding from the government of Alberta. That is incredibly important. It's the first time, and it never happened during the NDP government, I'll point out. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call.

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, 180,000 lost jobs, and they think nobody needed the food bank while they were in government? Give me a break.

You know what else we're going to do? We're going to support those that rely on transit, and we're going to provide additional funding for low-income transit programs.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands that heating and powering your home when it's minus 40 outside is not optional; it's pretty much a necessity. But it can also be incredibly expensive, which is why under Bill 2 we expand the electricity rebate for four months and provide an additional \$200 to over 1.9 million homes, farms, and businesses. You know what else happens in the wintertime? Not only is it cold, but it's dark. You kind of use a little more electricity.

At any rate, I want to talk here at this point, too, about some comments, again made by the Member for St. Albert. She talked about how this program is so poorly designed. Well, let me tell you a little bit about a poorly designed electricity program. It happened during the NDP government when they accelerated the removal of coal from generation, which, of course, increased the price of electricity. And then what did they do? Oh, that's right. They put a price cap on to hide, to cover up the fact that they'd raised the prices over the acceleration of coming off coal. And then what did they do? Oh, that's right. They pushed the costs forward onto ratepayers through the Balancing Pool. It was a giant cover-up.

This brings the total relief for our electricity program to \$500. We'll have a three-month price ceiling of 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour, and it'll also be set on the RRO for consumers. The government of Alberta will provide zero per cent interest loans to providers to support deferrals. Zero per cent. I think the Member for St. Albert referred to it as some sort of Ponzi scheme – I don't know – interest rate loans. [interjection] Interest-free loans, yeah. Okay.

Furthermore, the natural gas rebate program for when natural gas hits over six and a half dollars is going to be extended indefinitely because we believe that the owners of the resource, which is the people of Alberta, should benefit when our prices are increasing for that particular commodity.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, our government will deliver on our promise to reindex personal income taxes retroactively to the 2022 tax year. As an aside, I'm just going to remind this Chamber that we had no tax brackets

and therefore no tax bracket creep until the NDP came along and eliminated the flat tax.

At any rate, reindexing personal income taxes means that 80,000 to 95,000 more Albertans will pay zero personal income tax by 2023. This is in addition to the current 1.3 million tax filers that already pay zero. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's actually pretty good news for many seniors and also for young people who are just starting out.

Mr. Speaker, low-income Albertans will also be able to take advantage of Alberta's rent supplement program and expanded temporary rent assistance benefit and the Alberta adult health benefit.

Under Budget 2022 we're also supporting students, Mr. Speaker. Postsecondary students will have \$980 million provided for student loans, \$108 million in scholarships, and \$60 million in grants. Through the new beginnings bursary low-income Albertans will also have access to \$15 million in funding over three years and a further 3 and a half million dollars that was just recently announced.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the affordability measures that have been addressed by Budget 2022. I strongly urge my colleagues as well as the members across to support this bill, that will act to support Albertans in this time of need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to the matter? I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Before I begin, I just want to thank the countless residents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain that have reached out to me with their suggestions as well as for the great work that I know many of my caucus colleagues and the minister have done to put this important piece of legislation forward.

As an MLA my job is to ensure that my constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and the people that live there, the people that call that area home, are looked after. This has always been and will continue to be my main priority and the greatest privilege of my short elected life. With that said, it is my absolute pleasure to speak to this bill as I know that this substantial package of targeted measures will provide some relief and much-needed support to my constituents and countless other Albertans.

Alberta's economy has recovered strongly, but we understand that Albertans are still struggling to heat their homes, fill their cars, and feed their families. We hear you, and we want to help. That's why addressing this inflation and affordability crisis was put at the top of our government's agenda, ultimately resulting in this critical piece of legislation. As we continue to grapple with the inflation and affordability crisis, this act will help Albertans manage these difficult times while we maintain fiscal responsibility and economic stability. Every decision our government makes from now until this crisis is over will balance affordability for Albertans with the need for continued balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act provides important legislative changes necessary for our government to take decisive action and deliver timely and effective support for Albertans.

Now, under this legislation families across Alberta with dependent children under 18 will receive \$100 instalments for six months for each child. As the MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and having one of the youngest average ages of any provincial riding in the province, I know this is going to be a massive help for many of the families that live in my riding. According to Trevor Tombe, an economics professor and fellow at the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, families have been affected even more by inflation. Those with kids have faced higher costs than those without.

I think any of the parents here would attest to that. It's undeniable that having another mouth to feed without another stream of income makes things much more expensive. Now, that said, this measure proves to be imperative to many of the families that live in my area.

Furthermore, some of the most valued yet most vulnerable members of our society continue to be our seniors. Seniors have always been integral pillars in our communities and in our families. Unfortunately, this demographic is also increasingly vulnerable to situations regarding inflation and affordability. This is one of the greatest sources of correspondence and phone calls and e-mails that I receive from residents in my area. That said, I'm extremely pleased to see that under this relief package recipients of the Alberta seniors' benefit will also see an increase in their January cheques in addition to receiving \$100 instalments each month for the next six months. Our seniors have spent decades making our communities what they are today, and I'm proud to stand behind this bill so that we may take care of our seniors as they have spent their lives taking care of us and have helped build our communities for many decades.

3:30

Now, for other Albertans, relief through this legislation is going to be seen at the pumps and on the energy bills. Legislative amendments will suspend the fuel tax in its entirety for six months while extending rebate programs for electricity and natural gas. By saving 13 cents per litre at the pumps and receiving additional electricity rebates of \$200 per home between January and April, I am confident that my constituents and all Albertans will be better equipped to weather the storm.

For our province's most vulnerable, recipients of PDD, AISH, and income support will receive cash instalments, and they can rest easier knowing that those benefits will now be reindexed. Again, I just want to give kudos to the rest of my caucus colleagues, especially the minister, for ensuring that this change took place. For those who are frustrated seeing their pay increases make negligible impacts in their budget, this legislation will reindex provincial tax brackets to inflation retroactive to the 2022 tax year and ensure that you will not be penalized for moving up a bracket.

If the members opposite choose to vote against this bill, I would consider that to be a direct attack on Albertans and many of the families that they would represent. Alberta's inflation was 6.8 per cent in October, up 6.2 per cent in September, a bump that is likely due to increases in the price of gas, electricity, and food. On a year-by-year basis Albertans paid 6.8 per cent more in October of 2022 for the goods and services over the same period a year ago. Albertans are calling for help, and our government is there to listen. This bill will allow us to follow through on our commitment to answer that call. The Leader of the Official Opposition has warned Albertans to take caution when it comes to our government's substantial package of targeted inflation relief measures. Now, personally, I would be petrified of any party or government that is not willing to offer the same level of relief or support during this type of crisis. Our residents are demanding this type of support.

As we work together to manage these trying times, our goal as Alberta's government is to increase affordability. The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, does exactly that, Mr. Speaker. That is why I support Bill 2, so that the hard-working families and individuals across this province can go back to living a more affordable life. I encourage all members in this Chamber to do the same and support this very important legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With that, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 3**  
**Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022**

[Debate adjourned December 7: Mr. Deol speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has eight minutes left if he wishes to use it.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the floor.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you so much, and thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows for his remarks earlier on this legislation. It's my pleasure to take a few minutes to engage in it today as well. As we are here today to debate the property rights amendment act, Bill 3, 2022, I want to begin by saying that I appreciate that this bill went through a process to address some of the challenges that were identified through Bill 206, that was brought forward by a private member of the UCP caucus previously, in 2020, and that in turn a committee was created to help gather feedback and bring forward through the committee process a government bill to remedy some of the issues that were resulting of that Bill 206 and then also to do – one of the things I love most about committee work is that there's a very thorough interjurisdictional comparison that's typically done to make sure that we know where our legislation is in terms of national standards and where the rest of the country is. I believe that the bill in the iteration that we're considering today does significantly improve our standing to be more in line with other jurisdictions across the country.

This bill is an example of a bill that was drafted after consultation and the advice of community stakeholders. I know many members of the Legislature, through the committee, travelled the province to get feedback from local residents as well as had conversations with the Alberta Law Reform Institute. I think that these types of engagement lead to better legislation, typically.

I can't help but think about this bill, which is number three of the government's priorities, in contrast to Bill 1. Instead of having the type of in-depth consultation that we've seen with Bill 3, Bill 1 was of course rammed through with no mandate. You know, only 1 per cent of Albertans actually voted for the current Premier, and many members of the current government actively campaigned very aggressively against that bill for many, many months, and they were right to do so, as well as many members of the community.

Bill 3 acknowledges the role of the courts and the judiciary in terms of arbitration disputes. This is important because, of course, when it comes to questions around one's home and the right of one to occupy that space, if it is your primary residence it carries great concern if one was to be evicted from their home without any due recourse or any opportunity for arbitration or for the judiciary to engage in that process in the courts.

I appreciate that this bill does acknowledge the important role of the courts, of arbitrators, and of the judiciary in terms of making sure that no decision is made that could negatively impact individuals without them having an opportunity to get that clarity from the courts. Again, a contrast to Bill 1, a significant contrast, but of course the courts will have to engage in Bill 1 because chiefs have already made it very clear that they will be launching a suit against that.

I did earlier today talk in question period about referring the bill prior to proclamation to the courts for an opinion, and I want to assure members of the Assembly that this has been done before. It's been done before by Conservative Premiers, in fact. Don Getty did as much in the 1990s with a piece of legislation that he wanted to

bring forward but, of course, didn't want to waste significant provincial resources having multiple claims launched against that so, prior to it actually being proclaimed, referred it, as the economically responsible thing to do, to get a judicial opinion so that before it was actually passed and proclaimed, members could have confidence that it was, in fact, constitutional and that it would in fact be upheld by the courts and that they wouldn't be throwing good money after bad by trying to fight something that wasn't constitutional. So this is something that we have precedent for.

Again, I like that Bill 3 does acknowledge the role that the courts have in terms of these challenging conversations around people's property rights and typically their homes. I know that there might be some areas in the province where there are disputes where people have been living somewhere that maybe doesn't have a settlement land claim remedied for the location where they're at, and I think it's important for those individuals to have an opportunity to engage in the court process to make sure that nobody is without a home without having due recourse on what might be land disputes.

We know that there is language in here around guidelines, that they will likely be further clarified through regulations. I hope that the government shows good faith to the folks that were consulted in the drafting of the bill and takes those regulations back to those stakeholder groups that engaged in the creation of the legislation prior to enforcing regulations. Clearly, there was interest. There are well-documented stakeholders that are engaged on this topic, and then, of course, we do have significant interjurisdictional comparisons, as supported through the legislative services research branch of the Legislative Assembly.

It's with that that at this point I will probably wrap up these remarks. Simply to say that I think that this bill is something that my colleagues and I are keen to support. I hope that this type of legislation and the collaborative process, the community-driven process, the recognition of the role of the courts – I wish it was something that was emulated in other bills, particularly the first bill of this session, which essentially took the opposite approach, was something that was created in a silo by now well-documented individuals who say that the next step is a referendum as it relates to independence.

This is certainly a much better process, much more collaborative, and something that I wish the government would follow this lead on when it comes to other pieces of legislation to ensure that they are done in a fair, forthright, transparent way and that they will be upheld by court challenges and that they represent something that is not headstrong and disrespectful to communities in this province and our role in Confederation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to cede the remainder of my time on Bill 3.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to Bill 3?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been an incredibly interesting, robust week of debate in the House. We've made a lot of progress, and I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 on Monday, December 12.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:41 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 8, 2022**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., adjourned*)

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., adjourned*)

### **Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., deferred to December 21, 2022, or next available date pursuant to motion under Standing Order 8(8) agreed to on division*)

### **Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 12, 2022

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	



### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 12, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Nicole Williams. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
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 Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the privilege to meet with a very special guest who is joining us now in the Speaker's gallery. Please welcome the British consul general, Mr. Jonathan Turner. He is joined by Ms Kaitlin Boyd, head of science, climate, and energy at the British consulate general. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon I'd like to welcome a group of grade 9 students and their teacher Shayla Westman from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Dr. Elliott community school in Lyndon, Alberta. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has two school groups, I believe, to present.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. It's an honour to introduce not just one but two school groups today. I would like to welcome from Grace Martin school grades 4, 5, and 6, led by their teacher Siraj Hussain, and from Tipaskan school the grade 6s with their teacher Adrian Tsui, students who I recognize from visits at Read In Week and school visits and community events. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has an introduction.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Chamber members of the Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Rachele Venne, Josie Nepinak, Cheryl Uchitil, and Meeka Otway. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, actually, constituents of yours, Mr. Speaker, but they are local business owners in the great riding of Airdrie-East. Their business is Rival Axe Throwing. We shared a parade float last weekend for the Christmas parade, and it was super fun. Bull's eye every time. Please rise and welcome Jena, Cameron, Asher, and Eleanor Storms, and Joni Daley.

**Member Irwin:** I'm so proud to introduce the fabulous Margaret Mooney. Margaret was the artistic co-ordinator at the Citadel Theatre from 1965 to 1998 and is a talented visual artist who has exhibited internationally. She's also the coolest person that I know. I just presented Margaret with a Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Please rise, Margaret, and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of people visiting the Legislature today. I'd like to ask that they stand as I introduce them: Lynette Young, Tjarda Barratt, Donna Mendelson, Neil Konner, Joyce Kyncl, Christina McCharles, Dale Christian, Jody Young, Tony Blake, Ian Skinner, and Mike Northcott. If you could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Tim Arnold. Tim is a prominent businessman and volunteers in his community often. I've had the pleasure of getting to know Tim in a local coffee shop in Three Hills and can say that he is now a proud Conservative after a short stint, a long time ago, with the Liberals. That's what the coffee shop guys like to tease him about, anyways. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to introduce to you and through you Marian Brant. Marian is the executive director of the Edmonton International Street Performers Festival and has had a long career growing the arts in Edmonton. Please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour and privilege to introduce to the Legislative Assembly the chairs of the Alberta Wheat Commission and the board of the Alberta Barley Commission. We have in attendance Tara Sawyer, Greg Sears, Todd Hames, Devin Hartzler, Shawn Jatcula, Connie Matson, Tom Steve, Shannon Sereda, and Syeda Khurram. Please stand and accept the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature members of the Alberta Funeral Service Association that have joined us here today from across the province: Eden Tourangeau, Tyler Weber, Tracy McFee, David Root, and Stu Murray. Thank you for all the important work you do helping grieving Albertans across this province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to talk about a national crisis, a crisis that we have the power to change. Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people are falling victim to an alarming level of violence across our province and our country. Earlier this year Rebecca Contois, Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, and a woman whom elders named Buffalo Woman lost their lives at the hand of an alleged serial murderer in Winnipeg. These Indigenous women, like too many others, had their lives cut short.

Between December 2021 and March 2022 five Indigenous women were killed in Alberta. All of these women were people with hopes. They were people who were loved. They were mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts, and now they join the thousands of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people who have been murdered in this country. May we all honour them in our efforts to bring an end to the crisis of violence against women. It's time we stand in solidarity to stop this violence and the killing of Indigenous women and girls and make this province a safer place for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for keeping the red dress on display in the Queen Elizabeth II Building for the past three years. The dress is a reminder to members and visitors about this evil and a tribute to Indigenous women and girls whose lives have been lost.

Mr. Speaker, every Canadian woman deserves safety and a chance to fulfill their dreams. Sadly, Indigenous women experience much higher rates of poverty, and they're more likely to suffer at the hands of their partners from domestic abuse. They are more likely to be forced into prostitution, making them vulnerable to monsters like Robert Pickton or the aforementioned accused serial murderer in Winnipeg. Tragically, the homicide rate for Indigenous women is six times higher than the rest of the population.

1:40

More work needs to be done. We need the right resources in place to create safer conditions. I regularly meet with female Indigenous leaders in my office who provide important supports to vulnerable women in our province. Mr. Speaker, there is an enormous need to provide the support for Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people who seek freedom from dangerous situations.

Time and again the federal government has said that they will be there for Indigenous people, particularly when it comes to reconciliation and to ending the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. They talk a big game, but, Mr. Speaker, this is a story we've come to know all too well in Alberta, a story of empty promises. Promises are empty if there's nothing to sustain them, to follow up, and that is absolutely the case here. There is simply not enough funding from the federal government, and women's lives are at stake. If there was a time to step up, this is it.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has joined the cause for safety. We are working across government to implement the Alberta Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Roadmap to address violence and to increase the safety and the economic security of Indigenous women and girls. Additionally, the new Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is an Indigenous-led group that will give advice and recommendations directly to Alberta's government to help make our province a safer place. Their work has just begun, and it is the kind of work that will affect every part of our government.

It's my hope that all levels of government across Canada will take note of this incredibly important work and follow suit. Members of the council are here in our gallery today, and I'm honoured to be in their presence. I've gotten to know them all, and their stories are heartbreaking. Their expertise and their commitment is much needed. May we all follow their lead in creating a safer, more secure future for Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people across our province and our country.

**Member Irwin:** If you won't search the landfill, then we will: those are the words of Kera Harris, the daughter of Morgan Harris, who was murdered by a Winnipeg serial killer along with three other Indigenous women: Morgan, Mercedes Myran, Rebecca Contois, and one other woman who, at the request of elders, we will now refer to as Buffalo Woman instead of unidentified woman. Until her name is known, we honour her. My heart breaks for all who knew and loved these women and for their communities that bear the grief daily.

This is not an isolated case in Manitoba but a systemic issue that continues to occur across this country. Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than any other women in Canada – 12 times – and according to the Native Women's Association of Canada Alberta has the second-highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people across our country.

We must do more. Multiple governments, both federal and provincial, have launched panels and working groups. We must all push so that their recommendations become implemented. We must acknowledge that the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit crisis is rooted in Canada's historical and ongoing abuse of Indigenous peoples and that the inaction of the police when family members report missing relatives has only fuelled the crisis further.

This has to stop. Kera and the many family members have been clear: they are fed up with the lack of action. It's time to listen to those words; it's time to act.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Grande Prairie.

### Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As others have risen today to speak, I will do the same. There remains a crisis in this country of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The recent devastating murders of Rebecca Contois, Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, and Buffalo Woman by an alleged serial murderer in Winnipeg highlight this sad and continuing phenomenon. According to Statistics Canada homicide rates for Indigenous women and girls are at minimum – at minimum – six times higher than for nonindigenous women and girls. Attacks on Indigenous women and girls represent attacks on personhood, on womanhood, and on Indigenous identity, and they must end.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020 the government of Alberta appointed the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or MMIWG for short. This group was formed of Indigenous community experts and advocates for the rights of women along with Members of the Legislative Assembly, including myself. As a woman and mother from the north being appointed to this working group and walking alongside these women was a tremendous honour.

Since submitting the working group's final report, 113 Pathways to Justice, an Alberta MMIWG road map was created and is in

ongoing implementation, and the newly appointed Premier's Council on MMIWG was formed. The council members are leaders, experts, and advocates for violence prevention and family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and 2S-plus people.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government remains committed to the safety and dignity of Indigenous women and girls, and we will continue to work tirelessly towards the prevention of violence perpetuated against them, investing in the resources these women need like shelters, housing, and health supports in order to end this devastating cycle of violence. To the families of the missing and murdered I say: you will not be forgotten.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is next.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Universal Health Coverage Day. Every December 12 we take the opportunity to raise awareness of the need for a strong, resilient health care system and universal health coverage, but this year I want to use it to talk about Alberta's health care system and the threats that it faces, most prominently from that side of the House.

First, it should go without saying that Alberta has the finest front-line health care workers in the world, bar none. They've been faced with huge obstacles, unfathomable pressures, and crisis after crisis but continue to go above and beyond to protect our hospitals, clinics, EMS, really every aspect of patient care, but they've had to deal with a government that has accused them of being entitled and overpaid, even accused them of manufacturing a capacity shortage. They've had to deal with a government that threatened them, mused about slashing their pay, threatened to fire them, or chose to ignore them and a Premier that would rather lend credibility to a conspiracy theorist who called vaccines a bioweapon than encourage Albertans to simply get their flu shots.

On International Universal Health Coverage Day I want to promise those fighting for our public health care that help is on the way. In May 2023 they will have the chance to vote for a government that supports health care for all, not a Premier that considers making you pay out of pocket to see your family doctor, a new government that will work with front-line health care workers and launch the largest recruitment campaign in Alberta history to ensure they are supported. We will end the UCP's accusations, blame, and insults and return to science, stability, and support.

Alberta health care is for all Albertans, and they should be able to access the care they need whenever and wherever they need it. The UCP has failed to deliver that, but an NDP government will not let Albertans down. We will end the chaos in Alberta health care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Gull Lake and Invasive Carp Species

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, Gull Lake is one of the province's most beautiful and visited lakes. It is home for some Albertans and a major tourist attraction and economic driver, with many campgrounds and beaches. Its preservation is of the utmost importance. For decades the lake's level was declining until a pumping system was installed in the 1970s, bringing in water from the Blindman River to ensure the water level of Gull Lake remained stable. This system worked; Gull Lake's water level stabilized.

The lake now faces a new threat. Invasive species, fish in this case, are a problem across our province. Invasive Prussian carp are now in the Blindman River, the source of the lake's stabilization pumping

program. Pumping has been suspended to avoid pumping carp into the lake. These are aggressive fish that reproduce extremely quickly, making them incredibly dangerous to native species. The Gull Lake Watershed Society with the previous ministry of environment has been seeking a solution. With the help of Stantec engineering and the department, a series of pilot projects were done to discover a filtration system that would safely allow the pumping to resume and keep Prussian carp out of Gull Lake.

The most recent pilot successfully filtered out carp and, more importantly, their eggs at the necessary volumes. For the health of the lake ecosystem, native species survival, preservation of many acres of wetland, beautiful beaches, tourism, the economy, and property values, restoration of the stabilization pumping system is essential and not just for this lake. Invasive carp are a threat to much of Alberta. Filtration is the best solution so far. For the protection of these pristine natural ecosystems, I call on the government to pursue the work that has begun, find a solution to restore Gull Lake's stabilization pumping and protect it from invasive carp species.

Thank you.

1:50

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Cameras in the Chamber

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before Oral Question Period begins today, I have a brief statement I would like to make. I'd like to bring to the attention of the Assembly an incident that has taken place. As I understand it, photos were taken in the Chamber last week and later shared on social media. Members will know that there is a long-standing prohibition against taking photos in the Chamber, as indicated in the procedural memo which I sent out to all members prior to the start of session. Page 9 of the memo reads: "The use of any recording device, camera or pager, either as a standalone device or active on a Member's mobile device, is not permitted in the Chamber at any time."

Previous Speakers have been definitive in their approach to this matter, as Speaker Kowalski indicated on November 24, 2010:

The transgression goes to the very heart of the integrity of this Assembly and the right of [its] members to do their work and the security and the privacy of members in this Assembly. Cameras and the taking of pictures is strictly prohibited in this Assembly.

You may find these remarks on page 1478 of *Alberta Hansard* from November 24, 2010.

I would add to those remarks that members, as elected officials to this Assembly, have the right to privacy and to work unimpeded. They must not be interfered with in doing their work as members. I will leave you with this thought on the matter, as Speaker Kowalski had said: if members would like to have a picture of themselves in the Chamber, contact my office, and we will arrange it.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Emergency Medical Services

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Dangerously sick or seriously injured Albertans are waiting longer than ever for an ambulance to arrive thanks to this UCP government's war on health care. Today our caucus released a FOIP that shows that the number of unfilled shifts for paramedics in Calgary and area has exploded, almost doubling since the spring. Paramedics have called for three things to fix this crisis: offer everyone a permanent, full-time

contract, get crews off shift on time, and expand harm reduction efforts. To the Premier: why has this government refused to listen to these recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the reason why we put Dr. John Cowell in place as official administrator. I can tell you what front-line paramedics are telling us. Number one, they have told us that they don't want to be sitting for their entire shift at emergency waiting rooms unable to drop off patients. That's one of the things that we're going to be addressing. They want to make sure that they have more authority to triage and treat on-site. These are highly trained workers, and they shouldn't have to feel like they have to transfer a patient to the hospital every time that they can treat them with the oversight of a medical professional. And we're going to make sure that with dispatch we do more step-down to 811 so that we put less pressure on the hospitals.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, none of those solutions sound like what the paramedics have publicly called for in the light of day.

Meanwhile the departure of the chief paramedic last week pushes the ambulance system even deeper into crisis. It's been almost a year since the UCP commissioned an action plan, months since the report landed on the minister's desk, and the government is idle and the report remains hidden. To the Premier. These delays put Albertans' lives at risk. Paramedics have told us what needs to be done. Why is the Premier refusing to listen to them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must tell you that Dr. John Cowell has been on the job three and a half weeks, and one of the things that he's told me in my conversations with him: he says that AHS is performing better than he ever could have imagined. He's got great confidence in Mauro Chies as the leader of the departments, not only on the issue of dealing with efficient ambulance service but also dealing with emergency room wait times. Next he's moving on to looking at the surgical backlog. Those are the three priorities that we identified, those are the three priorities we're working on, and we're going to make progress.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the FOIP shows that this UCP government has made progress in doubling the number of cancelled shifts since the spring in Calgary and area. Meanwhile Dr. Trevor Theman, former head of the Health Quality Council of Alberta, former registrar of the college of physicians, says that our Bill 201 would move the health care system closer to meeting Albertans' expectations. Albertans expect an ambulance to show up quickly, and our bill would address that. With this shocking new data released through FOIP, will the Premier agree to debate the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act today?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're in agreement in this Chamber that we needed to take action. This is the reason why we put Dr. John Cowell in place as the official administrator, so that we could fast-track and move very quickly on the issues that have been identified. We are moving quickly on them, and we are beginning to see results. In fact, I was speaking with the Health minister, and I understand that we have more paramedics on shift now than we ever have in our history. The issue that we have to address is the issue of making sure that we retain our paramedics. We have to make sure

that they have an environment that supports them, and that's what we're working on doing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, according to a report released yesterday by Ernst & Young, Alberta drivers are paying more for auto insurance than other Canadians. A young male Alberta driver who's new to the road will pay more than \$5,900 for his insurance. That's \$700 more than he'd pay in Ontario, \$3,400 more than he'd pay in B.C. The fact is that ever since this government removed the rate cap, Alberta drivers are getting taken to the cleaners. Why does the Premier think that young Albertans should pay \$3,400 more than in B.C. to insure their vehicles, that they rely on to get to work every day?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard the Finance minister answer this question many times before, and I think what he has pointed out was that the rate cap was not as billed, that we still ended up seeing an increase in insurance premiums. Look, I've appointed a Minister of Affordability and Utilities, and if there are issues that we need to address across the whole range of affordability issues, he's been empowered to do that. If he identifies issues in auto insurance or home insurance that we need to address, then we will, but we have to maintain confidence in our investment environment here, and doing that means that we don't keep on messing around with the rules of the game.

**Ms Notley:** The most expensive car insurance in the country, and she won't take responsibility for it.

Now, another case study in the EY report looks at a 30-year-old woman with 14 years of driving experience who was recently at fault in a car accident. In Alberta she now pays more than \$4,800 while in B.C. she would pay just \$2,000. That's right. More than double: she's paying that here. Doesn't the Premier see that auto insurance rates are out of control and that they are hurting affordability for regular Albertans, and if so, why is there no action to deal with that in her so-called inflation plan?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, once again, in 2018, under the NDP's rate cap, premiums went up 5 per cent. The 12-month change in insurance premiums as of the end of November this year is 2.37 per cent. Now, it may well be that we have to take a look at what is happening in different age groups, and I'll take a closer look at the EY report to see if there's anything that we have to address. Our Minister of Affordability and Utilities has been charged with the task of looking at a whole range of issues to support those who are going through this difficult time of inflation, and we're going to make sure that we address these issues as they come up.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, once the cap was removed, insurance went up by more than 30 per cent. Now, there's a long history of insurance lobbyists helping members of this government get elected. And the reward? The UCP immediately removed the 5 per cent cap, and rates shot up 30 per cent or more. Insiders get the green light to rake in profits, and Alberta drivers get run over in the process. This report makes it clear: Alberta drivers are paying thousands of dollars more than they should be every year. Why won't the Premier stop standing up for her lobbyist friends and start standing up for Alberta drivers?

**Ms Smith:** I think there's a little revisionist history going on here, Mr. Speaker. The NDP rate cap was hard on Alberta drivers. What they forget is that drivers had to pay the full year's premium up front rather than monthly, they were denied collision and comprehensive coverage, and they were not able to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** . . . access coverage through their broker as insurance companies severed contracts with brokers. You ended up with people who weren't able to get insurance at all. Out of 2.7 million insured vehicles, 53 per cent had more than a 5 per cent increase during the 5 per cent rate cap. That is the history that we saw.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is next.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier claimed on Thursday that she had a new, constructive relationship with First Nations, but today we learned the actual truth. A senior staffer in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations office stated that consultation on the sovereignty act was, quote, nonexistent. End quote. That same staffer reported that they had attempted to raise the concerns of First Nations with cabinet, but that idea got, quote, zero support from leadership. End quote. Why is the Premier so opposed to hearing from First Nations?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we did have a conversation about whether the act needed to be further amended to underscore that section 35 rights were protected, and I pointed out that in crafting the bill, that was the foundational principle. Under section 2(c) it says that nothing in the act abrogates or derogates from the rights of Aboriginals and their treaty rights as defined in section 35 of the Constitution. The point I was raising is that we already made sure that that was built and embedded in the act, and as I've been talking with First Nations chiefs, that's the point that I'm making with them.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That same staffer also reported that the Indigenous Relations minister, staff, and ministry had been shut out of the drafting of the bill from the start. And it doesn't stop there: another Indigenous Relations staffer spoke out, saying that the Premier tried to slough off the concerns about zero consultation with First Nations. Expecting Indigenous Albertans to forget about their legal right to be consulted is a level of arrogance that I would not have expected even from Jason Kenney. What other instances of violating the rule of law in the sovereignty act was the Premier hoping would blow over?

**Ms Smith:** We have a robust process internally for analyzing bills, that includes our cabinet policy committee process, our cabinet process, our caucus meeting, our Legislative Review Committee. There is lots of opportunity for people to engage. The point was that we already had a recognition that the bill had to comply with section 35 Charter rights, which underscore the treaty and Aboriginal rights of our First Nations citizens. I've had some great conversations in the last number of weeks as we signed an MOU last week with the KTC council on mental health, and we're going to do more of these kinds of things.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These staffers were concerned and spoke out because they're watching the government's relationship with Indigenous communities go up in smoke, something that this Premier either doesn't understand or doesn't care about. Indigenous Albertans can't trust a Premier who decides if or when their legal rights are applied. Premier, prove me wrong; stand up in this House, apologize for this illegal imposition of the job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act on First Nations people, and withdraw this bill before it receives legal assent.

**Ms Smith:** I can tell you what First Nations talk to us about when we talk with them. They talk about having support for mental health and addiction. They talk about the fact that there are 78 per cent of our kids in care, that we're now going to support them in transferring services to First Nations and be supportive of that. They talk as well about bringing gasification to our rural communities so that they don't have to rely on propane, which is incredibly expensive and unreliable. They also talk about how we can work together on developing economic corridors and identifying protected lands together, and they're looking forward to working with us. Those are the things that we're going to partner with First Nations on, and I can't wait to get started.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

#### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Sabir:** In or out? That is the question being posed publicly by Barry Cooper, the chief architect of the Premier's job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act. He went on national radio last week to threaten that either the federal government bends to the will of this Premier, or there would be grounds to vote on Alberta separating from the rest of Canada. The Premier has claimed that her widely criticized bill has nothing to do with separatism. Why, then, is a key adviser and the writer of her awful legislation saying the exact opposite?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will note that Barry Cooper doesn't sit in this cabinet or in this caucus, and even though the Alberta sovereignty act was inspired by the free Alberta strategy, when I looked at that, I said: how can we make sure that we underscore our constitutional rights, make sure that we protect Indigenous rights, and make sure that we defend the Charter rights of our citizens? These are our principles in our Constitution and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that's what the genesis of the act was all about. It's the reason why Supreme Court Justice John Major has said that there is nothing unconstitutional about the bill, and it's the reason why I'm looking forward to declaring royal assent soon.

**Mr. Sabir:** The Premier went on the radio herself this weekend to muse that her horrible sovereignty act could be used to stop the imposition of paper straws on Albertans. That was her justification for a bill that has ignored treaty rights, creates economic chaos, and that has been cited by many as perhaps the worst legislation to ever come before this House. Albertans deserve better than this paper-thin Premier. Is she really willing to break our country apart over some straws?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's more absurd that the federal government intervened in our area of jurisdiction over managing our petrochemical industry, which members opposite used to support, so they could do something as frivolous as impose a ban on plastic straws. They have created uncertainty in our petrochemical industry.

They are creating uncertainty as we end up trying to do cross-border trade. They have declared plastics toxic for one reason and one reason only, because they want to intervene in our area of jurisdiction. They do this again and again and again, and it's why we're challenging them in court.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Barry Cooper and those closest to the Premier, including her own executive director, have teamed up before to write a document that called for pulling Albertans out of CPP, blowing up the RCMP, and that, in broad strokes: "sets up Alberta for independence in the event that independence must be considered." Separatist flames are being fanned from the office of this Premier. Will she stand right now and state for the record that there will be no vote on Alberta leaving Canada as long as she is in the office?

**Ms Smith:** I am not a separatist. I am not talking about leaving Canada. I'm talking about saving Canada. I'm talking about how we're going to be able to assert the way this country is supposed to work. We are a federalist nation. We are not a unitary state where the federal government dictates to us. We have our own areas of jurisdiction that we have the exclusive right to pass laws in, and the federal government violates it every day by declaring plastics toxic so they could take it over, by trying to enforce an emissions cap on our fertilizer, by putting an emissions cap on oil and gas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Glenmore is next.

### Calgary Cancer Centre

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cancer is an unfortunate reality that impacts us all. Whether it's us or our loved ones, almost everyone has felt the emotional blow of a cancer diagnosis in one way or another. Patients in Alberta are one step closer to receiving comprehensive cancer care in a world-class facility. This past Friday the Minister of Infrastructure announced that substantial completion of the new Calgary cancer centre had been met and has now been handed over to AHS. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what does substantial completion mean for this project, and what is the next step for the Calgary cancer centre?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier and Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Calgary cancer centre is the second-largest comprehensive cancer centre in North America. It is bringing a ground-breaking approach to comprehensive patient care, where patients will receive tailored world-class cancer treatment. I am also pleased to say that the layout and design are patient and family focused, from patient rooms, treatment rooms, right down to the plants in the central garden.

Mr. Speaker, as we announced on Friday, this project has reached substantial completion, meaning it is ready for AHS to install the vital technology, furnishings, and other items they need to provide excellent care and services to patients.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that this project has been a long time coming for Calgary and southern Alberta and further given that the Calgary cancer centre will be the second-largest comprehensive cancer centre in North America, a true feat in both engineering and health care, and given that this centre will bring together much of the existing cancer care

in Alberta and Calgary under one roof, once again to the minister: when can we expect to see the cancer centre open its doors to patients?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary cancer centre is currently expected to open to patients in 2024. During this time AHS will fully outfit the centre with all the necessary technology, lab gear, furniture and materials, and everything else needed to be fully operational. In fact, the design of the building incorporates the easy moving in and out of vital medical devices, with portions of the roof designed to lift off efficiently and safely move in heavy technology. While the hospital is not ready to open its doors just yet, we have reached a huge milestone in the construction process and a huge milestone in providing world-class cancer care right here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that in 2022 we are making steady progress in preventing cancer, detecting it earlier, and treating it more effectively and given that, unfortunately, nearly half of Albertans will deal with a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime and further given that the Calgary cancer centre is needed and important not only to the city of Calgary but to southern Alberta and to our province as a whole, once more to the minister: what are the capabilities of this new centre, and what care will they be able to provide patients?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that this centre was designed to encompass a whole continuum of cancer care, from prevention and screening and early detection to research and collaboration, from development and clinical trials to patient care and education. It will be a giant step forward for patients and families, for our health care system. Projects like this are more than just bricks and mortar; they are a symbol of hope. To quote Nashrin Mitha, patient and family adviser, from our announcement: a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed, but a thing created is loved before it even exists.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

### 2:10 Children's Health Care and Hospital Capacity Vaccination Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ongoing crisis in children's health care is having devastating effects, effects that will get worse if not addressed immediately. Parents are terrified, looking for information on what will be done, yet it's been 300 days since the last time the chief medical officer of health has held a press conference. The social media accounts, once another source of emergency information, sit silent and still bear the name of the fired Dr. Deena Hinshaw. This is ridiculous, and children's health is suffering. Why is there a UCP-imposed gag order on the chief medical officer of health?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. There is no gag order. I am very pleased to continue to work with Dr. Joffe, who has put out information for parents to be able to deal with this very challenging time, with flu, COVID, and the RSV. Also, Dr. Joffe has put out a letter to all parents in terms of providing guidance to how to manage this. I'm pleased to say as well that, you know, we've been working through



getting control over the CMOH account, and that will be active very soon.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that last week, in light of the impact of the ongoing severe viral season on Alberta's children, the pediatric section of the Alberta Medical Association recommended increased public messaging on the safety and efficacy of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines to address the pressures in children's hospitals and given that the uptake of flu vaccine is only 22 per cent across the province and increased vaccination would decrease the chance of severe outcomes, hospitalizations for children, will the Premier please simply stand, openly and unequivocally endorse the flu shot, and encourage all Albertans to be vaccinated?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated in this House last week, we are running a campaign to increase the coverage of flu vaccines. I'm very pleased that over the last two weeks we have increased that coverage by 3.5 per cent. Our coverage is now higher than last year at this time, at 23.7 per cent. We are continuing to run a campaign – you may have received a text message on your phone last week – we are also running radio ads, we are running television ads, and we will continue to do so and urge Albertans to make the choice to get their flu shot.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that this Premier has spent more time promoting the views of conspiracy theorist Paul Alexander than she has addressing the chaos in public health care and given that Alexander celebrated the firing of the Alberta Health Services board, bragged about being named in communications, called on the Premier to drag the board members in front of tribunals, bankrupt them and throw them in jail, and given that this rhetoric from Alexander is deeply dangerous, yet the Premier can't even stand and promote the effectiveness of vaccines in this Chamber, will she support the motion I'm bringing to this House today to promote the effectiveness of vaccines and condemn the spread of vaccine information by Paul Alexander?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as we indicated previously – and we thank very much for the tremendous work that was done by the AHS strategic board – we needed an official administrator. We appointed Dr. John Cowell to do that, to be able to focus full-time on helping to manage through the challenges that we're facing in our health care system and AHS, focusing on reducing the EMS wait times, reducing the emergency department wait times, getting more surgeries done, and pushing down decision-making. I'm very pleased that we were able to do that.

In regard to the motion that's coming forward this afternoon, I look forward to speaking to it at that point in time.

#### Revenue and Pension Plan Administration

**Ms Phillips:** The UCP have made clear that the Premier wants to set up a provincial revenue agency so we can all file our taxes two times. This again proves that the Premier and the UCP don't actually care what Albertans want because Albertans have been pretty clear that they do not want a provincial revenue agency. Why? Because it's an expensive, half-baked plan that would require a 20 per cent increase in public service workers. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce survey recently showed a strong majority of businesses believe it will be detrimental. Did the Minister of Finance actually support the sovereignty act because he wants to withhold our federal taxes? Is that what this is about?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, that question is ridiculous. Something we can all count on with the members opposite is a superficial approach.

We can take a look at the approach of a rate cap on insurance – which we were questioned on – a superficial approach resulting in unintended consequences. We're going to study the possibility, the benefits, and the costs of an Alberta revenue agency. We think that we should make informed decisions.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, given that what's ridiculous is this Minister of Finance's flip-flopping on the sovereignty act and given that what's ridiculous is filing our taxes twice and given that what's ridiculous is taking \$200 million from our CPP, that no one asked for, to fund a revenue agency that no one also asked for – this scheme doesn't even add up and shows that this government doesn't even understand income tax or pension policy – can the Minister of Finance explain why he's willing to raid our retirement security, a proposal that individuals and businesses both oppose, to pay for a revenue agency that individuals and businesses also oppose?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that adds up, but should we be surprised? When the members opposite were in government, they ultimately left Albertans with a fiscal train wreck. None of that added up. That's why we inherited billions and billions of dollars of structural deficit. That's why we had to make hard decisions in Budget 2019 to bring this province to fiscal responsibility, which we've done. Look, we're going to look at opportunities with respect to an Alberta pension plan and an Alberta revenue agency for the benefit of Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that that was not an answer, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the Minister of Finance doesn't want to talk about this topic.

Given that many in the business community, including prominent Calgary businessman George Brookman, past chair of Tourism Calgary, have also said that they oppose the chaos that will come from using CPP premiums to fund a revenue agency and given that the Alberta revenue agency will require Albertans to do one of their least favourite things, filing their taxes, twice and given that Albertans and business leaders oppose the creation of an Alberta revenue agency, who exactly is the Minister of Finance pandering to with this policy? Why won't he just abandon this policy? Why won't he just stand in this place and reject it out of hand?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason is that we're going to do the work. We're going to do the study so that we can make an informed decision. The member opposite rightly points out that an Alberta revenue agency collecting personal taxes may require a second tax return by Albertans. That's something we would consider. That's something that all Albertans should consider. We believe in making informed decisions. We're going to do the work and ensure that we're making decisions in the best interests of Albertans, unlike the members opposite.

#### Health Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, in the last year we have seen dramatic changes across our entire health care system. One of the most critical problems that continues to plague cities like Medicine Hat is the ever-decreasing number of available doctors, snowballing the inability to see a family doctor or nurse practitioner in a timely manner. Just this last week I was informed about another seven local doctors quitting their practice, leaving the Medicine Hat region. To the Premier: is there a plan to ensure we train more doctors and medical health professionals for all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As you know, human health resources is a challenge, not only here in Alberta but a challenge, quite frankly, across all of Canada and across the First World, but we are making investments to address this challenge. I'd like to speak to the \$90 million that we have invested annually for the retention and attraction of doctors, and we're continuing to invest also in our advanced education system. I'm very pleased that my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education invested an additional \$30 million to add health care capacity, and I'll speak more on that.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Given that there are not enough seats for Albertans at our medical schools and given that we are not graduating enough trained family doctors to meet our current needs, never mind our increasing population's needs, and given that I repeatedly hear from young Albertans how limited the spots are in medical programs in Alberta and given that when students end up doing their education overseas, they don't return to Alberta, again to the Premier: what is your government doing to ensure more Alberta students attend Alberta institutions to become family doctors, nurse practitioners and then return to work in communities in Alberta like Medicine Hat?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very important question indeed. It's critical that we support our postsecondary institutions and look at creating more spaces to ensure that more Albertans are able to access some of our incredible postsecondary institutions right here at home, right in their own backyards. Just this past spring we announced, as my colleague mentioned, \$28 million to expand spaces in high-demand health care programs, including, for example, in nursing, for health care aides, and in paramedicine. The Premier has directed the Minister of Health and me to continue that work, and we have more details coming.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that vaccine mandates struck an undeniable blow to our health care workforce and given that many of these individuals opted to go on leave, move to places like Texas or Florida, or quit altogether rather than face criticism, abuse, and vaccine mandates and given that now we continue to see rural health care facilities unable to meet huge staff shortages, again to the Premier. During your leadership campaign you promised considerable health care reform. What are you doing to ensure Alberta is adequately staffed with family doctors, nurse practitioners so our health care system can be proactive and preventative?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated, we know that we need more health care staff, particularly in rural Alberta. I was very pleased that over the course of the summer and into the fall I was able to travel to over 20 locations around the province and talk to over 1,100 individuals, many of them AHS staff. We know that they need help, and we're working very hard to do that. Not only are we investing in education, but we're also making it easier for foreign-trained health care workers to come to Alberta – changes to the college, supporting bridging education – and we'll continue to do so to get the people that we need to provide the service.

## Government Procurement Policies

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, social procurement policies support local workers, businesses, and suppliers, which benefits our economy as a whole, and these policies are supported by municipalities, businesses, and worker advocates not only in Alberta but across Canada. The NDP will always stand up for Alberta workers, businesses, and suppliers. Can the minister of jobs explain why his government supports the economic harm that will come about because of their sovereignty act and why they oppose social procurement policies that would boost Alberta's economy?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we've already been clear: this Premier listened to caucus, listened to cabinet, listened to Albertans, and we made changes to the sovereignty act. Even that famous right-wing columnist Graham Thomson acknowledged just a couple of days ago in a question to David Dodge, the Toronto man, that the amendments to Bill 1 solved the issues that critics of Bill 1 were concerned about. Now even he agrees that we're on the right path. Why can't they get on the program and help us and support Albertans?

**Ms Gray:** Given that construction workers in this province are among the highest skilled in the world, thanks in part to the world-class training provided by their unions, and given that under current procurement policies many of these workers are seeing lower skilled workers being brought in to take their jobs, lowering wages and making it harder for Alberta tradespeople to weather this affordability crisis, and given that many are leaving Alberta to work in provinces with robust social procurement policies and labour codes that actually support workers, will the minister of jobs please explain to the Assembly why he and his government continue to oppose social procurement policies?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the NDP is reading their news releases. Our record is clear, and investors know this. In Alberta we're already at record-breaking venture capital investments this year over last year, which was a record year. We're at record levels of migration. We have the highest average weekly earnings across all the provinces. In fact, new incorporations are up 13 per cent in Alberta. I don't know where they're getting their news releases, but maybe they should start listening to the government.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the trade unions and businesses that employ workers to build and maintain projects throughout Alberta support social procurement policies that provide local value and benefit and given that the Business Council of Alberta and the Building Trades of Alberta have teamed up to push government to implement more social procurement and given that social procurement can ensure that subcontracting goes to local businesses, providing opportunities for smaller businesses, and given that the minister does not appear to be aware what social procurement is, will the minister commit to Albertans today that he will meet with the Business Council, with the Building Trades, learn about social procurement, and implement it?

**Mr. Jean:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of our Premier. You know, she actually appointed a parliamentary secretary of procurement because she recognized this issue and we've all recognized it. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul – he's a great member – is going to work hard on this file. But let me tell you some other things that are happening. [interjection] I will meet with anybody – let's be clear – and I have met with unions, and I continue to meet with them because I'm from Fort McMurray and I'm proud of that part of our environment. But jobs in finance, insurance, real estate, renting and leasing are up 21 per cent; jobs in professional, scientific, and technical services up 16 per cent; jobs in

health care up 11 per cent. It's a good-news story. Come to Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### Airline Direct Flights and Tourism Development

**Mr. Bilous:** Recently Air Canada announced that it will no longer provide direct flights from Saskatoon and Regina to Calgary. There is a strong connection between Saskatchewan and Alberta, including personal and business relationships. This cancellation will triple travel time and hurt businesses and tourism between our provinces, yet we haven't heard a peep out of the government. They're quick to point out any time a new flight gets added, but there have been crickets when we can't even get a good flight next door. Where is the concern from the government over this decision that will impact our economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Obviously, we're concerned about flights coming in and out of Alberta and how it affects tourism and how it affects the workers being able to travel also. We have Travel Alberta working on programs, bringing actually thousands of more people into Alberta with flights and working with a program with that. We need to continue that. Of course, we'll look at all different flights coming into Alberta and making sure that we have programs in place so that we can make sure that we have people in those seats coming to Alberta again for both work and recreation.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that it's only a short flight from Saskatoon and Regina to watch the Riders play the Stamps, enjoy Stephen Avenue, or take a trip out to our beautiful mountains and given that Air Canada will no longer provide that flight – instead, people will fly to Vancouver just to come back to Calgary – and given that this will seriously hurt our tourism industry, what is the government doing to encourage competition between airlines in support of Calgary's tourism industry and our economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you very much again for the question. Of course, we are concerned about these flights, as I mentioned in my previous answer. We have WestJet doubling seats for some of the flights within Canada, and we like to see that happening. We know that's happening now. Again, we have Travel Alberta working with our partners in the air industry to bring those flights in. Again, when we look at the things that people travel for, being able to enjoy our mountains here in Alberta and being able to enjoy sports events, we know that that travel is important, and we'll continue to work with our partners doing that.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've been speaking to the tourism sector and they've been telling me that they're desperate for workers, especially those with hospitality and culinary training, and given that this government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from our postsecondary institutions, effectively turning off the taps of our talent pipeline, and given that this comes on top of direct flights to Calgary now being cancelled, why is the government making a bad situation worse and actively working against the success of our tourism industry and our economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we look at our postsecondary education system, we know that – you know, I've been talking to some just recently – they are talking about bringing in people from around the world to enjoy our postsecondary education system, to be able to be trained in tourism. That's a great opportunity for us to bring people from around the world here. In other areas that have done this, 96 per cent of the people that have come in and taken those courses have stayed in the industry in that location three years later. So we know that there's success in that, and we know that we can work on that with our immigration here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

#### Rural Health Care Professional Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Boyle health centre has been short two nursing positions since July, resulting in hospital closures every night. This means that some Albertans may have delayed access to the urgent care they need. I understand that this is a national issue and every province is struggling with staffing shortages, especially with nurses, but the fact remains that we need more health care workers in Alberta and we need them now. Can the Minister of Health tell us what the plan is to fill these necessary nursing positions in rural Alberta right now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Making sure we have the nurses needed where we need them is one of the top priorities of this government. We need further action. We've taken action already. I spoke in regard to the tremendous work done by my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education, but we need more, and that's why we appointed a parliamentary secretary specifically for rural health. My colleague will be working with municipalities across the entire province to be able to identify other areas that we can make an investment in to make sure we have the health care professionals that we need to support Albertans' health.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one short-term solution is to contract nurses from other parts of Alberta and across Canada on a locum status to fill gaps in RN coverage and given that rural Alberta not only has to compete with the major urban centres in this province but also other provinces, can the same minister tell the members of this House what our government is doing to incentivize registered nurses to rural communities in the short term?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The hon. member is quite right. This is a nation-wide, even international issue. That's why we are investing in our advanced education system, to train more individuals here in Alberta. We are competing internationally. I was also very pleased to announce, with my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education, a streamlined process for bringing in internationally trained nurses, for also being able to provide bridging programs for those nurses when they arrive here so that those who are certified as LPNs can increase up

to RNs. We're going to continue to do the work until we get the staff that we need.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Minister. Given that constituents are contacting me with concerns that doctors and other health professionals may look at leaving the community because of the partial closure of their hospital and given that the health professionals in these areas often look to areas with more sustained work levels so they can use their full capacity to support the health system, can the minister tell residents of my community what long-term solutions this government is bringing to fix this problem?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for the question. We understand that it is a challenge in terms of the retention and recruitment of doctors. We have more doctors than we've ever had in the province, but we still need more, and we still need them in particular areas where there are shortages, so we're continuing to invest in rural recruitment and retention – I mentioned the \$90 million – plus, in addition to that, in the rural and northern program, the recruitment and retention fund, the rural physician on-call program, the rural health professions action plan, and the rural medical education plan. In addition, we're very pleased to reach an agreement with the AMA, and we're looking at different methods of pay to be able to recruit and retain doctors.

#### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Capital Projects

**Mr. Dach:** From day one it has been nothing but chaos under this Premier. She's already had to walk back several comments that put massive infrastructure projects at risk. This includes the Premier musing that she had concerns about the Calgary green line tunnelling under downtown. In the past she has called this project "Green Line to nowhere," a "fantasy," "a catastrophically bad decision," and "of no real use to anyone." Does the Premier or the minister still agree with these past comments that create uncertainty for a vital project for Calgary's economy that puts 20,000 jobs at risk?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is just another great example of fearmongering by the NDP. There's \$1.5 billion committed by this government to build the green line. I've spoken with the mayor of Calgary. They want to see shovels in the ground as soon as possible. This is an amazing construction project that will help Calgarians get around their great city. It's something that this government is committed to, and we're hoping to see the construction as soon as possible on the Calgary green line.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the Premier has already created uncertainty around another project, the Springbank dam, that will protect Calgary's economy, and the green line, that will create 20,000 jobs, and given that the job-killing, chaos-causing sovereignty act will create even more uncertainty for investors and companies looking to bid on major transportation projects and given that business leaders, including tech investors, chambers of commerce, and a former governor of the Bank of Canada, have all expressed opposition to the sovereignty act, won't this government restore confidence and certainty in Alberta by revoking this bill so we can build important infrastructure projects that support economic growth?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I respect my critic for transportation, but I'm not expecting this kind of softball question from him. The Springbank dam is being built. He can go there and see it for himself. It's an amazing flood mitigation project that will save Calgary in the event of another flood. It's something that the money is committed there; it is being built. Calgarians will know that they will be protected in the case of another disastrous flood, something that – we can just look at the 2013 flood. About \$5 billion of damage was caused. This is a project that Calgarians can be safe with and know that it will protect their communities.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the last Premier mucked about with federal-provincial funding arrangements for major projects like the green line and stalled them and given that the radical policies of this Premier are far worse and given that the Premier is focused on a job-killing sovereignty act that could kill projects and put thousands of Albertans out of work, can the government tell working people why they are so blind to the concerns of so many who want them to stop this bill? The sovereignty act should be thrown in the garbage today.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Put people out of work. Kill projects. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is just classic fearmongering by the NDP, and I wish they would stop it because Albertans – not a lot of them – do watch this question period, and when they hear inflammatory comments like that, I think – and they can go to the Springbank dam and see that it's being built. They can talk to the mayor of Calgary, know then that the green line is going to be built. When they hear stuff like that, I think it really just devalues the work that is done in this place, and I hope we can get some better questions here from the NDP.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### Gravel Operations in Red Deer County

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, my guest Jody Young lives with her family in Red Deer county close to operating gravel pits. This fall AHS verified that her water well is now contaminated with lead and aluminum and is no longer potable. Her children have lead and aluminum in their blood, likely from drinking contaminated well water. Alberta Environment has been notified of the issue but has done nothing to investigate whether the gravel pit is the source of the contamination. Can the minister commit today to ordering her department to conduct a scientific investigation into this matter?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, our environment minister works very hard to make sure that we listen to Albertans and that we take their feedback and that we do good due diligence on all the work that we do. I have every confidence that she is doing the right work that is required in order to defend Albertans' interests and to ensure that the environment is protected. I appreciate the member opposite for raising his constituent's concerns, and we'll of course take a look at that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister just said that they're listening but the minister can't even bother to stand up and answer the question and given that the gravel pit in question appears to be operating without the proper approvals in place and given that gravel pits mining below the water table require Water Act authorizations and given that this pit is full of water even during the driest times of year, suggesting that operators are mining below the

water table, will the minister commit to pausing operations at this gravel pit until the proper authorizations are in place?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has some of the most robust environmental policies and protections in place in this entire country, and we stand by that. We will continue to make sure that we are listening to Albertans to ensure that we have and continue to have the best environmental protections in the country. That is exactly what we can expect from our minister of environment in the weeks and months to come, and I'm proud of the work that she does on this file.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, nobody should be proud of a government that refuses to enforce its own legislation.

Given that Jody Young's house is in close proximity to a proposed new gravel pit and given that the existing gravel pit appears to be operating without proper authorizations and may be causing water well contamination, will the minister at least commit to meeting with my guests today to let them make their case for pausing approvals for new gravel pits until the issues with the existing ones have been resolved?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, Alberta has the most robust environmental protection policies in the country, and we absolutely do enforce them, and we will continue to enforce them. It is so important that we protect the interests of all Albertans, and we know that protecting the environment is part of how we do that. I'm confident that the minister of environment is on the right track and will continue to do the right things to respect and protect the rights of Albertans.

Thank you.

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

### Health Care System Capacity

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great that Alberta is a growing province but troubling when many Albertans must wait for a long time to book a doctor's appointment or to be seen in the emergency room. Alberta needs to attract more physicians. Alberta has many skilled newcomers and international medical graduates that are ready to start their careers in AHS, but they are met with barriers that do not allow them to get certified in a timely manner. To the Minister of Health: what actions are being taken to bring more physicians to Alberta, including faster certifications of IMGs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.  
2:40

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to make Alberta an attractive location for physicians, with compensation that's among the highest in Canada, financial incentives, a variety of practice settings, high-quality medical schools and facilities, and rural medical education. We're enhancing marketing efforts, pursuing both Canadian and internationally trained physicians, posting part-time positions to provide additional flexibility, and providing incentives for full-time positions as well. Collaboration is also under way with the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to prioritize and expedite assessment and licensing of international medical graduates.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertan families are struggling to provide medication for their children and given that many children are showing severe symptoms during this flu season and further given that our government recently announced the securement of 5 million bottles of children's medication, can

the same minister explain how the children's medication will be distributed across the province and when Albertans can expect the first shipment?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a parent of two young children I know that this issue is top of mind for parents right across the province. Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services are working with Health Canada to obtain the necessary approvals. At this time it's estimated that Health Canada approvals will take 10 days to four weeks. Once approvals are in place, the medication will be delivered. As soon as the medication arrives in our province, it will be distributed to community and retail pharmacies so parents and caregivers can purchase it for their children. We will be working to get this medication to Alberta families as quickly as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the pandemic highlighted the importance of optimizing EMS response times and given that Albertans still have uncertainties on our EMS response times and further given that our government allocated an additional \$64 million in the 2022 budget that is specifically for Alberta's EMS, can the same minister explain what improvements have been made to Alberta's EMS thus far, what plans are under way, and what can Albertans expect for the future?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Supporting EMS has been and continues to be a top priority for this government. We are moving swiftly to reform AHS and improve EMS response times as that is a top concern of Albertans. Our AHS administrator, Dr. Cowell, is working on a plan to free up highly trained paramedics by fast-tracking ambulance transfers at the ER and finding other appropriate options for nonemergency transfers between facilities. Our new parliamentary secretary for EMS reform, the Member for Highwood, has also been working closely with front-line workers to identify ways to improve patient experience and worker safety.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

### Funeral Services Industry

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Losing a loved one is a difficult experience that affects us all. The decisions, the paperwork: it can all seem overwhelming for families dealing with grief while at the same time trying to ensure that their loved one's life is concluded with dignity. For those going through it, it is often difficult to balance their need to act with their feelings of grief. Albertans need calm, caring, and capable professionals to walk alongside them in their hour of need and to help bring dignity to their loved one's conclusion of life. Alberta mourners need to be provided with an opportunity to share in their grief.

The Alberta Funeral Service Association, the AFSA, is a professional organization of funeral service providers from across

the province that are dedicated to the betterment of funeral services by supporting the public as well as their members. Founded in 1928, the AFSA provides confidential business and professional relationships. They conduct all services in a dignified and respectful manner, they provide all merchandise at a fair price, and care for and show respect for all loved ones entrusted into their care with a high moral and service standard for all. These providers have strict provincial health laws to adhere to, including preneed service regulations and all other laws pertaining to their business or profession.

Mr. Speaker, many people are uncomfortable with talking about death and their fears around it, leaving them feeling alone. Death is a topic that the members of the AFSA deal with every day. They are ready to have conversations with families, no matter which stage of grief they are in, and with those interested in preplanning to remove the funeral planning process from their family's plate. Death is one of the few certainties in life. That is why having resources to turn to like the AFSA is so important.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Carson:** Children's health care is under crisis. That is not a point of debate but the simple truth of the situation. For over a month Albertans have seen the stories of the children's hospital struggling to deal with the unprecedented admission of sick children. We've heard the harrowing stories of nurses working with unimaginable fatigue and stress, some describing days where they are worried that someone might die in the waiting room because of the sheer volume. New structures have been built at the Alberta Children's hospital just to ensure that those waiting to be seen can have a warm place to wait.

This is a time where leadership is needed, but instead of that we have a Premier who tried to ignore a question about sick children by claiming that it wasn't on topic. We have a Premier who refuses to recommend the flu shot, a Premier who takes advice from someone who says vaccines are a biological weapon. The parents that I represent are scared, Mr. Speaker. They are worried about their children getting sick and about the prospect of long waits for emergency care should it come to that. As the father of a young son and with another child on the way I share these concerns with my constituents, and I will never stop amplifying their voices.

But I know that there is hope on the horizon. This comes from the prospect of an NDP government in May 2023 that will rebuild the health care system after years of UCP destruction. An Alberta NDP government will bring in real health care standards. We will restore respect and collaboration with front-line workers from day one. We will restore funding cuts by this UCP government. We will make significant moves to improve care closer to home in Alberta communities, and we will launch the largest health care worker recruitment campaign this province has ever seen. For those looking for health care, help is on the way. Alberta's NDP will end the chaos. We will ensure you and your loved ones will be taken care of.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a statement to make.

### Energy Industries

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was fortunate enough to join the Minister of Energy in Banff for the Energy

Council's global energy and environmental issues conference. Prior to the conference I was able to tour the University of Calgary's research facility and TC Energy's control room for North America. What a great way to show delegates from the United States and colleagues from Saskatchewan the kind of innovation happening in our own backyard.

The Energy Council conference afforded us the opportunity to make it clear that Alberta's energy sector is not only essential for our province but is a key driver of the Canadian economy and a critical partner in attaining North American energy security. Our oil and gas sector continues to be a leader in responsible resource development and GHG emission reductions while rigorously adhering to social standards. In addition to oil and gas, Alberta is home to some of Canada's largest clean energy start-ups, innovators, and investors. Whether it be hydrogen production, geothermal development, petrochemical processing, or the emerging critical and rare-earth mineral sector, Alberta is quickly becoming a central hub and world-class centre for energy transition. Ultimately, Alberta's energy sector is a key contributor in creating jobs, diversifying the economy, and supporting our economic recovery and growth.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has taught us again that energy security cannot be taken for granted. Energy security and affordability have real impacts on the lives of Albertans. In order to continue to be the economic engine of Canada while supporting Albertans and our own economy, it is more critical than ever that we follow through on our government's commitment to support the responsible development and extraction of oil and gas.

What I heard this past weekend is that the world needs more reliable, responsible, and secure energy. What I hear in that, Mr. Speaker: the world needs more Alberta energy. That is clear. For too long our federal counterparts have controlled the narrative, falsely characterizing fossil fuels in ill-conceived campaigns. Events and conferences like this are an integral part of standing up for Albertans by showing the incredible products we produce and the ongoing innovation happening right here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a statement to make.

### NDP and UCP Government Records

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are tired. I've had the privilege of serving the constituents of south and southwest Edmonton for almost eight years. When I was first elected in 2015, some were concerned about the accidental government, yet many more were filled with hope and optimism for the future. An NDP government in Alberta seems like something out of a fairy tale. In those first four years we accomplished much in and out of this Chamber: we built schools, we protected LGBTQ2S-plus children, we halved child poverty, we took real action on climate change and the environment, we invested in programs for social change like providing hot lunches in schools and affordable child care. The list went on and on.

2:50

And then Conservatives were elected in 2019. Conservatives changed course and reversed an unimaginable number of initiatives. They raised tuition, increased costs on families, lifted utility rate caps, lifted insurance rate caps, and Conservatives announced a meagre amount of new schools. They delayed and defunded hospitals indefinitely. Today Conservatives are celebrating legislation threatening Alberta's relationship with the

rest of this country, legislation denounced by experts as likely to drive away investment and harm our national interests.

How quickly things can change. Albertans are tired of this government, Mr. Speaker. They're tired of the games being played by the UCP instead of investing in initiatives that make their lives more affordable. Albertans are tired of being left out in the cold while the UCP squabble and play games.

There's one other thing, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are tired, yes, but they haven't given up hope. They know that there is a way, and they know that there are other options. They know that the future can be brighter. I don't know what's going to happen – nobody does – but I do know this: Albertans are motivated and ready to make real change in their lives once again.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 7, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), sponsored by myself.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a tabling.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table the requisite copies on behalf of the Member for Lethbridge-West, which she referenced in her question: Alberta Businesses Not Sold on the Benefits of Ditching CPP or Creating Police Force.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2022.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Justice, Alberta Human Rights Commission annual report 2021-22.

**The Speaker:** Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 202 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Peace River rising to speak.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on my bill that I'm moving, Bill 202. This is an important piece of legislation, and it's an opportunity for us, in private

members' business, to make a meaningful impact to the Alberta income tax act. The purpose of this bill is to allow individuals a break, those who are donating, in what will be a difficult year coming up, with affordability, with an increase in everything from insurance costs to groceries to fuel and everything in between. But on top of that and maybe just as or more importantly, it's an important break for the charities themselves.

Now, I've been going around meeting with as many charities as possible. There are 76,000 registered charities, according to the Canada Revenue Agency, in the country, and disproportionately we have our fair share here in Alberta. If there's a charity, that means there's a cause behind it and there are individuals that care for it.

I want to talk a bit about the importance of charities in our society, and I want to talk a bit about the trend of what's going on with charitable giving. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, the trend of charitable giving and philanthropy has not been very good. Now, there are some redeeming qualities and silver linings in it, but over the last few decades it's notable that we've seen the average age of the donor go up. It's true that, speaking to the Calgary cancer foundation, their average donor is somewhere in their 70s now. In a few years that average donor is going to be in their 80s, and a few years after that they will have many, many fewer average donors. That is a sad state of affairs. It is sad because the work that that community does is absolutely essential – absolutely essential – to the lifeblood of this province for services rendered, for charitable love and care given to Albertans in care, especially those or their family members going through cancer. The average age of donors is going up.

So is the average dollar amount right now, but that doesn't mean more total dollars in the pot. It's a multibillion-dollar private industry in Alberta, but we see the average dollar amount going up with fewer donors. From 2009 to 2019 we saw a 22.1 per cent drop of families, of households that have been putting charitable tax donations in their tax returns. That's more than a fifth drop, close to a quarter drop in the number of households giving donations. This is impactful for the sector.

We see this trend coming – yes, it was accelerated by the pandemic, and, yes, the affordability crunch with inflation is going to make it worse, Madam Chair – but the truth is that we've seen this for decades now, that donors are getting older. Those large donations from second- and third-generation accrued wealth will be happening increasingly as the baby boom generation finishes, retires. Unfortunately, some of that demographic is now passing away. They end up in large donations to these important bodies. But this trend is continuing, and it's a problem for operational sustainability.

I spoke to the Stollery hospital today. They're one hundred per cent funded not by tax dollars but by donations. It's multimillion dollars a year, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$40 million every year fund raised purely through the generosity of Albertans. This trend has a huge impact on the health care of our children. Alberta Children's hospital is in effectively the exact same boat in Calgary. It's a good example there of the importance that charitable donations play in the livelihood of the delivering of health care services to Albertans.

But the trend isn't just limited to larger donations, fewer folks donating that are older. We also see an important difference on the other side of the demographic of donations, young Canadians. Young Canadians are donating less and less to institutionalized charities; i.e., charities that have that charitable tax status according to the CRA. Increasingly they're donating to what the philanthropic community calls causes. We see this all the time on Facebook: an important cause comes out, and they'll e-transfer money. You see

this on GoFundMe campaigns or similar websites, sort of these crowdsourced funding organizations.

And these donations now are given just to that cause, to that important cause that they highlight, something that matters to them perhaps as a millennial or a Gen Z or some of these younger generations. As they come into disposable income, as they start to have their first career, job, salary, pay – perhaps they're in a household. Perhaps they have more disposable income. Perhaps they're wondering: "My parents donated; maybe I should, too. Where am I going to donate to?"

It's not that I don't like the causes, Madam Chair. Causes are important. But the fact that we're giving less to these institutionalized charities year over year as return donors is a concern. It's a concern because so many of the services, so much of the work that is done for these charities require operational budgets, require multiyear, \$100 million, \$200 million, \$300 million capital campaigns. It requires the ability to build up expertise and staff on the administration side, never mind the delivery of the service itself. It requires the ability to build networks into each of these communities, whether you're talking about servicing the vulnerable, servicing those in health care, servicing different diverse communities, like First Nations in my community and others.

Every one of these requires long-term investment – long-term investment – that the charitable sector cannot do if they're chasing the hottest trend and the latest dollar that moves from cause to cause. The institutionalization – i.e., permanency, some wherewithal – of these charities is so important. It's instrumental, it's foundational to the ability for us to do the great work that we do. Our friends and our Albertan brothers and sisters that are out there in the charitable sector providing those services, providing charity and love for others, need that stability. They need that wherewithal. They need a route through which they can rest their operations that they know will be there year after year.

3:00

We see this trend in the charitable sector and donations in particular changing on these two ends. On the back end, when it comes to age, getting older and older, fewer and fewer families and households are donating, and we see the dollar amount increasing but not necessarily a broadening of new donors coming in to replace them. On the other side we see young donors increasingly not associated with an institution in the same way, without the permanency that we saw for our parents' generation, perhaps, or our great-grandparents' generation, where it was loyal to Queen and country and to a company. No matter what may come, they know that they have a sense of permanency. We see more and more young millennials going through a number of different jobs, at minimum seven, before they get to someplace in their career where they find permanency. We see these trends happening on the younger side of the demographic, and they're not giving in the same way they used to.

We in government need to be reactive to that. We need to be at the front end in seeing what the trends are and helping the sector by giving it the tools it needs to continue to be successful, to continue to be able to fund raise literally hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars in a fiscal year out of the generosity of Albertans. Out of the near 40 million Canadians – I learned this today – approximately 1 million of them country-wide are employed in the nonprofit or charitable sectors. That is a huge percentage of our industry, of our country focusing on this gift, on this virtue of charity. It's important and fundamental, the most important of all the virtues we have that are given to us.

Madam Chair, it is incredibly important that we pass this piece of legislation now, as soon as possible, because the sector, these

charities, and those donors are all pointing us in this direction. They're saying: build a wide base of smaller dollar donations; get these individuals into the funnel, as it's said, and move them up so that they continue to be repeat donors year over year; let those repeat dollars be dollars from new Canadians and young Canadians that continue to build a movement within charities for a generation to come. Those charities can continue to build infrastructure like hospitals and services like we've seen across the sector and in our faith communities of all different varieties.

They will be there to serve and help for every single disaster and crisis and obstacle that our province sees. We will be positioned well here, because of the forethought of this Chamber, to incentivize a broad base of those to give and to give generously and to bring them into the fold as donors and to be participatory in that gift of charity and delivery of this giant sector to average Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to hear the debate on the bill today.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. As I listened to the hon. member that brought forward this bill speak about the concerns of the sector, there are definitely a lot of areas of that that I couldn't agree with more. We know that the nonprofit sector in Alberta is simply at a tipping point in our province. They're desperate for support, for resources, and for help. We know that this sector is essential to Alberta and to our communities.

We know that this sector is not getting these needs met by government funding. They're looking for areas to be funded such as poverty reduction, mental health, cultural and language support, and so many more areas. There has been a recent report that was completed by the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, or CCVO, that's titled Alberta's Nonprofit Sector: Too Essential to Fail. This report is such an important piece of information as it lays out the current state of our charitable and nonprofit sector and the damage that has been done and will continue to be done if adequate supports are not provided. Basically, it maps out the sector and has surveyed organizations across the province to get a comprehensive understanding of the state of the sector.

Some really important insights, Madam Chair, that I would like to speak to that really stood out for me in the report: they're saying that in the wake of the pandemic they're facing higher demand, a 68 per cent increase, and higher complexity, a 74 per cent increase. We know, when we're talking to Albertans, that needs right now are very high and that for the person or persons that are accessing services – nonprofits, charitable organizations – not only are there more people that are accessing these services, but their demands are more. They're more complex. They might present with one or more needs whereas perhaps prior to the pandemic they could have surfaced with just one presenting area of concern. Now the nonprofits are reporting that there are much more complex needs that are being requested by the people that they serve.

We know that our nonprofits are critical for our communities all across the province. They provide things like food provisions and basic needs. They provide settlement supports and senior supports, sports and rec, arts and culture, entrepreneurship, environmental, health, and so many more. This sector has also been incredibly damaging to women. We know that 78 per cent of people employed in this sector are women. The sector employs 285,000 people in Alberta, with a contribution of \$5.5 billion to our GDP.

When we talk about these numbers – 78 per cent women – we've heard over and over and over that the pandemic has been incredibly



difficult and largely so to women, yet we have a government that got rid of the status of women. Here we are talking about a proposed bill where 78 per cent of the employees of this sector are women. Listening to this sector, we've heard that this government has not provided the supports that they need to be able to continue to give the services that so many Albertans rely on. So many have had to close their doors because they can't operate anymore.

We've heard that another great concern in this sector is staff retention and recruitment, with more than 55 per cent of the organizations identifying that as a concern. So while we're looking at this piece of legislation, yes, it's a step in the right direction, but it's not what the sector is asking for. The sector is asking for supports so that they can actually retain their staff and recruit. It's hard because there is incredible inflation that's happening all across the province, which is creating rising costs, so it's hampering their ability to retain and attract workers. They simply don't want to put the rising costs onto clients. These are organizations that are putting Albertans first and foremost in their planning, in their services that they provide, and they're struggling.

We know that supports since the onset of the pandemic have failed to address this sector. Less than 4 per cent of the total funding for the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant, or SMERG, went to nonprofits. Approximately 7 per cent of the total hires supported by the jobs now program went to nonprofits. The critical worker benefit saw uneven distribution, and some nonprofit workers were deemed ineligible for this benefit even though they provide the same services as for-profit and public providers. Programs that are designed to support the sector directly are inadequate. The funding requests to the civil society fund totalled 22 times the available budget, with fewer than 1 in 10 applicants selected.

If the member that proposed this piece of legislation, Bill 202, is speaking to organizations like CCVO or ECVO or Canadian Mental Health, he would hear that this is not the solution. Bill 202 is simply not the solution to what the sector needs. It's a positive change, and he mentioned, you know, several organizations that would say that it is a positive change, but this is not the solution that the sector needs.

3:10

There are charities within this sector, but they account for a mere 30 per cent of the organizations, Madam Chair. The current ask for this sector is immediate emergency funding totalling \$30 million for staff recruitment and retention. They are saying that these are vital – absolutely vital – funds that they need to be able to continue to provide services and for them to be able to continue to support communities and Albertans that depend on these services.

We know, Madam Chair, that Albertans are struggling. We know that the cost of living is absolutely hammering Alberta families and that so many Alberta families and individuals are reaching out to those nonprofit organizations, those charitable organizations. So the same argument that the member that introduced this is using as to why charitable donations are down is the same argument as to why individuals are accessing these services more.

Having this piece of legislation is definitely a positive – it's a wonderful first step – but it is not what the sector needs right now. We've been hearing for years that this sector needs real supports, a real strategy that will help retention and help employees come to the sector. We're losing people.

There's such a disconnect between being able to support Albertans in a meaningful way and this government. There's an opportunity here for all of the arguments that the member stated as to why this piece of legislation is needed. It would counterargue why this government needs to actually provide support and financial backing to this sector. We have so many organizations that

have come out, that have been pleading with the government. I would urge all members to read the report that was put out by CCVO, to talk about what they're really asking, what the real needs of Albertans are at this time.

I would say that we've heard loud and clear that this nonprofit sector is in a dire situation. We know that there are so many services that have no longer been available for Albertans, and we cannot allow this to happen. These nonprofits are the space where so many Albertans turn to. This is their church organizations. These are . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate in Committee of the Whole? Do I see none? Sorry. I was confused by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane running around over there. But I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie rising to speak.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise and speak to Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. First of all, I'd like to start off just by thanking the hon. Member for Peace River for his thoughtful work in bringing this bill forward, particularly at a time like this. When we're looking at rising costs and pressures on families and pressures on communities, I think it's really thoughtful to bring forward a bill like this to encourage those that can to give charitably and to create a financial incentive to do so. I think that it's a very timely piece of work and a timely offering. Bill 202 is actually quite simple, proposing to amend the Alberta income tax act, making it more affordable for generous Albertans who already give to give to charity by amending the act to increase the tax credit on the first \$200 of charitable donations in each tax year.

We know, Madam Chair, that charities in Alberta play a vital role in our communities by providing essential services and supports to individuals and families in need. We know – and the data shows – the power of civil society to build and support community. We know that civil society is more effective than government in responding in real time to emerging community needs and to do more with less. They always have been, and they always will be. We saw that. We saw that through the pandemic, that civil society rose to the occasion in community after community across this province as needs emerged.

So I'll say again that I'm happy to support the bill, Bill 202. I think it's timely. I think an incentivization of charitable donation is always a good idea, quite frankly. Under this legislation the nonrefundable charitable tax credit will be raised from 10 per cent to 60 per cent for donations under \$200 – that's a significant difference, Madam Chair – and combined with the federal 15 per cent, this would bring the tax credit in line with political donations at 75 per cent. I think that's important to note, too. I think it's been a polarizing time in politics, and to level that playing field for charities to have the same opportunity to be donated to and for citizens of Alberta to be compensated for that on their tax return: I think it's a great idea.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as an example, 2 out of every 5 Canadian charitable donors say their giving has dropped. I'm hoping that this bill will be a small way for Albertans, who are generally more charitable in their giving – I think Statistics Canada shows that Albertans give more than the average province – to raise those numbers back up again and to shift behaviour. Habits form over time, and when you get out of the habit of donating, I think it's important to create an incentive for people to get back into the habit. Between the global pandemic and continuing inflation, our

charitable organizations have struggled, to say the least. I think other members in this Chamber have spoken about that. There are a variety of ways to support them. This certainly isn't the only way, but I think it's a creative way and it's a simple way for our government to say, "Yes, we support the charities in our province, and we want to incentivize generous Albertans to think about giving to those charities."

Given that individual Canadian donors gave about \$10 billion to charities in 2018, the decrease in giving that's been indicated in current surveys indicates billions in lost revenue for these organizations. I'm hoping that this is one small way that our government and private members that are working on this bill can incentivize a shift in the other direction. Research from May of 2020 found that charities nationally were experiencing, on average, a 30.6 per cent decline in revenue since the start of the pandemic. So I'm hoping a few things. I'm hoping that the pandemic is largely behind us – I'm really hopeful that that's the case – and I'm hoping that we will return to some habits of giving that are more consistent with prepandemic levels as a province and, ultimately, as a country.

I was just going to tell a little story. I love WestJet. I don't know how many people in this Chamber know that, but I really love WestJet. I think that sometimes companies like that are very cutting edge in terms of the way that they incentivize good behaviour. I was delighted last night when I got my annual WestJet Christmas e-mail, which I love also, and it was: giving is receiving. They had this flight, a full flight of people, and the stewardess got on and told this really compelling story about her niece who was a child struggling with cancer. A very sad story. She did not win her battle with cancer, unfortunately. But what came out of that was a new charity and a way for other families to give to children struggling with cancer in their time of need. It was a very inspiring story.

What WestJet did is that for every mile that the flight took – or every kilometre, I guess; I'll be Canadian about it – they were giving a dollar to charity. Each person on that flight got to fill out a little card with the charity of their choice, and WestJet donated in their name for the kilometres flown on that flight. So if I was flying from Grande Prairie to Edmonton, it's roughly 450 kilometres. If my flight was chosen, then WestJet would have given \$450 to the charity of my choice. For that one flight WestJet gave, I think, over \$90,000 to charity. I just think that's remarkable.

Looking at the joy on the people's faces who came off that plane and the stories in this little video about why they chose the charities they did – they weren't expecting this; this was a total surprise to each person on that flight – what it meant to them in their communities, in their families, in their stories, I just thought it was brilliant, and it actually made me think about this bill. It's a small thing, but it gives people who may not have a lot of an opportunity to give without it costing them as much, and it's meaningful to them. Each person coming off that WestJet flight talked with great passion about why they chose the charity they did and how excited they were to give back and to have some control over that. I think any time that government can get out of the way and empower citizens to support civil society, it's a win. It's a win.

Shifting these dollars from government to charities and donors strengthens civil society and it supports taxpayers in directing their dollars to the community supports that they believe address the needs of their community, and I think that's part of the power of this bill. This is giving the citizen the power to choose, and if that isn't enough, Mr. Speaker, we remember that the nonprofit or voluntary sector contributes \$9.6 billion in revenues to the Alberta economy. Sorry, Madam Chair. I called you Mr. Speaker. I apologize. Not only that, but approximately 176,000 Albertans are employed in the sector.

3:20

I just really am supportive of this bill. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it. I want to again thank the Member for Peace River for his thoughtful work on this.

Before I conclude, I just want to take an opportunity to thank all of the volunteers, all of the organizers, all of the donors from my constituency of Grande Prairie who give generously. Grande Prairie is a notoriously generous community, and I'm very, very proud to be a part of it. As a matter of fact, there's a fundraiser hosted by a famous Grande Prairie resident named Tenille Townes, and she regularly, annually, brings in between half a million and a million dollars a year at this point to keep the Sunrise House open. It's a passion in the community, and she's been the spark to that passion.

I hope that this change, if passed, will be a spark for people to ignite their own passions in their own communities right across Alberta, and I want to thank those working in the nonprofit sector in Alberta and certainly in my community of Grande Prairie for all the important work they do to support their communities, particularly in a time of need, and I want to wish them all a merry Christmas.

With that, Madam Chair, I will take my seat. Happy to support Bill 202. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for a chance to say a few words around Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022, which, I believe, in short, is changing the numbers by which you can apply for a return for a charitable gift and increasing that amount. Categorically I think this is a good idea. Other speakers have already outlined how many of our nonprofits and charitable organizations are experiencing some tough times – right? – which is a direct reflection of our economic circumstances where average Albertans: you know, in real terms their incomes have been reduced over the last four years and more because of inflation and because of perhaps the lowest growth rate, more like a stagnant growth rate, in the country in terms of wages. Alberta seems to be the number one province for that, which is unfortunate.

So all of the things that are associated with our economy are made more stagnant, too, when you're not moving money into the hands of the majority of Albertans, right? There are a few Albertans that are making lots of money, but most are not. Our charitable tax regime is sort of an effect of that. People have less money to donate, so we try to create ways to incentivize people to make those donations.

Yeah. I think that we are in support of this concept as well, but there are a couple of caveats, Madam Chair, that I think are very important to put on the table, the first of which – and it's a genuine concern – is that if we are giving a more generous tax return for people making donations, I hope that in no way would this incentivize this UCP government to cut their contributions to our nonprofit sector. If that's the case, then I cannot support this bill at all. Like, if this is in any way a window or a chance to open up – and I can see hand signals. That's great. That's good. I'm glad to hear that. We just have to make sure that we're not just giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

I heard the hon. Member for Grande Prairie, you know, talk about the government getting out of the way of corporations to donate. Well, that's not what we're doing here at all. In fact, it's important that we create a circumstance by which the people can make a donation. I mean, that's the government doing that job. Any change like this does not preclude our responsibility to those same nonprofits.

We know that nonprofits, I believe, are contributing at least 5 and a half billion dollars to our gross domestic product here in Alberta. I heard the Member for Grande Prairie mentioning 9 and something billion. I think that's a little bit high, but I mean the point is still made that we have more than almost 300,000 people working in the nonprofit sector, so this whole notion is a significant part of the overall province's economy, quite frankly. Of course, that's not to say anything about the tremendous services that the nonprofit and charitable sectors do supply as well. I mean, that's kind of the point of giving them charitable tax status as well. You know, we have so many different social services being delivered to Albertans through this sector, and now more than ever we need to make sure that they are being supported.

I don't know, you know, if there's a way for us to formalize this, but I certainly will say it again, as my colleagues will, emphatically I'm sure, that this change to charitable tax returns should not provide an excuse for provincial funding to the nonprofit sector, right? Those two things cannot go together, and if they don't, then I'm feeling pretty good about this bill, really, quite frankly.

The other issue that I wanted to bring up, which is very important, is that we heard other people talking about getting people into the habit of donating and keeping them in the habit of donating, so I would suggest that part of this bill is to ensure that it's put out in the front window of our provincial communications that this change has taken place so that people know that you donate \$100 and you'll get \$30 back in April when you file your tax returns – right? – something like that, so that you make it a real, tangible thing. Then once you get people on to donating to a charity of their choice, then they'll be likely to continue to do so often for the rest of their working lives. Passing this bill and then putting quite an aggressive education campaign to Albertans about this new tax opportunity, I think, really would make a difference.

The third thing I wanted to mention – and again I don't know exactly how this comes out in the wash – is just for us to lobby the federal government to pursue a similar pattern of a more generous tax return for charitable donations from the federal CRA, okay? Again, that's a more significant part of our overall tax payments that we make every year to different levels of government, so for the federal government to be similarly looking at a more generous deduction, I think, would be a really great idea. We could do this here and then use it as a signal to the federal government to make those changes for all Canadians, really, because I bet that whatever is happening with the nonprofit and charitable industry in Alberta is also happening in all the other provinces and territories, too. That's always a good way to co-operate as part of a confederation, right? You know, having those conversations with the federal government, I think, is a good idea.

Yeah. I mean, I don't want to talk too long about this bill because I know other people want to, but, again, if I could just summarize, changing the tax deduction numbers is a good idea, but in no way should it be an excuse to reduce the provincial responsibility to nonprofits and charities that we have as a government; and, two, once this does occur, that there is an education program so that Albertans can realize that there's something to be taken advantage of here for this tax year – I don't know if it's possible to do it for this tax year, but ASAP, then once you get people on to the notion of a generous tax return when they file in April, then they're more likely to create a whole new generation of donors that can help us – and, finally, to suggest that a similar change to the deductible numbers for donations from the federal government would be a nice notion to leverage this particular bill. In sum, I'm quite supportive with those three suggestions, constructive criticisms, of course, for the bill. That's it.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Members to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

3:30

**Mr. Gotfried:** Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. And great thanks to the Member for Peace River for bringing it to the House for debate and hopeful passage.

Madam Chair, Albertans are generous, and they're warm-hearted – and we've seen that so much in the past – and a moving force with respect to addressing the opportunities which community members have to support the charities and those great organizations that help to, I guess, fulfill a broader scope in our community and sometimes to meet some of the needs that aren't met by government and other organizations. It's a great initiative to see tax donations that are being increased for the under-\$200 amounts from 10 per cent to 60 per cent – of course, with the federal applications to that bringing it up to a total of 75 per cent, which also aligns with political tax credits, which I think is good. Politics and the charitable sector should be comparable, and people should be able to make the choices of where they direct their dollars.

Madam Chair, we've seen in the past – I know that there has been a marked decline in charitable donations for a number of years, but to maybe take people back to what I think was one of the world's, the globe's greatest outpourings of support was during the 2004 tsunami, Indian Ocean tsunami, which I happened to have survived by running from that wave and coming back and doing some of my own charitable work through the Red Cross at the time. As we know, not only did we get tax credits, but there were also contributions from government at that time, which we've seen through various things, including some of our support of relief efforts in Ukraine.

But this is actually going to change the landscape, change the foundational tax credit for charities to go forward, and hopefully to encourage people to get back and to embrace that heart of giving, which we know Albertans are so proud of and I think so focused on, supporting the vulnerable in our communities. But we can understand; you know, the last six or seven years have been tough from an economic perspective, from the pandemic perspective. Many people have lost their jobs and now are regaining those jobs, gratefully, thanks to many actions of our government.

This is an opportunity for us to set a foundation which says to people, not only those with the disposable income to do so, but even those that want to plan giving as part of their day-to-day budgets – I think that this is an important opportunity for all Albertans. I think we all try and teach our children that, you know, if there is an allowance or if they're earning money in the community or cutting lawns or whatever it is, to actually take a portion of that and budget that to give back to community, Madam Chair. I think that that's important for us as a lesson to pass on to future generations.

Now with this bill we have an opportunity for that to be, I think, solidified into our tax system, that people understand that charitable giving is not only something that they should do and can do, that when they're doing well, they can do more good, but that it actually can benefit them from a tax perspective at the same time and that there's a net benefit to the community, a net benefit back to them as well that supports them and encourages them to be more generous. I think that these are things that we have to embrace even as we face financial challenges, and we know some people are struggling to meet ends and hence much of the work we're doing on affordability within this particular session of our Legislature.

I'd like to sort of take a look at some opportunities and maybe just localize it a little bit more. I know that even in my own

constituency we have some groups that have been struggling, but they work hard. I'll use the Rotary Club of Calgary-Fish Creek as an example. During this past summer they raised over \$15,000 to support other charities, as we know the Rotary Club does. They take that money and they turn 100 per cent and sometimes more than that in volunteer hours back.

They hosted a pub quiz, which saw an additional \$2,000 donated to I Can for Kids. They've supported HomeSpace, which is an affordable housing provider in Calgary. They partnered with HomeSpace and other Rotary clubs in Calgary to raise over \$72,000 to upgrade eight family units of affordable housing. Recently the clubs got together to pack boxes for operation Christmas child, bringing 125 smiles to children around the world and hosting similar events to help families, kids, and other local, smaller charities. So here we have just a small organization – it's not one of the long-standing ones; it's a more recently formed Rotary Club – that does some great work. That tax credit increase, I think, will help them to raise more funds in the future.

Madam Chair, this morning I had a chance to do an announcement down at Fish Creek park in my backyard, the namesake of my constituency, and the Friends of Fish Creek were there. A new partnership has been created between them and the province in terms of some of the environmental work that they do. But the beauty of that organization is that they have over 200 regular volunteers – I think 13,000 hours of volunteering just this past year – and they do their own fundraising. So this will help organizations like that who work with us. The civil society groups that bring forward their volunteer efforts: they bring forward their fundraising efforts. They bring forward expertise and knowledge, and they complement what we do as government, which is the way it should work, when we have the public sector and the private sector and the not-for-profit sector working together.

I remember when I was in the corporate world, we went down, about 35 of us from the company I was with at the time, and we picked thistles out of the park. We did it in co-operation with the Friends of Fish Creek, who needed to make sure that they had volunteers there to supervise us, who also had some staff members there to help us. Again, you have that partnership of the public sector, the not-for-profit sector, and the private sector coming together, possibly from the private sector it can be in donations or in time from their staff to assist those groups.

Those are the types of partnerships I think that we're empowering by this type of legislation, Madam Chair. I thank, again, the Member for Peace River for bringing this forward because I think these are things we talk about all the time. How can we help people to be more generous in their communities? How can we help them to consider giving back to their communities or maybe it's to the province or maybe it's a global cause that they can contribute to? This will allow us – if we pass this and we do it right and we bring it to the attention of Albertans and say to them, "You know, you can be more generous and it's not going to cost you; net amount to you is going to be the same or less," maybe you can give more generously than you have in the past and, as importantly as I'd mentioned before, to teach future generations that that giving should be part of when they're doing well, or well enough, to be able to do some good in the community by giving back.

So, Madam Chair, I'd just like to encourage everybody in this House, in this Chamber, to support Bill 202, and I'd like to again thank the good work of the member and those who have spoken on this bill. I think that there's a common theme here, which is that we have an opportunity to encourage the not-for-profit sector to work more closely, to develop their donor bases, and to encourage those donor bases to give more generously.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll keep my comments brief because I do know that there are other members that are wishing to speak to this piece of legislation, Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. Now, I appreciate all the comments that the members have been making in regard to looking at trying to encourage Albertans to continue to donate to different organizations within their local communities.

One of the pieces that we've been hearing in consultation with many of the voluntary sectors is the concern around looking at having stable staffing and stable funding. Now, I recognize that the concern about, you know, supporting nonprofits and charitable organizations and being able to fund raise is an important conversation to have, but we also know that donations that go to these organizations can be inconsistent. It's very difficult for organizations to create an annual budget, to be able to provide those services, whether it be anything from mental health supports to local food banks to culture or language supports and a variety of other things, that can look at the financial budget for the year and say: well, this is what we're going to be able to provide to our local communities, and then on top of that, be able to, hopefully, fund raise to expand our supports and our services to those local areas.

Now, of course, fundraising is very important, and I don't disagree with that, but I think that as a government we do have a responsibility to ensure that that base funding is continuously available so that we can make sure these organizations know and are able to predict their future financial means. Although I appreciate the intent of the act that the member has put forward, being able to encourage Albertans to continue to support their local communities and charities, depending on whatever it is for them, I would also like to hear from the government that there is also a commitment from the government to be able to support that base funding. As we know, the base funding is important. It does ensure that the services that are being provided by these organizations are consistent and that they don't face the continuous concern about whether or not they're going to be able to function year over year over year.

What we've heard is that many of these organizations were significantly impacted over the last couple of years. Their demand for services increased during COVID, and they continue to increase as we hit the affordability crisis, with many individuals seeking supports for mental health as well as looking at supports for, you know, food costs and utility costs and things like that.

**3:40**

What we've been hearing is that many organizations within this sector are looking at ensuring that they have a total of \$30 million for staff recruitment and retention. Of course, as we've heard, many of these organizations, although they do depend on volunteers, also need to ensure that they have consistent staffing to run those programs and that it's not just a hundred per cent volunteer based. You know, you need that administrative component and those experts in the area to be able to provide that support.

Although the intent of the bill is good and encouraging Albertans to engage and be part of their local communities is important, we need to ensure that those basic needs are still being met through those organizations. Of course, you know, we need to be looking at settlement opportunities, seniors' supports. Many of these organizations offer sports and recreation opportunities for low-income families. They're also, you know, supporting local entrepreneurs when it comes to our multicultural communities.

Many of those services help build healthy communities and engage with those who may not have those opportunities in the same way as others. Looking at the fact that, in addition to that, we know that about 78 per cent of the individuals that work in these local communities tend to be women and that there is a substantial contribution to our GDP at about \$5.5 billion annually, the return on the investment by the government to ensure that these programs continue to function and are funded appropriately is also part of this conversation.

I look forward to seeing in the next provincial budget that that funding will be made available so that there is consistency in the programs being offered, and then, in addition and on top of that, we're able to see an increase in the donations that are being provided on behalf of Albertans that will help to expand the services that are already being provided.

Again, I think the intention of the legislation is good, but I just want to ensure that the government is also acknowledging their responsibilities in ensuring that that base funding is still available so that organizations are not solely relying on those donations annually to run the basic programs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It is my great pleasure to talk about this Bill 202. If there is one thing that my office hears from my constituents in Calgary-Beddington, it's all about affordability. This is why I'm so pleased to speak today to support Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. My constituents in Alberta are not only struggling to cover the inflation costs of their utility bills and groceries, but they also are being forced to deal with increases to the carbon tax, which is, of course, what the NDP and their friends in Ottawa, Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh, support. It's really sad to see the NDP support Ottawa over Alberta.

Thankfully, Madam Chair, under this UCP government Alberta's economy has rebounded from the NDP four-year disaster in office and the unprecedented worldwide pandemic. Because of the UCP government's discipline to hold the line on spending after the last four years, we are now in a position where we can offer significant relief to Albertans at the time when they need it the most, unlike the NDP, who would have kept unsustainable deficit spending and placed the burden on our children and grandchildren and all the future generations. We, this government, are helping Albertans.

Madam Chair, under Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, this UCP government will provide over \$2.8 billion in relief to Albertans to help them deal with this inflation and affordability crisis. For seniors, who are much of the time on fixed incomes, and parents who are struggling to pay their overloaded grocery bills right now, this UCP government will provide a total of \$600 in monthly installments for every senior and child under 18 in a household if their family earns under \$180,000 per year.

For Albertans that struggle to pay their utility bill right now, this UCP government will provide \$200 more than originally planned in an electricity rebate from January to April of 2023, bringing the total above \$500. Albertans will also be protected from the price spike over the winter as the government of Alberta will extend the natural gas rebate indefinitely. Our government will make zero-interest loans available to providers to support the deferrals, which will ensure that nobody is forced to pay more than 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour this winter.

Madam Chair, this UCP government will also suspend the fuel tax of 13.6 cents per litre of gasoline.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. The hon. member has a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

**Mr. Sabir:** I rise under 23(b). The member so far is not speaking to the motion at hand. It's completely irrelevant to what we are debating here.

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. This is clearly not a point of order. The Member for Calgary-Beddington is speaking to a matter that is relevant to the issues being debated. We are talking about a bill that talks about the need to provide and to support charities across the province, and she is contrasting our record versus that of the NDP. Therefore, this is not a point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, it's that time of the afternoon. It's a good time to remind all members that we are on Bill 202 and should speak to the matter as such.

Given that, I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington to continue with this caution in mind.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This continues from January to June of 2023 regardless of the price of oil, and it will remain in place afterwards subject to the price of oil.

Furthermore, under Bill 202 AISH, the Alberta child and family benefit, income support, and the Alberta seniors' benefit will be indexed to inflation, increasing the payments to the most vulnerable by 6 per cent. This will make the best social programs in the country even better.

Albertans know that we need to share our prosperity with the most vulnerable to make sure that we are all supported. Under just the Alberta child and family benefit indexation a family of four children will receive an additional \$307 in payment per year.

With Bill 2, Madam Chair, our government will also index Alberta's personal income tax . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just a clarification. We're on Bill 202, not Bill 2. I'm wondering if you have some different notes there that might be more helpful to this debate, and/or just a caution that we're on Bill 202, not Bill 2.

Please proceed. The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you. My apology. I should have said Bill 202.

Our government will also index the Alberta personal income tax to inflation retroactively to 2022. This means that a significant number of Albertans will receive a refund or owe less tax after they file their income tax for this year. On top of that, Madam Chair, this will increase the number of Albertans that pay absolutely no provincial personal income tax; the number will rise by up to 95,000 Albertans, to a total of about \$1.3 million.

Madam Chair, this support means that some of the most vulnerable Albertans right now will receive several thousand dollars in increased support in the next year alone. They don't need to decide between eating and staying warm anymore; Albertans will be able to do both. I know this support will make a huge difference for all of us, for all

Albertans, and I applaud this government in making this right choice to target this relief to those that need it the most.

3:50

These are just some of the ways that this UCP government will help Albertans struggling to heat their homes and fuel their tanks or put food on the table. I only listed some of the actions that our government is taking, but more is being done to help Albertans across the province. Madam Chair, this is why I'm so proud to stand up today in support of Bill 202, the inflation relief statutes amendment act . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Bill 202 is the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022. One final reminder to speak to the bill, or I will have to cut your time.

Please proceed.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Remind me again.

Anyways, I'm almost done sharing my thoughts with you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there others to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm proud to speak to Bill 202, the personal income tax act, as opposed to the previous speech, which was a campaign platform speech which had little relevance to this bill.

Now, I'll keep my comments brief. I know that there are a lot of members in the Chamber that also want to comment on this. I'm speaking to Bill 202. I'm pretty confident that I'm speaking to Bill 202. We've heard from a number of charitable and voluntary organizations that they're in a situation that they're referring to as quite dire as far as the need for emergency or urgent funding in order to continue to operate.

The one piece that I will agree with from the previous speaker is that high inflation is causing additional challenges for our not-for-profit and charitable sectors. It is placing a larger burden on the services and supports that many of these organizations around the province offer. We also recognize, and I appreciate there's been some comment on the fact, that many of these charitable organizations that lie outside of the two major urban centres are for some communities the only on-the-ground supports that community members can access, so it's critical that they have the resources to be able to support their communities.

Now, I am in favour of this bill. I appreciate where this is coming from as far as increasing the tax receipt portion that Albertans can get to try to incentivize Albertans to donate more. We know that Albertans are very generous, but this increase or change in the charitable tax receipt will hopefully translate into millions of more dollars from Albertans to charities that provide critical work.

What I will say is that my caution and my concern is that the government will interpret this bill as replacing the core funding that charities and not-for-profits require to be able to function, and I do not support that notion, Madam Chair. There is an absolute responsibility that the government has to ensure that our charitable, not-for-profit sector is adequately funded.

This is a way to support or provide a tool for those charities to be able to generate more dollars to provide supports, especially in light of inflation. I think immediately of organizations that support families when it comes to direct support for food, for utilities. Those are going to be facing even higher costs.

The spirit of this bill and the intention of this bill I strongly support, but again not-for-profits have – in order to fulfill their mandates, they need to be able to recruit and retain staff, and that's the crux of where they have come to the Official Opposition caucus. And I'm sure the government caucus has heard it as well, that they need some of that base funding in order to be able to hire. They cannot rely on donations to make their staffing budgets because every year there could be huge swings depending on the amount of donations that come in.

My hope is that the government will not abandon their responsibility to this sector, that they will in fact fund them and increase funding, give them predictability, long-term commitments, and use this as a tool for these entities to enhance the dollars that they get on a year-by-year basis.

With that, Madam Chair, I know other members are interested in speaking to this bill. I'm mindful of the clock, and I will take my seat.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Who can measure the value of compassion and generosity? It's because of that that I really want to highlight the importance of the passing of Bill 202, which increases the tax exemption available on the first \$200 of giving to Alberta charities. It'll encourage new people to give that maybe haven't given in the past. Maybe it'll even encourage some not-for-profits to also obtain charitable status to strengthen them. But the important thing here is that I think all Albertans understand the value of compassion and generosity, charity, if you want, in our communities so that we can continue to support one another through all the challenges of life. Civil society, in fact, is built on the free and independent action of individuals expressing their goodwill and their generosity to people around them in their neighbourhoods, in their communities.

Just a brief story from my constituency, Lacombe-Ponoka. A few weeks ago the Lacombe Police Service hosted its charity Checkstop event, which is held every year during this time. I know that nobody likes to get stopped by the police, but if you get stopped by the police and have an opportunity to express your generosity and make a donation, that's an extremely valuable thing, so kudos to the police for stopping as many as they possibly can. You know, when the men and women of our police service spend their Saturday collecting donations of food and toys and money to give to multiple charities, ranging from the Lacombe Food Bank to Big Brothers & Big Sisters, that is a good thing. The Checkstop is just one of those examples, among many, of the value that charities provide to our communities. It brings people closer together, encouraging community building between individuals and institutions while supporting those in need.

This generosity shown by my constituents is one of the reasons I'm standing here today in support of Bill 202. Charitable contributions, though, have been in decline for the last couple of years and have decreased even faster during the pandemic with the current affordability crisis. In spite of this, there's still a spirit of generosity amongst Albertans, but I really want to throw out a challenge to the constituents of Lacombe, Ponoka, Blackfalds, and the rural areas around to donate whatever you can to support your province and your people.

I want to remind Lacombe-Ponokans that in 2014 Lacombe was recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency as the most generous community per capita of any city or town in the country, the most generous community in Canada. That was in 2014. More recently I just found an article from March of 2022 that Lacombe has slipped to third place. So my challenge to Lacombe-Ponoka residents is: we need to be back in first place. We need to find that same generosity. We need to return to the place where we are giving to our communities around us. That's my challenge to Lacombe-Ponoka. A year from now I want to

see Revenue Canada report you as the most generous community in Canada, not just Alberta, and I dare any other constituency to match it.

Just to reinforce that a little bit, I heard on the news this morning that wages generally across Canada from November of this year to November of last year are actually up 5 per cent. There's room there, my friends. I have to throw out a little bit of a statistic, though, to further raise the challenge. While we may have been number 1 and are now number 3, did you know that the per cent of annual giving to annual income across Canada is 1.5 per cent? It's not a very big number. It wouldn't hurt very many of us to give a little bit more, especially with a 5 per cent average across-the-country, I understand, wage increase over the last year. For those of you that are giving more than \$200, I know this doesn't necessarily impact you, but my challenge to you there is: hey, this is your chance to make sure that the Laurentian Liberals in Ottawa get less and that it stays in your own community. Give to your local community rather than to the Liberals in Ottawa. So that's my challenge.

**4:00**

We need to encourage this practice. We need to make it easier for people across the province to give so that they can get the help that's required, so that we can pay respectable wages to those who are working in these sectors. We need to make sure this all stays in our own local communities. That's what we need to be doing.

That's why I'm supporting this bill. That's why I think it's a great idea. The people of our province who donate our time as volunteers and money as donors do have an outsized impact for people who need generosity and who today may receive but tomorrow may give. One day we give; one day we receive. This is why it's so important that we Albertans show our support for all the charities in our local communities by supporting Bill 202.

Encouraging more Albertans to help these charities by increasing the tax incentive is one of the ways that as a government we are trying to help the not-for-profit and charitable sector. We introduced crowdfunding as a tool, free to use for them, a while ago. There have been government matching donation programs.

By the way, I almost forgot to say that there are also many corporations where you may work that will match your donation as well. While you may only give \$200 and you'll get 75 per cent of it back in your tax, if your corporation matches it, it becomes \$400 or maybe even \$600 in some cases. It doesn't really even cost us that much. We just need to open up our hearts and learn the practice of being charitable and giving and generous and kind to one another.

It will increase the revenue that charities receive, and it will help Albertans to be more generous than they've ever been before. From supporting seniors to newborns, from food to toys, everything in between, our not-for-profits and our charities constitute a pillar foundation in our society. As a conservative I am committed to making sure that we support the independent operation of nonprofits and charities created, really, out of the passion and the hard work, the volunteerism, the donations of individual Albertans all across our province in every community making their community a better place. That's what this is all about.

Madam Chair, this bill is important because it reduces taxes. It incentivizes generosity and compassionate society. It helps Albertans, and I believe that it can be a real support for our nonprofit and charitable sector. Any number of new donors that the passage of this bill creates is worth it. Every single dollar counts when it's committed to important causes like this. I, quite frankly, think this should be a nonpartisan bill, a nonpartisan issue. We must support each other. Our society is built on community, and community means helping others in times of need.

I believe that by increasing the capacity of that independent action, the members of the House stand for principles of generosity and goodwill, and that's something that I think we can and we should all support. There couldn't be a more timely moment as we enter the Christmas season, the holiday season. It seems like in our world these days peace and goodwill are in short supply. We can change that a little bit today by the passing of this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair. It stands for good things, and I think we can all stand for that, so let's work together for the betterment of our province and our people.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to Bill 202? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to make a couple of comments here today to Bill 202. We're going to be very brief. The move towards allowing Albertans to be able to get a better break on their taxes when they give to a charity is going to be really important, and I know that in my community, where so much of the help that we give those that are less fortunate is coming through private charities, it's going to be important for us to be able to provide the incentive for Albertans to be able to do that. This will help things like Warming Hearts in Drayton Valley. It'll help things like the opportunity home. It'll help the warming centre. It'll help the shelter pods that are in Drayton Valley that cater to about a hundred homeless people.

I would just like to stand and, for a couple of minutes, ask this House to consider Bill 202 and to support it. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to the bill? [interjection] I will decide when the question is called.

I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 202 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Deputy Premier to rise and report out of committee. Would you like to make a motion to rise and report?

**Mr. Madu:** Yes, Madam Chair. I ask that we rise and report on Bill 202.

[Motion carried]

**The Chair:** We shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 202.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

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

**Bill 203  
Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties)  
Amendment Act, 2022**

**Mr. Toor:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022.

Every day Albertans across the province tragically lose their lives as a consequence of unsafe driving. Oftentimes those who perish as a result of their own unsafe driving are our youngest drivers testing the limits of their vehicles in attempts to peer pressure or to impress their friends. This heartbreaking reality is something that we as elected officials should do more to prevent. Excessive high speeding is a criminal act that does not only endanger the drivers themselves but all other Albertans who use the roadways where these crimes are being committed.

In order to protect the people of this province from these needless, preventable traffic accidents, we must act. Therefore, I am pleased to introduce this bill. The proposed bill would strengthen the penalties in place for excessive speeding in Alberta so that would-be reckless drivers are more thoroughly deterred from endangering themselves and also others while those who still violate the law are punished more severely. Alberta, quite frankly, is lagging behind other provinces when it comes to pursuing more severe penalties for excessive driving or speeding. Other provinces have rightfully strengthened their laws surrounding these crimes, and it is time for us to follow suit to help to prevent any more needless injuries or deaths.

If passed, Bill 203 would increase the maximum fine for excessive speeding to \$5,000 and introduce an automatic seven-day licence suspension for anybody caught excessively speeding. Additionally, there would be an option of a seven-day discretionary impound to be decided by law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

The time to implement these more severe penalties is now. In the past few months alone there have been high-profile incidents both in Calgary and Edmonton. The two cities claimed the most excessive speeding and street racing that involved unavoidable accidents. Two months ago two Albertans were killed in a two-vehicle crash that authorities believe to have been the result of a street race. Even more recently, last month, I think, two vehicles crashed on the High Level Bridge here in Edmonton, both of which were involved in a street race. The saddest thing about crashes like these is that they are entirely avoidable. They're caused by reckless bravado, specifically amongst our youth.

**4:10**

My priority as an elected official is ensuring the safety of Albertans, and it is my conviction that passing this bill will greatly improve road safety in our province, especially in the residential areas. I'm proud to say that despite incidents like this, as I mentioned previously, Alberta still has the lowest fatality rate of any province. Most Albertans are committed to road safety as they know that acting responsibly on the road keeps us all safe. A notable exception to this rule involves those who excessively speed and others who drive recklessly.

It is so important that these people receive the punishment they deserve when they commit these crimes. Through mandatory licence suspension and discretionary vehicle impounding, drivers who commit these needlessly dangerous acts will be prevented from doing so again in the immediate future. Their friends will hear about their fine and the suspension and will rethink twice before ever going 40 K over the limit, especially in the cities of Calgary and

Edmonton. Deterrents are extremely important. Madam Speaker, it is much better if we prevent drivers from doing this in the first place more than it is to get them serious penalties. On top of this, the increased fines will further contribute to deterrence so that these drivers will not act so dangerously again after their licences and vehicles are returned to them.

As stated earlier, this bill would bring Alberta's penalty for excessive speeding more into alignment with other provinces. Ontario's excessive speeding penalties are similar to the changes proposed by this bill. Additionally, these increased penalties have been requested by police chief associations, community associations, residents, and especially the people who live in so-dense communities like Calgary-North East. The implementation of similar penalties in Ontario has been seeing results. The number of people charged for committing these dangerous crimes increased, and the laws have given police in Ontario more options to make the streets safer.

This problem has not gone unnoticed. Multiple city councillors in Calgary and Edmonton have noted the problem and need more options to deal with it. Those who have committed their lives to protecting Albertans in all areas of life, not just on the road, believe that increasing the severity of these penalties will improve road safety. When organizations like the police chief association make requests like this, I as an elected official do not take it lightly. According to research done by this association, the large portion of speeding drivers – 40 per cent, to be exact – are between the ages of 16 and 24. Evidently, this same age group also has the highest traffic casualty rate of any age group; it's almost 80 per cent.

This same age demographic is also most likely to engage in excessive speeding, especially in residential areas. When these young people engage in excessive speeding, they endanger themselves and others. In their I'll call it silly attempts to impress their friends or peer pressure or to show off, Albertans can be severely injured or even killed. These young drivers need to learn to respect the power they have when they go out behind the wheel. Without more severe penalties for acts as dangerous as excessive speeding these young people may continue to take these unnecessary risks. Parents would agree that oftentimes it is important to be strict with your children, especially when they are pursuing a course of action with consequences that they do not fully understand. If a young person is caught excessively speeding and receives the penalty outlined in this bill, they will be far less likely to commit the same acts again. Preventing the repetition of criminal behaviour works to increase community safety and to prevent death or injury that may have occurred if the penalties were less severe.

Preserving life and limb is the main motivation behind the bill. Taking every reasonable step, we can keep Albertans safe as our top priority. These penalties will increase public safety. If these penalties were not seen as effective, then their implementation would not have been called for, especially by the police chief associations. By ensuring that the penalties surrounding excessive driving are proportionate to the crime, all Albertans will be made safer. This includes young drivers who may be tempted towards recklessness, other drivers who expect . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon as critic for transportation to speak to Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022. I would be hesitant to suggest that the traffic safety issues that are caused by excessive speeding are anything but a significant concern to all Albertans. We've all experienced times on our Alberta highways when somebody has gone blowing by us at a crazy high speed which scared the daylight out of ourselves and/or



our passengers and we wondered, of course, what in the heck this individual might be thinking, disorderly and irresponsible behaviour that, as the previous mover of the private member's bill has suggested, brings great harm and injury to Albertans as a result of their risky behaviour.

However, the member who brought forward this piece of legislation, as a general rule, should be reminded that, of course, any time we are looking at increasing the consequences regarding punishment or deterrents for traffic infractions, that is something that we should be considering after consultations have been done. I'm wondering if indeed the member – he alluded to certain consultations, and they seem to be rather informal attempts at consulting with members of police forces and members of the public.

[Mrs. Aheer in the chair]

I'm just wondering if indeed there were municipalities involved. He mentioned quite often the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary as places where high-speed infractions were quite prevalent, speed racing quite prevalent. Some high-profile incidents have occurred where injuries took place, unfortunately. I'm wondering if indeed the member has spoken directly to the municipal authorities in Edmonton and Calgary about these proposed changes in enforcement to the bill that he proposes in Bill 203.

Has the Rural Municipalities association been formally consulted? Other large Alberta municipalities: have they had the opportunity to express themselves to the minister in a formal way rather than an ad hoc way that it seems as though the member was describing? I wonder if the consultation took place. I think it's important to have those talks with the people involved in administering the roadways and the speeds in their particular municipalities and jurisdictions.

The Alberta Motor Association often will conduct studies and bring forth their public opinion about changes to legislation. Most recently, of course, they spoke about the blue lights on tow trucks and had some concerns about implementation there that were openly expressed publicly.

4:20

I would like the member to really inform the House as to what formal consultations took place before he came forward with the bill, the private member's bill, that he's promoting, because, of course, public safety is everybody's concern, Madam Speaker. We all want to minimize the carnage on our highways throughout the province. One of the – well, the most dangerous form of transportation, of course, is on our highways versus trains or versus buses or versus aircraft.

We certainly want to minimize it, but there can be some unintended consequences to any legislation, and I think we see kind of a glaring example here in this piece of legislation when we talk about the people who might be captured by this increase in penalties for excessive speeding, who are travelling through what would be called transition zones, coming off an exit ramp from an Alberta highway – these are going to be divided highways, Madam Speaker – and entering into a lower speed zone to perhaps transition to another highway. Quite often we don't know exactly the lengths of those ramps transitioning from the highway speed, which is currently at 110, to the 80 kilometres or less of the area of speed that you might be going to to get to the next highway.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

These are what we might call fishing holes, Madam Speaker, and Albertans, of course, are rightly concerned about photoradar and the use of it. It's been called a cash cow by our former transportation minister Mason when he was the minister in the NDP government. We want to avoid sort of replicating some things like that, where

we use a transition zone as a means of capturing people who otherwise might, you know, not be breaking the law with any malice; they just didn't slow down in time to get onto the off-ramp and transition to the next highway that they were travelling to.

That may be an unintended consequence, Madam Speaker, and I don't bring this up just as a matter of bringing something out of thin air. I have already mentioned in the House once about travelling in Australia, driving a camper van down the east coast of Australia, and coming home to find in the mail some rather large speeding tickets, two of them, that happened in transition zones. I recall seeing the lights flash on the photoradar unit that was in a vehicle that was parked in that transition zone, and I certainly know and recall exactly those two incidents because I was making a normal effort to slow down, and before I knew it, I was barely off the main highway onto the roundabout or to the off-ramp, the cloverleaf, to get onto the next highway, and, boom, the photoradar went off, and a ticket resulted twice. Luckily, they were reduced because I happened to be a visitor, but in the mail the ticket that I got was, like, 750 bucks for each infraction, so that would have been a significant amount of money.

We can capture tourists who are maybe not as familiar with our roadways innocently not slowing down quick enough when perhaps on a short exit ramp transitioning from the high-speed two-lane highway to a smaller highway and ending up with a ticket that will be super hefty and perhaps an immediate suspension of their licence or impounding of their vehicle. That's one of the situations off the top, Madam Speaker, that I'd like the member promoting this legislation to consider when looking at the sort of blanket application of new penalties and deterrents for individuals who would be speeding, especially at high, excessive rates.

The UCP members, Madam Speaker, seem to be sort of at crosspurposes on a couple of their pieces of legislation, particularly private members' bills. They seem to be a little confused about what their policy should be in relation to higher speeds on highways. They're driving, as one might say, in opposite directions on this. The reason that I say that is that earlier in 2021 another private member brought forward a bill, Bill 213, and it sought to actually increase highway speeds on Alberta's double highways, two-lane highways, from 110 kilometres an hour to 120 kilometres an hour, implying that perhaps speed wasn't a contributing factor to decreased public safety. The member who brought that forward, the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, kind of argued or implied that the higher speed would actually be an improvement to public safety because individuals were going that speed anyways, and they might as well just raise the speed limit.

That is in contrast to what we see here before us today, Madam Speaker, where Bill 203 is very clearly stating that, of course, speed contributes to higher danger on the highways and endangers public safety. I wish the UCP members just might get it straight when they decide upon whether they're going to be suggesting speed injures and kills or whether it actually harms the public and public safety. I think the public kind of gets it, but there is that element of confusion in the two pieces of legislation brought forward by private members regarding the impact of speeding on our highways. That as an aside, I think it's a pretty well-accepted doctrine that higher speeds contribute to higher rates of accidents.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have so much to say. It's going to be hard to say everything in 10 minutes. With the permission of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge I hope I can help to answer some of these questions, and I want to thank you very much for bringing this bill forward.

We're not talking, Madam Speaker, about a 10-kilometre increase on the highway; we're talking about in excess of 40 kilometres an hour in an 80-kilometre zone. In fact, I believe, yes, on page 3 of the bill, that when section 158 is amended, it's specifically speaking about the \$5,000 fine if you're driving at a speed of "40 kilometres per hour over a maximum speed limit that is 80 kilometres [an] hour or less."

We're not talking about a couple of kilometres here. This isn't a cash grab for speeding or for tourists that don't happen to understand the legislation. This is, like, excessive speeding. Excessive. Significantly different. Bill 213, that was brought forward by the member from Spruce Grove, was talking about increasing the highway speeds by 10 kilometres an hour. To the point, I mean, I drive that highway pretty much every week, like the rest of you. I'm fairly certain I don't stay at 110 kilometres an hour consistently on that highway, to be truthful.

I thought I would add my voice to this simply because – I'm very grateful for this piece of legislation – this is about prevention. This \$5,000 fine is added on to fines that already exist. This is a higher fine, and as the Member for Calgary-Falconridge was speaking about, this is actually about preventing deaths, Madam Speaker. This isn't a couple of kilometres over.

I would like to just address – the Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about fishing holes. I don't understand how 40 kilometres an hour over an 80-kilometre zone is in any way a fishing hole. That's not a fishing hole. It's criminal. To that point, the deaths that happen – the member had already relayed some of the numbers of the deaths that happen as a result of collisions. I want to give, actually, a few personal examples just to help illustrate why this legislation is necessary. Like I said, I just need to repeat that these aren't fishing holes. This isn't a cash grab. This is excessive speeding.

For example, not only are we engaging in education about that, but you add alcohol and drugs to this whole scenario, and in fact this excessive speeding and stunting happens when the roads are actually fairly empty. It happens between 11 p.m. and 3 in the morning. This is when the deaths are happening, and they're happening to our young people.

I'm a parent of a 24- and a 26-year-old. I remember when they got their drivers' licences how excited they were but having that conversation around, you know, speeding. This is a completely – completely – different conversation. We're looking at a 22.3 per cent fatality amongst drivers that are travelling at these speeds; 22.3 per cent.

4:30

This is not a fishing hole, Madam Speaker. This is about prevention of death and also making sure that we're engaging with the demographic that is actually finding themselves either – I mean, the folks that are involved in this excessive speeding: it's not only them. Their friends are dying. There's injury, criminality. Should they choose to do anything else in their lives and have these charges against them for the rest of their lives, particularly when they're young, it could impact everything that they do in the future.

I actually am so grateful for this legislation, to the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, because it's not only about the fine; it's actually about education. You cannot change anything if you don't have preventative measures in there to make sure that there are serious consequences for this behaviour.

In Chestermere, in fact, in my riding of Chestermere-Strathmore, there was a police officer monitoring speeds on range road 284, which is just near, actually, where I live. I don't know if the member remembers this. We share some roads between the rural constituency that I'm in and the city constituency that he's in. They caught a driver going double the limit, weaving in and out of traffic. By the time that they were able to monitor the top speed of 205 kilometres per hour – the vehicle was actually tracked at 199 kilometres per hour when he

was arrested and pulled over. Not a fishing hole, Madam Speaker; serious, serious speed violations. Fortunately, thank goodness, nobody was hurt in this, but Sergeant Bowman himself said that travelling at these speeds is outrageous and not only shows a wanton disregard for their own safety but other members of the public, and it could have ended extremely tragically.

I was just speaking, actually, to a dear friend here in the Legislature, who was just telling me a story. He was called to a case where excessive speeding ended up with them hitting somebody at a traffic light. The car exploded, and the people inside that vehicle passed away from the fire. He was there. He was on the scene. He saw it. Not a fishing hole, not an accidental tourist, not a few kilometres over the speeding limit but excessive speed, a massive difference. And it's written in the legislation. To the member again: thank you so much for clarity in this legislation.

This is about safety and a duty to care but also about educating all of us about what our responsibilities are when we take a vehicle out on the road. Vehicles are weapons when used the wrong way. There are many opportunities whereby – I don't think we realize, when we get behind a vehicle, the amount of weight and metal and steel and power and speed that you have at your fingertips. I'm 52. I've been driving for a really, really long time. There's absolutely no way I could handle those levels of speed, and I've been driving for a really long time. Full disclosure, Madam Speaker: I'm a rural kid. I've been driving a truck since I was 12, out in a field, picking up rocks. Thank God there were no humans or anybody else other than gophers out in these fields, because I probably didn't have the capacity to do that. Those were the things that we did when we were younger, hauling stuff around when we were working out on the farm.

Out on those back roads, the gravel roads out in my area, holy moly, we could get our cars up to some pretty high speeds, but fortunately for us – and this happened when I was 17. I would have been 17, yeah. We were actually pulled over by a police officer – in the rural areas by the RCMP – because the fellow that I was with that day was driving at excessive speeds. We were pulled over. Not only did he have a discussion with us, but the driver of the vehicle was forced to watch – there was a movie back in the day that we used to have to watch when we were kids that showed what happened when there was excessive speed or bad driving or alcohol and drugs involved with all of this. He was actually made to watch this movie to understand the consequences of his behaviour should he actually impact somebody else, hit another vehicle, a curb, a side, anything. In my area there are loose animals all the time, all sorts of livestock in the middle of the roads.

If we don't start here, where we have preventative measures, where we have the opportunity – losing \$5,000 is nothing compared to losing your life or another person's life or having a criminal record. Every year we have so many people who are so excited to have passed their drivers' licences, and it's so exciting, but we have a responsibility to make sure that that independence doesn't lead us towards death and destruction also. We have a responsibility to make sure that folks are protected.

According to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police 40 per cent of speeding drivers are in that young group. As the member had said earlier, this isn't about pointing fingers at a particular demographic; these are the actual statistics. So what is it that we need to do to inspire change? Not only do we need to talk to our kids about the privilege they have of being out on the road, but if we want to keep them safe, we need to make sure that there are really heavy-duty consequences. Again, it's not meaning that it's just that demographic. It's not. There are lots of people who are doing this, but we are losing our youth. These are our future leaders. These are people that might end up in this House one day. We want

to make sure that they're safe to be able to do that, but we also want to make sure that the laws of the land have severe enough consequences and penalties that, hopefully, it doesn't happen in the first place.

I'm very, very proud of my friend the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for bringing this forward and holding up that commitment. I know that you've been talking about a lot of other work that you're going to be doing along with consultation, particularly with the youth, because they need to know what it is that you're doing, and you need to be able to hear from them. I was really happy to hear about that, so thank you so much.

I just would like to share a few numbers, Madam Speaker, with you as I have a few minutes left here. In 2019 233 Albertans were killed and 15,364 were injured in traffic accidents. Out of 132,000 collisions, 120,000, 91 per cent, involved property damage; 11,700 had nonfatal injuries; and 215 people died. Between 2015 and 2019 80 per cent of those fatalities were from those collisions.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Honoured to rise and speak to Bill 203. Just a couple of things that I do want to clarify with the member. Again, we're only in second reading, so these are more questions and comments than they are anything else.

I represent the northeast, similar to the member opposite. Obviously, the writer of the bill is in Calgary, I'm in Edmonton, but our areas are similar. Now, something that happens in my riding is that if you're coming off the Anthony Henday and onto Manning freeway, it is 100 kilometres an hour on Anthony Henday. The minute you hit the exit to merge onto Manning freeway, it drops to 70. So what my colleague was trying to explain is that that's a trap, right? Like, that is the concern in the context of: if it was decided that photo enforcement sits there – which they do quite often, to be fair. They're there a lot because it's an immediate drop, right? Many people will get speeding tickets there often.

Now, the problem with this piece of legislation is that now, if they are not immediately hitting that 70, right in there, they're on that cusp. So let's say that the speed limit is 100 but they were going 110, and they're slowing down to get into that 70 zone. If they don't do it immediately when they hit that exit, they would be in this category of excess speed. They would lose their vehicle, they would get a \$5,000 fine, and all of the things would happen. So the question that I would have about that – like, again, that's my intersection; I know that intersection quite well; I hear about it all the time – is: what is the protection for the Albertan in that specific zone, where it becomes such an immediate drop?

I appreciate that what the member is trying to get at is that we're looking at people who are, let's say, within the city of Edmonton where the speed limit is 40 kilometres or 60 kilometres, which is also within my area, and people are going 120 when it's 60 kilometres an hour. But it's because they've come off the freeway and made a right-hand turn onto 167th, which is right there. There are no lights to slow them down, and they just whip right through.

And, as the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore was saying, I do have – and I hear about it often from my northeast police division – individuals who are at 3 o'clock in the morning or at 1 o'clock in the morning drag racing down 167th because there are no lights to slow everybody down, and they're going excessive, like 130, 140 in a 60. That is a fundamental problem. I don't disagree with what the member is saying, but to reinforce what my colleague was saying, there are also these weird pockets in the city where this could potentially become a problem. So the question is: what are the protections around that?

**4:40**

Now, the other piece that I'm curious about is that the act as it's currently written actually speaks to 50 kilometres an hour, and the member has chosen to drop it to 40 kilometres an hour. I'm curious as to why the drop and why there isn't a consistency with 50 kilometres an hour of excessive speed. The reason that I'm asking that is because if we look at what is currently drafted within the legislation, if an Albertan is getting a speeding ticket over 50 kilometres an hour, they automatically get a pink ticket and they automatically have a mandatory court appearance. If they don't appear, a warrant can be out for their arrest for failure to appear, and then six demerits will exist and a possible licence suspension and fines in excess of \$2,300. That's consistent if you're going 50 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. That's no different than a residential area or a highway, right?

What we're seeing within this piece of legislation as it's written now: it says that if it's an 80-kilometre zone or less and you're going 40 kilometres over, all of a sudden the fines go to \$5,000, there's an immediate seizure of your vehicle, and a couple of other things. The struggle with that is that it's not consistent with how the act currently reads. So you could be going down the Queen Elizabeth II highway at, like, 180 and not have your vehicle seized. You won't get the same amount of fine and – well, you still get the same demerits. Demerits are the consistent part within these two pieces of legislation. But they're inconsistent from highway driving to residential driving. So although, again, I do appreciate what the member is saying, I do think that we have to figure out a way to address the fact that people are burning through residential zones.

I have a park right by my house. The park is 30 kilometres an hour, and you see people whipping through there at, like, 60. It's ridiculous. Kids are swinging on the swings and chasing balls, and the next thing you know someone is going to get run over at the crosswalk. That is the problem, and I don't disagree with what the member is saying. That is a problem. But the question is: how are we doing the enforcement? The reality of it is that in those school zones or those playgrounds I don't actually see a lot of enforcement happening. I don't see my local department having a vehicle there every day enforcing what is going on. So how do you enforce this new piece? Like, you can write the legislation and you can say that these are the issues, but it's the enforcement component as well.

If the member is trying to address the issues in residential areas, that we're worried about kids getting run over, all of those things, like, I worry about that all the time. I have a school that is built in the worst intersection ever, where we've talked about lights and all the things and speed bumps and: how do we slow people down? The way our communities are built is that they're just like these straight drag racing opportunities because it's: how do you get people in and out of their communities? There is a planning and building of communities that is kind of the conversation and then the speed. But how do you reinforce it? Unless you're going to have a police officer sitting at these parks and these school zones every day, people are still going to be whipping through there because there isn't an issue or a consequence to those problems. So there's that piece.

I agree that maybe there isn't sufficient signage, right? In the city of Edmonton the assumption is that unless you see a sign that's marked a different speed, you should go 40. Well, when you're on a main thoroughfare of a major avenue that runs east to west, people aren't going 40. It's actually maybe a 60 zone, but you don't see a speed sign. You know, it could be 20 blocks before there's, like: oh, here's the speed zone for the day. There's, I think, some of that conversation that needs to happen around the infrastructure piece.

But my biggest concern is the inconsistency between the penalties. If I'm on a freeway and I am going 180 in a 120 zone, the only penalty I'm going to face is a pink slip that requires me to go to court, and if I don't show up, there'll be a warrant. The fact that the six demerits are the same but that there may be a possible licence suspension and that the fine is \$2,300 if you're on a highway – so if you're 80 kilometres or less and you're not following municipal rules, you actually have a significantly higher penalty. The issue is that both of those are bad driving skills, and both of those could cause fatalities, and both of those things are a problem, but it's inconsistent. I guess my question to the member – and I'm happy to hear this as we move into Committee of the Whole – is: is there a way to align the legislation to ensure that the penalties are consistent between both? If you're on the highway, you get the same penalty as you would if you're a residential driver.

Also, I do believe it is a bigger discussion around residential issues. I have a significant concern in my community about how they're widening one of my roads. We have repeatedly had EPS officers arresting people going 130 down that avenue, and the city has decided to widen it because the traffic flow – there are so many new neighbourhoods; there are so many people driving down it. Well, it's counterintuitive in a way because if it's narrower, people have to naturally slow down, right? You have to slow. Do people get annoyed because it takes forever to get down the avenue? Yeah. Is it safer? Probably, right?

What they are doing now, in fairness to the city, because we should be fair, is that they're putting lights, but the lights are going to be, like, every .5 of a kilometre, so you're going to hit a light, and then you're going to hit another light, and then you're going to hit another light. That's probably going to irritate people just as much as the narrowing of the road. Like, I'm not a city planner, so I should be cautious around this, but . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'd like to air my road frustrations as well. I'm enjoying this debate.

Are there others to join? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 203, the excessive speeding penalties act. I'd like to, first of all, thank the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for bringing this important issue to the Chamber. Like many have spoken about today, including the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, you know, many of us see every day or hear every day excessive speeding. I guess that's one of the reasons I'm standing up to speak today, because in my riding we hear excessive speeding many, many, many times, particularly in the summer and the spring and early fall.

Where my constituency is located, I have a lovely racetrack, actually. It consists of the ring road, and then it consists of 90th Avenue, and then it consists of 24th Street, and then it consists of Anderson Road. Many do circuits on those roads, and I think, Madam Speaker, you may have been chatting with me on the phone one night when you heard that particular noise. It's that loud, and it's annoying. Everybody will admit – you know, you hear those mufflers, you hear the excessive speed, and it's really annoying.

But I'll tell you what. As annoying as it is, I can't imagine being that family member who gets the phone call the night when the race goes wrong; you get the phone call that your loved one is at the hospital or arrived at the hospital and has passed away. Sadly, too often street racing is undertaken by younger people, and we know the statistics. We've heard all the statistics today. We were all young once. We know how much we like to challenge our limits,

you know, push the envelope, and that's all well and good until something goes wrong.

I know that there are a lot of folks who put a lot of time and money into perfecting their vehicles in order to undertake some of this street racing, but it's not a sport. If it is a sport that someone wants to participate in, they need to go to a racetrack, but our roads and our neighbourhoods are not racetracks. Unfortunately, there are those that undertake speed racing. They do treat it as some sort of a sport, and they put a lot of time and effort and money into it, and then they undertake it on our streets and on our highways.

4:50

I will say that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has raised a good point today about trying to understand how we can make the legislation consistent so that it is applicable on highways as well as roads. But in my riding I will tell you that they literally do circuits from a highway onto city streets in my neighbourhood, back onto a highway again, so I am particularly interested in seeing if we can make it more consistent.

But to say that we don't have racing within our city streets – we do. Sadly, you know, there are occasions, I am sure, where there are narrow misses of pedestrians, maybe taking a little shortcut to the 7-Eleven in the middle of the night across a boulevard, and it's too late. This is very much a safety concern. It's also about ensuring that those families out there don't lose a loved one.

Honestly, I don't know how we get through to people other than making the penalties so stiff that they actually might pay attention. Perhaps that does mean having the vehicle towed away to an impound lot. Maybe that's what it takes – sadly, I don't want to see it take a death or a life-changing injury to convince somebody to stop street racing – maybe that driver's licence suspension that's going to keep you from going to work the next day, maybe having the vehicle towed and impounded. Certainly, \$5,000 is a pretty big chunk of change for most people. Maybe that will help people understand that street racing is the wrong thing to do.

But I think the intent of this legislation is very good. I think maybe the member will be willing to work on an amendment to help us align it for highway and city streets. But I will say this as well. You know, I know that for some, having an excessive speed ticket that results in, potentially, a record is very harmful for people, but if you're doing 40-over in a school zone when kids are present – I'm not sure. Maybe somebody needs to learn a lesson there. I would hope – I would hope – that it wouldn't take too many instances of that before somebody understands.

At any rate, I won't repeat much of what's been said today except to say again: thank you to the Member for Calgary-Falconridge. I really do hope that we can ensure that we take some meaningful action to ensure that street racing comes to an end in this province and certainly, I would hope, in my own riding.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I will be offering some cautions, but I wanted it clear at the outset that I will be supporting the bill because of the reasons that have been spoken about by so many people: the danger to members of our society and particularly, as we're learning, young people in society who seem to be engaging in very dangerous behaviours such as stunting and racing on our city streets. Because of my concern for these young people and, well, for all of us, of course, both the participants and the unintended victims that unfortunately are likely to happen at very, very high speeds, we certainly want to do what we can to limit the likelihood of these kinds of things happening.

I do have a couple of cautions around the bill, though. It fits into the category of what I've often been concerned about with bills brought forward by the Conservative government, that the bills too often do not dig deep enough into the issues that they're trying to address. We often get bills that do a small, little piece towards something but don't actually work on the structural, underlying issues that need to be resolved in order for whatever we happen to be dealing with to be properly resolved, and I think this bill fits into that case. I have some sympathy for that. I know that private members' bills are a different case than government bills. I know that all the resources are not necessarily available to create a bill with greater depth, but I still think it's one of the things we should be doing in this House. We should be encouraging depth in problem resolution whenever we possibly can.

As such, I have some comments about this bill. I guess the thing that's most important is this question of deterrence. I know that the member who moved this bill has indicated that there's a hope that if somebody gets this kind of a fine, word will spread amongst their friends and family and that that will act as a deterrence to other people doing it. I must say that I certainly hope that's true. I would love to see that happen.

However, having, you know, been in the area of social sciences most of my life and been a researcher, I also know the research on deterrence. The research on deterrence indicates that the severity of the punishment is not a particularly effective mechanism for reducing a behaviour. We know that's generally true with regard to behaviour, that if you just keep upping and upping the cost of engaging in the bad behaviour, you don't actually tend to get – I mean, you certainly get some response. Don't let me limit it. But the amount of deterrence you get is considerably less than one might hope.

We know, for example, that there are a few other things that are much more effective. The likelihood of getting caught, for example, is often cited as something that is certainly demonstrated to have a greater deterrence effect so that you can actually keep fines small if the likelihood of being caught rises dramatically. That's a problematic area in our society. I know that when we put up speed traps, for example, people often object and say that they're just cash cows when, you know, I generally support them because they really do increase the likelihood of being caught. I think in this case that we haven't looked at that. What are some of the mechanisms that we can employ that will actually increase the likelihood of being caught?

[The Speaker in the chair]

The other thing that we need to understand from a statistics point of view is that we have a distinctive, statistically significant aberration in the commission of this illegal activity, and that is that it is not equally committed by people across the age ranges and genders. In truth, what we're seeing is that young males are significantly more likely to be engaged in this kind of behaviour, which tells us some important things here. It tells us that it is not the level of the fine that's allowing people to make the decision to engage in this type of behaviour or not. The distinctive characteristic that seems to be associated with the decision to engage in this kind of behaviour is actually gender and age rather than the level of the fine.

Therefore, we should be looking at responses that understand that and respond to this by addressing: what are the factors associated with gender and age that are contributing to the decision to engage in this kind of behaviour? We know from some of the brain research that goes on that younger people tend to make more irrational decisions than older people. They don't have the experience. Their brain is not fully developed, and they may not even have the mechanisms for making those kinds of decisions. We know that

males tend to also make more dangerous decisions than females. One of the things I would have liked to have seen in this act is something attached to the government's attempts to reduce speeding and stunting by addressing the kinds of things that may be associated with those factors, so that would probably mean some kind of education or relationship process.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but time for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### COVID-19 Vaccines

502. Mr. Shepherd moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly is of the view that COVID-19 vaccines are a prudent and necessary tool that allowed the economy to open more fully in 2021 and the ongoing use of these vaccines supports public health and safety and the full operation of the economy and the education system; and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) affirm its trust in the science-based research, including research and vaccine development here in Alberta, that led to the creation of COVID-19 vaccines and that has saved the lives of tens of thousands of Albertans, and
- (b) reject claims that COVID-19 vaccines are bioweapons.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I'm guessing that there will be those who will claim that the motion I'm bringing forward today is divisive, that it's intended solely to play political games. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised to see a government member rise and perhaps argue that shortly after I take my seat. But the fact is that there is good reason to question where members of this government, particularly the Premier, stand on the question of the COVID-19 vaccine. As noted by columnist Rob Breakenridge, shortly after the Premier declared that those who chose not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 were, and I quote: the most discriminated against group that I have ever witnessed in my lifetime. As Mr. Breakenridge noted, the Premier had not yet and still has not yet addressed any of her previous social media posts or statements on vaccination, "which included false and dangerous claims like 'the mRNAs had no obvious effect on COVID deaths and may have actually increased deaths from other causes.'"

In videos posted online, the Premier endorsed avowedly antivaccine groups like Vaccine Choice Canada, a group that has spread the discredited hypothesis that vaccinations cause autism and claimed that COVID-19 vaccines aren't necessary, as well as Taking Back Our Freedoms, whose board was advised by Paul Alexander, whose claim that the COVID-19 vaccine is a bioweapon is noted here in the motion before us. The Premier, at a forum during the recent by-election, stated that her anonymous, unknown group of medical advisers had invited Mr. Alexander for a consultation and that she was, I quote, interested in hearing what he had to say.

So, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have good reason to question just where the Premier stands regarding the science of vaccination, particularly regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and particularly given the current crisis in pediatric care as a wave of respiratory illness is sweeping through children in our province, leading to overwhelming pressure on children's hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary. This wave is driven by three respiratory viruses: influenza,

COVID-19, and RSV. For two of them we have safe vaccines that are scientifically proven to be effective in protecting against and reducing the spread of illness.

Unfortunately, the current rate of vaccination against influenza in Alberta is only just over 20 and a half per cent. While children under five and seniors are two of the groups at highest risk of serious complications due to influenza, just 12.7 per cent of children between the ages of six months and four years and 57 per cent of seniors have had their dose. The immunization target, Mr. Speaker, for both those groups is 80 per cent.

Now, clearly, we need leadership from public health, but sadly we have none. That, again, is due to the Premier's decision to leverage conspiracy and misinformation in her campaign to lead the UCP, targeting the boards of AHS and the College of Physicians & Surgeons and the former chief medical officer of health, accusing them of being lawless, blaming them for the damage done by the COVID-19 pandemic and this government's mismanagement of it. That's what prompted former AHS board member Tony Dagnone, appointed and removed by this UCP government, to speak out regarding the Premier's "dangerous rhetoric" designed to "play to her misguided followers who rant against science and academic medicine" and who warned that if the Premier "persists in vocalizing false, conspiratorial and unfounded claims, she will be responsible for putting healthcare providers, and Albertans needlessly in harms-way."

That is precisely the situation we face today as doctors, nurses, and other front-line staff at Alberta's children's hospitals are forced to beg this government to take real action to protect children in our province and ease the unprecedented pressure on the health care system, actions including increased public messaging around the safety and efficacy of influenza and COVID-19 vaccines in children to create awareness of their importance in decreasing severe outcomes and hospitalization as well as increased accessibility to vaccines, especially amongst marginalized populations, by offering school vaccine clinics or mobile vaccine services, increased messaging, Mr. Speaker, which I'm sure the minister will stand and say: indeed, we have increased our messaging.

Let's be clear. These pediatricians spoke out last week, so unless the minister has done something striking between then and now, there is work to be done. Now, increased messaging, Mr. Speaker, is a simple ask that would be well within the purview and the mandate of the chief medical officer of health, but it's been 300 days since Albertans last saw a CMOH stand at a podium and speak to the province.

Indeed, it's clear just how unseriously the Premier and the Health minister take the role of the CMOH. After they fired the previous individual, they chose to replace her with a volunteer who already holds another full-time job, a volunteer they seem studiously intent on keeping out of sight, allowing him only the occasional statement by letter and text. In the words of Dr. Paul Parks:

Seriously: while a tridemic is overflowing our EDs and hospitals, and truly harming our children, does it make sense to place our [CMOH] role on the side of the desk of an already extremely busy physician [with] a full time job already? And [with] no deputies to help?

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the two deputy chief medical officers of health have resigned in the face of the challenge they face with this Premier.

Dr. Parks goes on to say:

And this is not a criticism of the person chosen.

Indeed, I am not criticizing Dr. Joffe; neither is Dr. Parks. He says: I don't think anybody could add the job to an already full time position and be successful.

What does this say about current priority for public health?  
Is it worse to pretend like this even seems reasonable?

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this government has spent more time and resources trying to promote their job-killing sovereignty act than they have encouraging and supporting Albertans to get vaccinated against viruses that are impacting tens of thousands of children across the province and crippling our pediatric health care system to the point that nurses were speaking of black Sunday, a recent day when the Alberta Children's hospital was so overwhelmed, they were worried a child could die in the waiting room.

Mr. Speaker, in jurisdictions around the world it's become an annual tradition. Indeed, it has been here in Alberta. Celebrities, community leaders, political leaders, leaders of all stripes: they take a moment to take a picture of themselves either receiving or having just received the influenza vaccine or, indeed we saw during COVID, the COVID vaccine. They post it to social media. They talk about it to the press. It's a moment of celebration of the wonders of science and the importance of each doing our part to protect ourselves and others.

I'm pretty sure every Premier of our province as well as ministers and MLAs have done this for well over a decade, but this year our Premier can't even muster a simple endorsement of flu vaccination in front of a microphone. She has refused to do so several times in this House, and as noted, she spread misinformation and doubt about mRNA vaccines, going so far as to travel to the U.S. to get the Johnson & Johnson viral vector vaccine. She spoke publicly about that, so it's not disclosing private information. Mr. Speaker, when you undermine confidence in one vaccine, you undermine confidence in all of them, like the influenza vaccine. Indeed, we saw the Premier do exactly that at a press conference a few weeks ago. She was asked if she would recommend the influenza vaccine for children. She instead talked about: well, really, it's only 50 per cent effective, and, hey, people are always going to get sick, so the important thing is just to make sure that they can get Tylenol. So her record is clear.

With this motion I am providing the opportunity for each MLA in this House to make their own record clear and show whether they stand with science and for public health, whether they stand in support of our front-line health care workers. Will they stand against the growing scourge of deliberate, intentional misinformation and delusional conspiracy theory that threatens to continue to undermine our public health care system and the very principles of public health that allow our society and our economy to function?

There is no prosperity without a commitment to science and robust public health. Mr. Speaker, I encourage every member of this House to support this motion today for the sake of the province, our health care system, our economic prospects, the health of the most vulnerable, and for the sake of our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:10

**The Speaker:** Motion Other than Government Motion 502. The hon. Health minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for putting this motion forward. There's no doubt that vaccines have fundamentally changed the course of health care. They've been integral to the development of the field of public health from the start because identifying the source of communicable diseases and how they're transmitted goes hand in hand with developing effective measures to stop transmission and help protect people from infection.

Arguably, the biggest step forward came with the creation of the smallpox vaccine, and since then, one by one, the threats of tetanus, diphtheria, rubella, meningitis, measles, polio, influenza were all

greatly diminished through the study and development of vaccines. Today parents can choose to give their children routine childhood immunizations to protect against all these illnesses, along with the annual flu vaccine, Mr. Speaker. Vaccines have changed the course of human history several times over. They contributed to the dramatic increase in life expectancy that we all take for granted today, together with advances in sanitation and other areas of health care, especially care during pregnancy and care for newborns and infants.

Here in Alberta today immunization has an important role in public health, just as it does around the world. It is one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions we have, Mr. Speaker. I've mentioned our children's routine immunization schedule, which helps protect them from childhood through to later in life, and our schedule begins as an infant and continues through the teenage years given the importance. These routine childhood shots have almost eliminated diphtheria and tetanus, just to take two examples.

Mr. Speaker, simply put, vaccines work. They've served us well for decades, and they've shown their value again in the past two years in helping us manage through the COVID pandemic. COVID vaccines have worked to reduce the toll that the pandemic took on our families and our communities, and by making these vaccines available, we had another tool to help manage through the pandemic. Over the past two years COVID vaccines were offered to the most vulnerable people first but eventually to all Albertans age six months and older, and we continue to offer COVID vaccines to Albertans, particularly as different forms of the vaccines are developed. We have continued to make them available to Albertans, and we will continue to do so.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, today's COVID vaccines are not the same as the ones that were first available when they first came out over two years ago, and that is why it is important to continue researching and developing so that we can prepare for whatever future disease may hit us or as COVID evolves. Alberta has tremendous research and health professionals, and we have a role to play in global efforts to get ready for the future.

We also need to take matters into our own hands so that we are less reliant on companies and countries elsewhere. That's why just over a year ago our government announced funding to grow our pharmaceutical and life sciences sector. We are investing up to \$81 million to fund four vaccine development projects right here in our province of Alberta. The impetus for this investment was our pandemic experience, and our support for science is real.

Ultimately, though, vaccination is a personal choice. COVID vaccines are being made available by the Alberta government today, Mr. Speaker, as a choice, and our government will continue to make vaccines available to Albertans in the future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. If the hon. minister would like to join in the debate, he's welcome to do so. Until then, the Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** We'll continue to support Albertans in making their choice to stay up to date on their vaccines, be it routine immunizations, COVID vaccines, or influenza, Mr. Speaker.

I'll step aside, because I know – just to respond to the hon. member across the way talking about flu vaccines, Mr. Speaker, we have been very supportive of flu vaccines. In fact, over the last two weeks we've increased the rate of flu vaccinations by 3 and a half per cent. We are in the middle of running a campaign here in this province to support vaccines and support Albertans in making the choice to get vaccinated, and we will continue to do so as we are running a campaign on flu vaccines so we can support not only

Albertans in managing through the flu season but also to support the tremendous job that our front-line workers are doing across our entire health care system, particularly in the children's hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to come back to this particular motion. You know, our government has been making COVID vaccines available. We will continue to support Albertans in making their choice to get access to COVID vaccines, and we'll continue to make COVID vaccines available and support Albertans in making their choice.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask members of this House to support this motion.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Motion Other Than Government Motion 502, and I'm happy to hear, from what I can tell from the minister, that at least the minister will be supporting this. We'll see how the Premier votes on this. Again, just looking at what we see in this motion, I think that it's pretty straightforward. In terms of understanding and reflecting on the fact that the COVID-19 vaccines are prudent and a necessary tool that allowed our economy to open more fully in 2021 and onward, the fact is that, you know, without this, of course, this tool through this pandemic, we would have found ourselves in a much different situation.

I would argue that if we had the Premier that we have now – as I reflect back, even though I had many, many concerns with the past one, I might even find myself more worried if this current Premier was the Premier at the time. Just looking back on a few of the comments that have really undermined our public health system and our public health officials, some comments from our current Premier, of course, a comment that was made – and eventually they came back and, you know, after being proven wrong, apologized and deleted the comments that they had made, so I'm thankful for that, I guess, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is that once you release these kinds of statements into the public and, again, undermine our public health care system and our health research, science-based research, as is listed in this motion, it's really hard to come back from that.

Again, the quote that I have before me: "Hydroxychloroquine cures 100% of coronavirus patients within 6 days of treatment." That was a comment that was made by our now Premier, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's truly disappointing. I don't think that we've seen much learning on the Premier's behalf when it comes to undermining science-based research and undermining the vaccine efficacy, and it's truly unfortunate. Further, we also heard the current Premier talk about the use of ivermectin as a coronavirus, or COVID-19, treatment, again, another circumstance that continues to be unapproved, first of all. But this idea of using ivermectin as a COVID-19 treatment has been discredited and debunked.

Now we find ourselves in a situation in the middle of flu season, of course, compounded with all of the other illnesses and diseases that we're dealing with, including COVID-19, and all the critic for Health and the NDP opposition have asked this Premier to do is simply make a statement saying that they believe in the efficacy of the flu vaccine, that Albertans should go out and get the flu vaccine.

The previous speaker, the minister, brought up the point around mandated vaccines. Nothing in this motion is pointing towards that, so it was interesting that the minister felt that necessary to bring forward. I thought that that was going to be followed by the minister saying that they didn't plan on supporting this motion, but thankfully that wasn't the case. Again, I hope that we do see all government members, including the Premier, supporting this.

Now, the other piece, of course, within this motion is rejecting claims that COVID-19 vaccines are bioweapons. It really goes back to the decisions that this Premier has made to invite certain conspiracy theorists to provide information, to provide guidance to this Premier and to this government, in respect to Paul Alexander, and I think that it should be pretty straightforward that these are not the types of people that we should be expecting or looking to for medical guidance, medical information.

Looking back at other – I believe it was during the leadership process of the current Premier and the UCP government that we saw this Premier again blaming both Alberta Health Services as well as the previous chief medical officer of health, Deena Hinshaw, for giving bad advice and execution through the pandemic. Of course, that eventually led, when this Premier became the Premier, to firing that chief medical officer of health. I think that the Health critic laid out a very reasonable and clear timeline of what has happened since then, with the subsequent hiring of a voluntary chief medical officer, the resigning of the two deputies. We find ourselves in a very unfortunate situation.

5:20

The fact is that with our last chief medical officer of health, Deena Hinshaw, we heard again and again that that position was there to provide advice to this government, and it was up to the government and this Health minister to take that advice or to not take it. I guess, Mr. Speaker – I can't necessarily claim to know – it seemed in some circumstances that this government was not necessarily following the advice that was given to them, very likely going against many of the decisions that were made by that chief medical officer of health at the time.

The fact is that the decisions that were made through that process lay squarely at the feet of this UCP government, lay squarely at the feet of this Health minister, so it's interesting that with all of the attacks the Premier has done on our health care system and the previous decisions of politicians in this province and, through them, the chief medical officers, they decided to keep the same person in that role. I'm interested to find out why, again, we have a Premier attacking those decisions but not necessarily making changes to structures or designs that were in place at that time and likely made some decisions that were not necessarily the best ones.

Now, there is just so much to be said on this, Mr. Speaker. I, again, fully support the motion that has been brought forward. I thank the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and the critic for Health within our caucus for bringing it forward. I think that it should be very easy for all members to support this motion because at the end of the day the effectiveness of vaccines – through COVID-19 and through several flu seasons every single year it is very clear that these vaccines are effective, that we should do everything in our power to not undermine the effectiveness of vaccines, that we should be doing everything in our power to encourage those to make the choice to get them.

I think, with that, Mr. Speaker, again I would just thank the member for bringing those forward. I would encourage the Premier to stand up in this House and support this motion, speak to this motion, and, further to that, make it very clear to the general public that they as the Premier and as a citizen believe in the efficacy of the flu vaccine, among other vaccines as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join in the debate? Seeing the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a second I thought that somebody from the other side will speak, so I was willing to wait

and hear them and then speak, but while I am now on my feet, I will speak to Motion 502, proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, which essentially is asking this Legislature and this government to say unequivocally that they trust in science-based research, including the research and development of vaccines, and reject the claims of conspiracy theorists that vaccines are bioweapons.

We do know that science has settled that vaccines are the most important way to keep Albertans healthy, in particular as the spread of respiratory illness is on the rise. We're grateful to every Albertan over the period of the last two years who stepped up to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and played a role in ensuring that we remain open, our economy remains open, and Albertans – fellow Albertans, their neighbours – remain healthy. Now that our health system is under strain and in particular children's hospitals have seen a huge rise in workload because of respiratory illnesses, we must send a strong message to all Albertans that it's important that they receive vaccines and that vaccines do work.

When we were going through the COVID-19 pandemic, I remember that former Premier Jason Kenney once blamed people in northeast Calgary for spreading COVID-19 without any basis whatsoever. I think that most people living in northeast Calgary, living in my riding, were in the kinds of jobs that they were not able to do from home. They were mostly front-line people working in hospitals, working in retail, working in transportation, the kinds of jobs that you would not be able to do from home. Then Premier Kenney blamed them, that they were spreading COVID-19, which he never apologized for. But afterward people in my riding, people in northeast Calgary came together, and they worked on making sure that people got vaccines. Now, as a result of that work, where many organizations, including AHS, were involved, northeast Calgary has a 99.9 per cent vaccination rate. That's huge.

Now, if they will hear from the Premier of this government that somehow vaccines are bioweapons and, instead of getting the COVID-19 vaccine, they could have used hydroxychloroquine, that doesn't send a very good message. That is disrespectful to all those people who stepped up and got a vaccine. So I do want to stress that the words that we say, the words that people in positions of power say, do influence public opinion, and we should be very careful when we say such words.

Not only that, in the last week or so while I was here in question period, the Premier was asked more than three times, I believe, just to simply get up and encourage Albertans to get a flu vaccine. I think that was too much for the Premier to say. Not once – not once – did the Premier get up and state that simple fact, that vaccines are good, that people should talk to their doctors and make their choice. Instead, the Premier is saying that they won't defer to experts anymore. Also, when this government will bring in people like Paul Alexander, when this government will legitimize the work of people like Paul Alexander, a conspiracy theorist who has called vaccines a bioweapon, that doesn't send a good message.

5:30

That's why it's important that this Legislature votes in favour of this motion, which the Minister of Health has indicated they will, so that Albertans can be assured that vaccines are effective, they save lives, and Albertans should consider making that choice. We should also condemn and oppose the misinformation spread by the likes of Paul Alexander, who thinks that vaccines are bioweapons.

It's also important that we send that message because we do know that we have a crisis in children's hospitals. There are capacity issues in Lethbridge. General hospital systems are getting overwhelmed by respiratory illnesses. So passing this motion and urging Albertans to get vaccinated, get flu shots, will certainly be a



step in the right direction. It will also help us deal with the workload that our hospitals are seeing and focus more singularly on managing the crisis in health care.

Thank you. With that, I urge everyone in this House to support this motion. Use your circle of influence to urge Albertans to get flu shots. Use your influence and position of power to urge Albertans to seek expert advice, not politicians' advice, when they are in doubt about vaccines and get vaccinated. That will certainly help us address some of the strain that we are seeing in our hospitals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion 502. I've got a number of comments that I want to make. I think that the debate of this motion today is very important. I want to thank my colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre for bringing forward previous motions like this, bringing forward emergency debate resolutions that, unfortunately, in the past – we have seen over the course of the past few weeks, since the start of the fall sitting, the government refuse to engage in emergency debate around things like the crisis of our health care system, the crisis of lack of medicine for our children, which, yes, I will acknowledge that the minister and this government have secured, you know, children's medicine to come into the province, which is greatly appreciated. However, that solution doesn't address the backlog of children's surgeries.

The fact that we've seen staff in Calgary providing a critical service for children suffering, you know, unbelievable health issues, who are terminal, moving over to support other children who are critically ill: that shouldn't be the case in a province like Alberta, a province as rich as ours, a province with a once incredible health care system but that is under immense strain.

Now, the reason for this motion, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is because we've seen numerous examples where the Premier and leader of this province refused to encourage Albertans to get their vaccinations. Now, I'll acknowledge that the Minister of Health has done that. I appreciate that he has done that for the past couple of years, throughout the COVID pandemic, and now encouraging people to get their flu vaccine.

I will give a plug that – you know, for those who don't understand how flu vaccines work, our health care professionals try to anticipate the strain of the flu virus. Some years they get it bang on; some years they don't. This year, from what I've learned, our health care professionals have done an amazing job identifying the strain that is coming through. All this to say that if you get your flu shot this year, it is going to be very effective against four different strains of flu that are going to pass through our province throughout this fall and winter. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that my two-year-old daughter just got her flu shot two weeks ago and has both of her COVID shots.

The purpose behind this resolution, which, you know, we heard the Minister of Health stand up and acknowledge that he is encouraging members to vote in favour of – and that, quite honestly, was a bit of a surprise. It's very welcome news. I thank the minister for his support on this motion. Having been in this Chamber for quite some time, Mr. Speaker, as you're also well aware, it's rare that government will accept motions from the opposition and vice versa. You know, it's very exciting when those moments happen. I appreciate the Minister of Health acknowledging this, and my hope is that the Premier will also acknowledge this.

Some of my comments are going to be around the responsibility that we all have as the 87 Alberta legislators. We are in a position of leadership, a position where the public does – some look up to us, but the public does often listen to our words and what we say. You know, if we want to lead by example, if we want to be good role models, then we should be encouraging actions that will protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. The Premier, being the chief spokesperson for the province of Alberta, should be encouraging Albertans to get their flu shot and to get their COVID vaccinations. I appreciate the fact that the Premier respects every Albertan's individual choice, but encouraging people to do something that's going to protect their communities, I believe, is a responsibility of looking at the greater benefit versus just thinking of ourselves as individuals and it's my choice and I'll do what I want. Yes, but let's use our positions of influence to better our province, to better our communities.

I am hopeful. I will encourage all members to vote in favour of this motion. I think this motion will also demonstrate to our front-line health care professionals something that they've been asking this government for. I'll acknowledge that the previous Premier encouraged Albertans to get their vaccinations, standing in this Chamber.

**Mr. Sabir:** He offered a hundred dollars.

**Mr. Bilous:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Sabir:** A hundred dollars a job.

**Mr. Bilous:** Oh, right. Well, he even, yeah, offered a hundred dollars per job. That's a good point. I forgot about that one. Right. Yeah.

Well, regardless of that, the point is that there was an acknowledgement of his position and of the position of influence that we all have.

I will take my seat momentarily here, Mr. Speaker, but my hope is that, one, our Health critic will continue to hold the government to account but continue to press the Premier to use her position as Premier to influence Albertans to protect themselves, their families, and their communities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair and encourage all members of the Chamber to vote in favour of this motion and to go out, get vaccinated. Let's protect Albertans. Let's protect our economy and do what's right.

**5:40**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 502. Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. member to close debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to close debate on my motion calling for the Assembly to affirm its trust in the science-based research, including research and vaccine development here in Alberta, that led to the COVID-19 vaccine, acknowledging that it has saved the lives of tens of thousands of Albertans, and reject claims that that COVID-19 vaccine in any way is a bioweapon.

I appreciated the response from the Minister of Health, the lone response from any government member towards this motion, but I do appreciate that he recognized the history and the importance of vaccines, that he recognized that they are indeed life saving, that that includes all vaccines up to and including the COVID-19 vaccine, that he does not share the skepticism, outright misinformation that at times has been shared by the Premier. I appreciate that we have that in the Health minister's office and that indeed that is a perspective he brings.

He spoke of this government's continued work on an influenza vaccine campaign, noting they've increased by 3.5 per cent the number of vaccinations. That indeed is a good thing.

They're in the middle of a campaign, but again, Mr. Speaker, I would note it was only four days ago that the entire AMA section of pediatrics called on this government to do more. This has been a consistent pattern throughout the COVID-19 pandemic up until now, that this government chooses to act last, act least, be somewhat, shall we say, less than full throated at many times in its promotion of vaccination, walking a very careful line under the previous Premier and even more so under the current Premier, who, again, has chosen to court communities that spread outright disinformation and indeed used them to propel her into the position that she holds today. That is clear on the record, and I outlined it clearly.

I recognize that the government is making vaccines available, and certainly the Deputy Premier was very vocal in pointing out that it is an individual's choice. Indeed, it is an individual's choice, and we should be encouraging people to make that choice, not discouraging and spreading misinformation. Now, I did note that at a time this Deputy Premier came out and said that in terms of many of the public health measures that were brought forward, they were never about science but about political control and power. He thanked all those citizens, freedom convoys who had the courage to mobilize against what he called tyrannical policies.

**Mr. Madu:** Yeah. By forcing people. It's a choice.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, when we use that kind of politically charged rhetoric, we are tainting the choice people have the opportunity to make.

Let me remind this Deputy Premier that his government held a two-year, 3 and a half million dollar inquiry into anti-Alberta energy campaigns, claiming that there was disinformation about the oil industry. That is something that they thought was worth while to combat disinformation on. Of course, that report found that the organizations, individuals involved, in fact, had done nothing wrong. They just exercised their personal choice, their free speech and did not spread misinformation, but the government insisted on spending Albertans' time and money and a great deal of political hot air on combatting that because they claimed it hurt our economic interest and our reputation. Mr. Speaker, the kind of disinformation that's been supported by this Premier, that the Deputy Premier chose to skate up to in his tweet: that harms our economic interest. That hurts Alberta's reputation.

So they will stand and they will vote for this today – and I'm glad to see that – to help repair some of the damage that they have done

and that they continue to do as this Premier continues to undermine public health in the province of Alberta. The Health minister continues to support her in doing so. The Premier was very clear during her leadership campaign why she was firing the chief medical officer of health, the board of AHS, and we will see about the board of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. It's because she said they were lawless during the pandemic. It had nothing to do with improving the health care system; it had to do with her political objectives in catering to a particular base. She said it. It's on the record.

We have this motion today. I'm glad to see that the government will support it. Perhaps this will help. Indeed, I hope to see that the Premier will stand and will give full-throated support to vaccination against influenza for children, indeed for adults, for seniors in the province of Alberta and that we will see this government take the action that is being called for to help address the very serious crisis in our health care system, particularly in terms of pediatric care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Jean	Rowswell
Carson	Jones	Sabir
Copping	LaGrange	Sawhney
Eggen	Luan	Schulz
Feehan	Madu	Shepherd
Glubish	Orr	Sigurdson, R.J.
Goehring	Panda	Toor
Gotfried	Pon	Yaseen
Issik		

Totals: For – 25 Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried unanimously]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(8) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:02 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 12, 2022

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Carson  
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Dang  
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Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

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Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

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Fir  
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Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 12, 2022

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 6 Police Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be here today to move the second reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, which will ensure police in Alberta are more accountable and more responsive to the communities that they serve.

This is the first time Alberta's policing legislation has undergone substantial changes in 34 years. In that time the world and Alberta have changed, of course, dramatically. Policing has changed, too, Madam Speaker, and so have the public's expectations of the police. We've moved from having police forces with a narrow mandate to maintain law and order to having police services that still perform the vital function of keeping communities safe but do so in a much different environment. Today police are expected to involve their communities in developing approaches and solutions that we now understand to be very complex and often nuanced in public safety challenges.

Police derive their authority from having the confidence of the public that they serve, but maintaining public confidence isn't their job alone. Under the Police Act the legislated responsibility to ensure adequate policing throughout the province falls to the Alberta government. If we want our police services to be representative of the communities that they serve and respond to their needs, not just today but into the future, the provincial government has a responsibility to provide them with the framework in order to do so.

I'll now detail how the Police Amendment Act will serve this important purpose. Firstly, the legislation answers long-standing calls from a broad range of stakeholders, including the police, to reform the public complaint process. This legislation will establish an independent agency to handle complaints against the police, the police review commission. Establishing the police review commission replaces the system of police investigating police, which invites a perception of bias, with an independent body that will be responsible for receiving complaints, investigating them, and conducting any resulting disciplinary procedures.

This would make the complaints process totally independent by changing these functions from being handled in-house by police services and putting them under the authority of an arm's-length organization. By creating an independent agency to receive, investigate, and adjudicate complaints, we'll also make it easier for Albertans to access the process, stay updated on the progress of the case, and resolve their matters in a quicker fashion.

The Albert Serious Incident Response Team, which investigates deaths and serious injuries involving police services in Alberta as well as serious and sensitive allegations, would become part of the police review commission. We're proposing amendments to ensure every death and serious injury involving law enforcement is investigated independently and consistently by expanding ASIRT's

mandate to include cases involving peace officers working for the province and authorized employers, including municipalities.

Bolstering public confidence, which is one of the main aims of this legislation, also aims in finding ways to ensure that police are in tune with the community's public safety goals and priorities. We're proposing amendments that will give Albertans a larger role in working with police to ensure their community's needs and aspirations are being met. Firstly, many communities across Alberta policed by the RCMP would gain a role in setting policing priorities and performance goals that they currently don't have under the current system.

If passed, this legislation will mandate the creation of formal governance bodies for communities policed by the RCMP, giving them oversight closer to what municipalities with stand-alone police services have via their local police commission. Communities policed by the RCMP currently have the option of forming policing committees, but during the stakeholder engagement that informed this legislation, we learned that most communities, unfortunately, have not done so. Although this legislation would mandate the creation of these civilian governance bodies, we've taken care to develop a model that respects the distinct needs of different sized communities.

For small and rural communities policed by the RCMP under the provincial police services agreement, we're proposing a provincial police advisory board. This group of communities is also represented by an interim board, established in conjunction with the police-funded model that was implemented in 2020, but the interim board is made up solely of municipal elected officials. This legislation would open membership on the provincial board to a much wider, broader scope of the public, with one seat designated for First Nations and representatives and one seat designated for representatives of the Métis communities.

In addition to those communities, there are 47 municipalities in Alberta that have their own contracts for the RCMP to police them. Communities with a population over 15,000 that have municipal RCMP contracts would be required to set up a local governance body. Smaller municipalities with a population under 15,000 will be represented by regional governance bodies unless they prefer to form their own local board.

This legislation would also give the public throughout Alberta a more meaningful role by requiring police to develop community safety plans. Community safety plans will require police to work more closely with civilian partners on strategies that go beyond enforcement and better address the root causes of crime. When you have greater collaboration between the police and their partners in the community, it leads to more co-ordination, and it helps identify gaps in services. Ensuring people get the help that they need when they need it, whether it's from the police or local social service agencies, will make our communities a much safer place.

The legislation will mandate diversity and inclusion plans that outline steps that police are taking to reflect their communities and to train officers about the distinct cultural needs of the communities that they work in. Improving those connections will result in better outcomes between police and the people that they serve. Additionally, building better relationships could lead to more opportunities for mentorship and encourage more people from diverse communities to pursue careers in policing.

This legislation also aims at increasing the diversity in voices that are involved in police governance by giving the minister the authority to appoint members to municipal police commissions. Provincial appointees on municipal police commissions are a common practice in several other provinces, including British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

The number of provincial appointees will be based on the size of the commission; however, it's important to add that what we're proposing here is just a seat at the table and more modest than what we see in our friends in British Columbia, where the province can appoint up to three-quarters of the members of their municipal police boards. The provincial government has a legislated responsibility to ensure adequate policing in Alberta, and this is a logical extension of that mandate.

Similarly, we are proposing that sections of the act governing ministerial intervention be clarified to allow the minister to step in at the request of police services or commissions in the event of a dispute at the local level.

Another proposed amendment will enable the minister to set provincial policing priorities, which will help foster consistency in policing right across this province.

Police commissions will also need to create their own policing priorities while taking the provincial priorities under consideration and report whenever there is a change. Police will need to report annually on their progress while they will increase accountability and transparency with the communities that they serve.

We're also proposing administrative changes that will underpin and support our reforms of the public complaints process. First, amendments will create standardized categories of complaints. This will establish a consistent framework on how the police review commission triages complaints to improve the public's understanding of the process. Further amendments will distinguish between police misconduct and employee performance, ensuring police services can better handle performance issues through human services and the collective bargaining process. Separating police misconduct from employee performance will allow the commission to focus on misconduct and help with a more timely resolution of the complaints.

Finally, there are the small, administrative changes to the Law Enforcement Review Board, most significantly the increase in the chair's term from a maximum of three years to five years.

The legislation we'll be introducing today represents a fundamental shift that reimagines police as an extension of the community and provides a variety of practical and realistic reforms aiming at getting us there. This legislation is the product of listening to a broad range of Albertans from all corners of the province from a variety of backgrounds, a variety of occupations. This is the culmination of years of important work that started in 2018, under the previous government, and included meetings with more than 200 organizations representing law enforcement, health and social service agencies and sectors, municipalities, Indigenous organizations, and diverse communities. We have heard from nearly 15,000 Albertans who completed the public survey as well as 1,500 respondents who filled out a survey for law enforcement members.

7:40

I hope that members on both sides of the House will support this legislation, which ensures police are more accountable to the public, more responsive to the community that they serve, which ultimately will help safer communities and build relationships between the community and the law enforcement at large.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you very much, and I'd like to move second reading of Bill 6.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. We can all agree that the most fundamental role of the government is to make sure that all Albertans can feel safe in their homes, in their

communities, and across this province, and certainly law enforcement plays an important and fundamental role in making sure of that. On this side of the House I want to state for the record that we support civilian oversight of law enforcement, and we believe that policing should be responsive to the needs of the communities and reflective of the diversity of our communities.

There are a number of things that the minister also touched on that need to be unpacked in this piece of legislation, but before I do that, I do want to say that these changes are coming out of a review that we started in 2018. The purpose of that review was to make changes to the Police Act to make sure that the Police Act is responsive to Albertans' needs, but we have not seen any report coming out of that review. That report has not been shared with Albertans. It would have been nice to see what we heard from the communities across this province.

Also, that report is important for us to see because when it comes to this government's record, we have seen that despite significant opposition from the majority of Albertans in municipalities, the UCP remains hell bent on creating a costly provincial police force that no one is asking them for. Their own report says that that will cost them more than half a billion dollars – more than half a billion dollars – to set that up. Alberta Municipalities, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and Albertans at large have opposed that idea, but still the UCP are pushing ahead with that.

We also know that early on the government changed the funding model for the municipalities and downloaded millions of dollars, 250-plus million dollars, onto municipalities. We also know that for the last three years they have made massive cuts to the Justice department budget. We also know that in 2015, when we started, for instance, the Legal Aid Alberta budget was \$64 million. In 2018 the then Justice minister and MLA for Calgary-Mountain View entered into an agreement, a governance agreement, with Legal Aid Alberta, making Legal Aid Alberta funding \$104 million at the end of 2019. In 2022 that funding has shrunk to \$82 million. Those organizations have been calling on this government to sit down with them and pay up in the areas the government is owing to Legal Aid Alberta under that governance agreement, and so far we have not seen any action from this government.

Whenever the government says that these changes reflect what was in the report, it's hard to trust this government. But, as I said, we are all for civilian oversight of law enforcement. However, the problem with this piece of legislation is that there is one provision that a new body will be created and that the minister will appoint a CEO and registrar for that oversight body. The rest, literally everything governing the powers, duties, and functions of the commission, the provincial advisory board, and policing committees, is left for the regulations. These are the three bodies that were mentioned in the act, and literally everything – their powers, their duties, their functions – is left to the regulations.

There is one provision that there will be a commission that will be responsible for the oversight, and there is no other detail that is provided in this piece of legislation. Again, civilian oversight is really good. In principle we agree with that, but this piece of legislation leaves far too many details to regulations that are yet to be developed and will be developed by this cabinet.

A second thing. I will come back to this civilian oversight piece, but I also want to say that throughout this legislation the government is trying to get more control and concentrate all those powers in the minister's office. Before the minister was responsible for establishing standards for police commissions and policing committees, but now they are also adding that now they will be the one setting the priorities instead of working collaboratively with those commissions. To achieve that goal, what this legislation is proposing is that now the

minister will be able to appoint members to different police commissions across this province. There is no detail whatsoever on how those members will be picked, whether that will be a public process or if it will be just at the minister's discretion.

The concern there is that when we were in government, there was an open process, the Alberta boards recruitment process, where every single appointment was published on that and all Albertans were invited to apply for that. The criteria was not who you know; the criteria was what you know and whether you qualify for that position. Since this government came into power, there is no such process, and we have pretty much seen UCP insiders, former party office holders put in positions like senior advocate and on other boards. Here we are talking about policing, so certainly there is a concern that if the minister is able to stack the deck at his or her own discretion, that could lead to the politicization of policing. That's a huge concern.

7:50

There is a certain formula that the legislation suggests as to how the minister will appoint these board members, that for every three members the minister is going to appoint one member on the commission. However, there is another residual power in this legislation, where the minister could appoint up to 49 per cent of the commission – 49 per cent – and there is not a word about how those members will be chosen, what their qualifications will be – and I will ask that later – who they have consulted on these changes. Were municipalities consulted about these changes? Were First Nations consulted about these changes? Was this something that the Police Act review recommended? Since they never published that report, we will not know whether that was recommended by that review.

The minister is also able to establish policing committees now, which will be mandatory. The history of these policing committees is that existing legislation allows for these committees, but historically there have been only four or five established in this province. For the most part the elected representatives of municipalities, the mayor and council, have worked with law enforcement on policing priorities, and then, in the case of First Nations, the chief and council have worked on such priorities. But now the minister is making those committees that were there, permissible under previous legislation, existing legislation, which were not used – now the government is making them mandatory. When it comes to the details of who will be on those committees, how people will be selected, there is no detail whatsoever. Their powers, their duties, their functions: that will be determined through regulations. Again, the most critical details are left for this government to decide behind closed doors in cabinet. That certainly seems like overreach again by this government, which cannot be trusted with those powers.

The other thing. They are establishing a police advisory board, which will take over the current board, and there will be 15 people appointed to it. Again, they will all be appointed and picked by this government. The only requirement there is that there be one member of a First Nation, one member of a Métis settlement. In a province like Alberta, where we have 48 First Nations, three different treaty areas, I would want to know how that number was reached and what the recommendations were coming out of the Police Act review. Was that something Albertans recommended? Was that something that the minister consulted on with First Nations?

As I said, civilian oversight, independent oversight is a good thing, and we support that. But for that commission, the police advisory board, municipal policing committees, regional policing

committees, their powers, their functions, their membership – everything is left for this government to decide, and there is nothing in this legislation to make sense of how this new model will work. I don't think that the government was ready to bring this bill forward. They have not done their homework. They just want to make an announcement that, oh, they are bringing forward civilian oversight.

Another thing is that for all people who are appointed to municipal or regional policing committees, the government is asking the council to pay for the remuneration or allowance to the members of the committee in accordance with the regulation. So there is a possibility that the government will establish these committees and further download costs onto the municipalities, which they have done previously.

Then there are other provisions. A few were requested by police services, the police commission. The minister now can direct the council. When asked in the technical briefing what kind of matters can be directed by the minister and where the minister can intervene, it didn't seem like anything was on the table, including police budgets, that now the minister will be able to intervene in.

There are additional reports that the minister may request from the commission, from municipalities. However, there is no mention whether such reports will be made available to the public, and as we saw from that police review report, this government seldom wants to be transparent, so they cannot be taken on their words.

I mentioned about the police review commission earlier. It says that the minister may appoint a chief executive officer and a registrar, and then there is absolutely nothing in this legislation that can tell us how much that will cost, how this organization will be staffed, what their function will be aside from the fact that they're a civilian oversight body. How will they operate? What's the time frame for this commission to be set up and up and running? There are no details around any of that.

I think there are a few other good things. I think one good thing I would like to highlight is that this act will take peace officers and sheriffs under the jurisdiction of the commission, so complaints arising from their conduct now can also be investigated.

Before this piece of legislation ASIRT was the independent, arm's-length body that was tasked to investigate serious harm and injuries. Now this legislation makes ASIRT subordinate to the commission. Again, I think I would like to know who was consulted on this change, why this was the best route, and will there be further consultation about that? There is still a lot that is left to the regulation, where they will determine the powers and duties of the commission.

8:00

There are a few other things; for instance, the government has set the limitation period for one year. Again, why was that one year chosen, and what will happen if one year's time has passed or somebody has retired or switched police services? There is no mention of that.

In general I would say that the intention of the bill is good, to bring civilian oversight to make police more responsive to the needs of Albertans, but government left far too many details to regulations. I think there are many substantial details that generally are included in the legislation, and they should have been included in this.

The second thing is that the government has given itself power to appoint members to various police commissions. I think that's overreach.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise to speak on Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. The bill will make important changes, and I appreciate the comments from the previous speaker. I enjoyed a bunch of those references. One of my favourites was one of the ones that the hon. member closed with, that the government will give themselves power to do things. Well, the government doesn't give itself power; the people of Alberta give the government power at an election every four years. For someone that claims to have finished law school, I thought that that was a really interesting comment to have heard in this House.

I also heard comments about the act, whether it was – I heard at different points. If you check the *Hansard*, I'm sure you'll find at different points in the discussion we heard comments where the hon. member said that it was too slow, based on some report done some time ago, and then a couple of paragraphs later the hon. member said that it was too fast and the government couldn't possibly have time to have done it right. Clearly, what we just heard was a bunch of gobbledygook with no real focus or real consistent amount of thought into what's actually happening.

Here's the other thing. I appreciate that the hon. member said that civilian oversight was a good thing – probably one of those few sentences that I agreed with in what I just heard – but, also, then the hon. member went on to complain about all the things that would be necessary to provide that civilian oversight, and they were all bad.

Madam Speaker, it seems to me that this is a bill that is well intended. I can tell you that as a person in this Legislature – I may not be the only one. I'm probably one of very few that actually sat on a police commission for a couple of years, so I can tell you that civilian oversight is a good thing, and it's a good thing to support police.

Now, I appreciate folks on the other side: many of them are on the defund-police camp, which is not really supportive of police. I myself am on the I-support-police camp. Having been part of civilian oversight in the past, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that it makes a big difference. Let's face it. Many of us, if we're honest with ourselves, if we had to pass judgment on what a good job or a bad job we have done, we'd probably give ourselves a passing grade, and, in fairness, in some cases that would be correct.

But where it gets complicated, Madam Speaker, is if we perhaps didn't deserve a passing grade, it might be hard for us to give ourselves a failing grade if we were judging ourselves. So, let's face it, civilian oversight is a very good thing. This is part of the reason why even the rules now, before this piece of legislation, have it such that in some cases a police service from an area, a jurisdiction, a geographical jurisdiction, different from the one where somebody's charged, if there is a connection to the police, gets investigated by a police service out of that particular jurisdiction, for obvious reasons. It gives credibility to the investigation, it gives credibility to the police service in the area where the event took place so that people who actually look at this don't say: well, yeah, the police investigated themselves; who could take that seriously? It's not fair to the police, actually, so this actually is supportive of our police services, which we all ought to support here because they are the ones that are one of our last lines of defence. Them and, of course, all of our other first responders.

Madam Speaker, I would say to you that this is a bill that has been well thought out. It has a very good chance of making Alberta a better place, and I, for one, support it and recommend that other members of the House do the same.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This is an interesting bill. I have a lot of questions about it. I will say to the diatribe, I suppose, from the previous speaker that it's a bit rich to get up and be confused about what bill you're speaking to and then proceed to complain that the last speaker didn't know what he was talking about.

On the bill, Madam Speaker, Bill 6, which has, I think, a lot in it, I'd like to start, rather ironically, by speaking about what I think are the good things in it. The first good thing in it is the police review commission, in principle. I say "in principle" because a lot of details are left to the regulations, so one is never totally certain what's going to happen there. But I think, overall, the idea of a centralized police review commission is a very good one. My recollection is that this is something that everyone was asking for. The police chiefs were asking for this, the people that acted for complainants were asking for this, the oversight bodies were asking for this, so this is, overall, I would say, a very good step. I think it is better governance.

It certainly removes the sort of appearance – because, of course, we had ASIRT for higher level things, but for things that weren't death, serious injury, or a serious and sensitive matter, those things would typically go to either another police service or the specific police service being investigated. It just didn't always look great, and it was very challenging for the police services to manage that, because even if they did a good job, which they did, by and large, the vast majority of the time, it didn't look great. I think that's a very good thing. I think everyone will be happy with that.

The guiding principles, also, which are at the beginning of the act, I think are good. They're good principles insofar as they go. I might quibble somewhat with the language. I feel it's a little bit out of date, the language around mental health rather than trauma informed, the language around respecting diversity rather than, say, addressing something like systemic racism or dealing with intersectionality. I think there's more modern language that could have been used, but in principle I think those guiding principles are good. So those are the things that I think are in the right direction.

There are some things – I don't want to say they're bad. I would more say they're questionable in that they don't have sufficient substance, and there isn't really a clear reason. I guess I'm a natural skeptic – might be the way to put it – so when someone does something and there's no clear reason for why you would do that thing, I always sort of wonder what's going on.

**8:10**

**Ms Hoffman:** What do you think is going on?

**Ms Ganley:** Well, this is the thing. I don't know what's going on.

There's the establishment of a provincial board and then municipal and regional committees, and in both instances – I'll read out the section. With respect to the provincial board – it's section 28.02 in the act – "the Provincial Police Advisory Board shall have the powers and perform the duties and functions set out in the regulations." That's the entire substance of what the provincial police advisory board will do. Its powers, duties, and functions: that's, like, one hundred per cent of what it does, and that will all be in the . . . [interjection] Oh, an intervention.

**Ms Hoffman:** If you're okay with it.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes, I am.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. It's not every day that I get to ask an intervening question to the former chair of the Legislative Review Committee, so having the opportunity to do so, I would say that one of the things that I appreciate about the hon. Member for

Calgary-Mountain View is her incredible attention to detail. That definitely applied to bills that came before this House but also to regulations that didn't necessarily come to this place because regulations are passed behind closed doors.

I would say: what is one of the member's concerns around a section being that broadly defined to be later spelled out in regulation? For me, as a not lawyer, one of my concerns would be that we don't get the clarity about what the actual purpose is, that that is determined just by a subset of the members in this Assembly, a subset within the government caucus, and that there is no clear transparency. Sometimes, as we know, regulations aren't necessarily communicated in the clearest of ways to those that might be impacted. So if the Member for Calgary-Mountain View could elaborate on that, I would find it helpful.

**Ms Ganley:** I would be delighted to elaborate on that. I love talking about the difference between legislation and subordinate regulations. Nobody else loves it, but I love it.

Yeah, generally in good legislation what I would say is a rule of thumb is that the legislation, which is the piece that comes to the Legislature, which is the piece that is passed by all elected members – so arguably everyone who doesn't live in Calgary-Elbow or Calgary-Lougheed now in this room is represented, and they have a voice in this room. That's the purpose of representative democracy. So the legislation should have the substance of the issue. The regulations should be left to sort of work out details or things that change frequently or maybe, you know, like a process or something, but you wouldn't normally leave everything.

You might say that additional ways in which the commission would do its work would be there, you might say that they can add sort of additional powers, maybe, in certain circumstances, but generally – generally – you would want in the legislative part to broadly define what the powers are and what the duties are. The powers, duties, and functions are what the board does; otherwise, you don't know what the board does aside from the title. It's called a policing advisory committee, but that's pretty much it. So that's a concern.

With respect to the municipal and regional committees – the section is 28.06, again – “a policing committee shall have the powers and perform the duties and functions set out in the regulations.” Again, this is very, very broad, and the reason I am reluctant in this case is because, again, at least in theory, if a constituent were to come into my office and say, “You voted for this bill and it does something I don't like; I would like you to explain to me why you thought that was good or why you thought it was worth voting for,” in this case I wouldn't be able to explain anything to them because I'm being asked to vote on the bill without knowing what the substance of the issue is. That's way too much power being devolved to cabinet. [interjection] I see another intervention.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for allowing the intervention. I guess where my head goes, based on the remarks that I've heard so far, is that there are very significant parallels between this section within the bill and Bill 1, which of course has been already . . .

**Member Irwin:** Rammed through.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, rammed through, indeed, but also plagued with scandal and deep public concerns about its legality. Knowing that it's going to be brought to the courts by Indigenous leaders already is something that's been talked about significantly. Definitely, this section of the bill, I think, is intended to give large, sweeping powers within this piece of legislation, so I'm wondering

if the member can maybe talk about other times – I know that this is only the fifth bill brought in under the current Premier and the current cabinet although many of the cabinet members were there previously, often in the same portfolio – what some of the concerns are around seeing this type of sweeping power delegated to the authority of cabinet.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Might I add, as well, that you are looking lovely this evening.

**Ms Hoffman:** Aw, thanks.

**Ms Ganley:** Returning to the bill, yeah, I think that's an excellent point, and that is what, to a certain degree, gives me cause for concern here. This isn't the first time we've seen it. We saw it in Bill 10. Obviously, that was under a previous Premier. Then the government had to go and sort of walk that language back after giving itself too much power. We saw it again in Bill 1 in this session, the sovereignty act, which again gave cabinet way too much power. So it does appear to be a theme that the power is sort of centralized in the hands of cabinet, and that's not good governance. I know that good governance isn't always a thing that is a sexy political issue, but it's important. Without it we can't govern ourselves, and that's extremely problematic.

I think this is problematic. It does cause me to question. You know, I would be willing to give it the benefit of the doubt but for, as the member mentioned, these previous instances in which there has been sort of a massive overreach by this government attempting to sort of take too much power. Everything is in the regulations. That's my big concern with this.

My other question is: who's asking for this? As the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall pointed out, you know, there was a consultation. It was started in 2018 originally, under our government. The report from that has – I mean, it came back and then never went out. The government still has it; they've just never released it. I don't recall anyone asking for this.

In fact, these sorts of regional and municipal committees are allowable under the current legislation. Under the current legislation they're permissible. They're not required, but they're permissible, and there have been maybe a handful in the entire history of the province. People can do this now and they choose not to, so I don't understand why we're forcing it on them. Who's asking for this? Who is it that wants this? Who thinks it's helpful, and why do they think it's helpful? That might help us to define what it is that the powers, duties, and functions ought to be.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, just one more intervention.

**Ms Ganley:** Oh, sorry.

**Member Irwin:** No, that's okay. It's hard when I'm behind you.

Thank you so much. I do hesitate to interrupt the Member for Calgary-Mountain View because her knowledge is deep, but I want to allow her to be able to speak without interruption for the next 10 minutes or so.

She brings up a really good point about consultation. Again, I do hope that the minister – he touched on it slightly in his opening remarks, but I would love to hear, you know, who exactly was consulted. Who's asking for this? It wouldn't be the worst thing if he could even table the folks, the groups, the individuals who were consulted. I think we'd like to hear that, especially given what we heard from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, this government's lack of ability to consult, as we saw with Bill 1, the sovereignty act. We've got multiple treaty chiefs, First Nations chiefs from around

this province who've spoken out, who've said that there was absolutely no consultation that took place. In fact, that minister's office was shut out. So I would give an opportunity to the minister to clear the record.

Thank you. No more interventions.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. That was very helpful, actually, because it reminded me to sort of go back and run through the history of this matter a little bit. I don't think anybody disagrees that the Police Act needs to be amended. In fact, I think that there is broad agreement on a lot of things that need to be done. However, there are some places where the details are problematic, and the act is sort of a mishmash of amendments, and that sometimes makes it run in a bit of a clunky way.

8:20

In 2018 it was me who got to go out with the consultation, and I went very broad. I took that consultation to social-serving agencies, to stakeholders throughout, because the truth is that the problems that occur in policing are impacted by health and vice versa. The problems that occur in terms of social disorder, in terms of mental health and addictions: the police get those problems because, at the end of the day, when all other services fail, the police have to pick up the phone. They are legally obligated when they are called to pick up the phone, so it is often the case that the police find themselves involved in matters that are not best dealt with by the police, that would have been better dealt with by a mental health intervention, that would have been better dealt with by an addictions intervention, that would have been better dealt with by having housing and appropriate supports.

In order to try and solve that problem, we did a very broad consultation, because we wanted to talk to those other systems about what belonged there. We wanted to talk to housing and to mental health and to addictions about how they could better handle those issues so that they didn't wind up with the police, who normally – again, they have to show up because they're legally required to turn up when they're called. The police don't think that they are the best place for those mental health and addictions issues either. It's just that the system is not designed to work together. Anyway, that is why we did the consultations so broadly, because that was one of the problems we were attempting to solve.

Now, my immediate successor – there have been so many; I've lost track – the former Member for Calgary-Elbow, thought that this was a laughable approach. He made fun of this approach. He thought it was ridiculous to consult with all of these outside stakeholders. He said that he'd have the act in by 2020.

**Ms Hoffman:** Oh, you can say his name now.

**Ms Ganley:** I still don't think I can say his name.

**Ms Hoffman:** A member who's no longer sitting . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll just remind that all comments are to come through the chair.

**Ms Ganley:** Oh, sorry, Madam Chair. Anyway, it doesn't matter. Everyone knows who I'm talking about. The former Member for Calgary-Elbow, currently unrepresented, yeah, found it hilarious that we would consult with these sorts of stakeholders around mental health and addictions and all those things.

I had not heard that another round of consultation went out, so it would be very helpful to me, and I think all members of this House, to know what consultation was done and who was talked to and sort of what the follow-up from that was. That first brush that we did in

2018 was never supposed to be the whole conversation. That was supposed to be a scoping of the conversation. That was a conversation around: how broad do we need the conversation to be? Who needs to be included? What do we need to talk about? What are the areas of focus? It was, like, designed to set up principles and then have further conversations. So I would love to know what happened to all that.

Okay. I am now going to – oh. Other things that are questionable in my view. The minister's ability to step into disputes: I find that a large centralization of power. It seems odd to me. I don't really understand why you would do that. The minister is not a chief of police. The minister is meant to be oversight of the chiefs of police. It doesn't seem like great governance, so I would love to know a little more about that to make me a little bit more comfortable with it. Again, it just seems like a huge centralization of power.

The questions I have. I note, at least with respect to level 1 complaints and possibly others, that the costs associated with the investigation are to be borne by the police services themselves. Just overall, I'd like to know how much this is going to cost and, like, how the costs will be divvied up, whether they will all be borne by the police services paying into it, and what we expect the total cost to be. What exactly will be the powers, duties, and functions of the board, broadly speaking? Who asked for the Solicitor General to be able to step into disputes in the case of a dispute? I find that, again, a very weird thing, so I would love to know who asked for that and why we think it's a good idea. Okay. I'd also love to know who asked for the advisory boards because, again, I don't recollect – like, people can do it now and they don't, so I'm a little curious.

Oh. Big issue. Currently the disciplinary process loses jurisdiction when an officer resigns. Is that problem addressed in this legislation, and does it intend to be addressed? That's one of the biggest problems that needed to be fixed.

Okay. I have a lot more. Do I have . . .

**Member Irwin:** You've got, I think – time check? – a minute.

**The Deputy Speaker:** About a minute.

**Ms Ganley:** About a minute. Okay.

I would just love to know a little bit more about the substance. I can see that a complaint is made, it goes through the process. It seems generally good. The minister intervening thing, again, is a bit curious, so I'm hoping that the minister can answer those questions. Being as they were asked at second reading, hopefully, they can answer those in committee.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will adjourn debate in what I think is just in the nick of time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Actually, you had, like, 35 seconds left, but maybe I shouldn't tell you that.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 5

### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate December 7: Mr. Deol]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anybody wishing to speak to Bill 5 in second reading? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** May I just have a check as to how much time my colleague, the member who . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's too late because you stood. So now it's your time. I don't know how much time is left. My apologies.



**Ms Hoffman:** Okay. That's okay. I rise tonight as the first speaker to Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. While others may have been so keen to want to speak to it, I look forward to hearing what they have to say now that we are on that bill. It has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Acadia, who is currently the Minister of Justice.

Of course, it does have implications in other areas, namely agriculture, as it relates to amending the legislation of the Sale of Goods Act. That, of course, is a follow-through in response to federal legislation changes that were made around being able to identify and record the vehicle and registration of grain being delivered to an elevator and changing a "track buyer" to "grain dealer." I think that that certainly is a good move, and I'm glad that the current government hasn't decided that they are as opposed to that as they are to some other things to date. Definitely, this is around ensuring that we have a consistently strong reputation when it comes to the sale and distribution of our world-class grain products.

When we still had the Canadian Wheat Board a number of years ago now, probably about a decade ago, maybe even slightly longer, I had the opportunity to visit and to learn about some of the ways that we were using that process to be able to market our products internationally, and one of the things that they did is that they had a test kitchen. They had a test kitchen as well as a test brewery as well as a test distillery, and they used that to be able to say: if you're using barley that's grown in the prairies, here are some excellent recipes that you can use. A lot of buyers were purchasing those products to be able to make the recipes as they'd been tested in that kitchen and then later sold in, for example, distilleries in parts of the valley in California that focuses on other types of alcoholic products. They were using Canadian products to help build and grow their market share in that area. I found it incredibly interesting, and I think that the collaboration that was in place around the sale and distribution of Canadian products certainly has strong merit.

**8:30**

I think that part of the reason why the federal government has brought this piece in is around ensuring that if there are any issues with a product, it can be traced back to its place of origin to make sure that we don't have to destroy any products unnecessarily. I think that making sure that we have the record of the vehicle and the registration and that we can track the buyer to the final dealer is an important piece to make sure that we don't impede our ability to sell our products locally, nationally, or internationally when it comes to our world-class agricultural products. I wanted to begin by saying that piece.

Definitely, there are a few other pieces in this bill that give me a bit of a pause for consideration. I appreciate that we were able to get a bit of an interjurisdictional comparison through briefings that we've had from officials. One of the big pieces that seems to be an outlier in terms of the interjurisdictional piece is the fact that the current cap around civil court rulings is \$50,000 here in Alberta. The bill proposes to raise that cap to \$200,000. That's a significant increase, quadrupling the cap, and \$50,000 is closer in line with what the interjurisdictional comparisons are. I believe it averages at \$85,000. That is a significant increase over what it used to be. I guess one of the questions that it begs for me is why we think it's important to raise it by such a significant amount. Don't we anticipate that that will drive more traffic towards the civil courts as opposed to where they lie today?

And with that additional traffic to the civil courts – we know that we've seen many budgets brought forward by the current governing party that have not kept up with the current demands, let alone the

increased demands that we will likely see should this part be passed. I don't think it's a reason to not support the bill. I think there are a number of pieces in this legislation that I'm generally supportive of, but that definitely is a piece that's cause for some concern. I think it's important for us to be able to ensure that if we are making decisions in this place that will drive up traffic to different types of court, including the civil court, there should be resources put in place so that people can have access to justice or some sort of remedy in a timely fashion.

I know that the government has been more focused on renaming courts than actually staffing courts, thinking that it's going to magically make things better if you change the title. It definitely hasn't, and we know that a lot of people have waited far too long, especially over the last three and a half years under the current government, to receive some sort of clarification of remedy and decision as it comes to a number of their cases that they've brought forward. So we will probably have at least one recommendation, one potential amendment, but of course in second we won't be in a position to bring that forward – it will be something that probably comes at the next stage of the legislation – and that's definitely something that we will speak to in greater detail at that time.

But when members do speak from the governing side, if they can speak to that cap piece. I hope that that's something that current members of the government caucus have asked questions of. We know that the process that they have in place – they definitely talk about the fact that they have bill briefings behind closed doors in caucus, and I hope that they've asked the question around the cap for the civil court rulings being increased from \$50,000 to \$200,000 and would appreciate some clarity being offered to this House either by the front bench or any member of the government caucus.

Just to summarize, this bill does amend six different pieces of legislation. I've touched on a couple so far. There is another piece that we haven't talked about yet at this stage or as it relates to the Referendum Act. There is an amendment to ensure that all referendums require a motion of the Assembly. I guess one of the questions I have with that is why it is that the cabinet believes that limiting it to having to come to this place before something can go to the people of Alberta would be a move that they think is in the best interests of all Albertans, limiting those who can actually bring forward referendum questions. I know that there was talk under previous members of the House: the former Premier, who's no longer a member of this Assembly, Jason Kenney; the former Justice minister who, again, is no longer a member of this Assembly, Doug Schweitzer.

I also have to say that this has given me a moment to reflect on the fact that we've had three resignations in this place in short order. The Premier acted very quickly, as did her cabinet, to call a by-election for one of those seats but left the seat of the former former Justice minister vacant in Calgary-Elbow, unrepresented, as it says currently on their website. They have no MLA. There is not a current party that represents those folks. Then, of course, the day that Bill 1, the job-killing sovereignty act, was introduced, Jason Kenney decided to resign as well.

It definitely, I think, gives some pause for concern about what this government, the current government, has chosen to make priorities for themselves and if it is fair to trust that the current government, which, of course, holds presently the majority of the seats in the province of Alberta, is indeed in the best position to decide what warrants a referendum question or not. It seems like there could be more power held in the hands of many, an opportunity to – if this is really about bringing the power of the people to the forefront and making sure they have a chance to weigh in on matters of significance to them, whether it be provincial, local, municipal, school-related, or federal issues that the government

wants to call a referendum on, why is it that the provincial government is the only one to determine who is in a position to be able to make that call and ask for that clarity from the people of Alberta?

It feels like it's an attempt to use political influence yet again, as we've seen, political interference as it relates to ensuring that every Albertan has an opportunity to elect and have an elected member representing them in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Again, we don't have that for Calgary-Lougheed. We don't have that for Calgary-Elbow. Why is the current government so scared to let the people of Calgary actually have a by-election and have their voice heard in this place? That relates directly to this section around referendums in that the government wants to decide what referendum questions they'll have. The government wants to decide where they'll have by-elections. It seems incredibly antidemocratic, and we've seen this be a bit of a theme so far under the leadership of the current Premier.

It definitely brings some significant pause for consideration. Do we as Members of the Legislative Assembly want to delegate that power again just to ourselves, or do we want to truly channel representative democracy and ensure that all members of the population have an opportunity to, through some form of fair lobbying, be able to bring forward referendums for the people of Alberta as opposed to just Members of the Legislative Assembly bringing forward a motion and getting majority support? [interjection] I'm happy to welcome an intervention from my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I wasn't going to intervene, but I guess I'm passionate about justice statutes. You know, one of the things that I think is an interesting connection here is that you talked about referendums, and you kind of alluded to the fact that this is a government that's not really been listening to the people of Alberta. We saw that most recently with the sovereignty act, Bill 1, pushing that through, and hearing even more about that today, that not only were First Nations across this province not consulted, nor were even some of the key cabinet ministers. I guess my question for the Member, soon to be minister, for Edmonton-Glenora – sorry; knock on wood – is: is she concerned about the fact that there are these pieces around, let's say, referenda in this piece of legislation when we've seen a government quite recently, in fact, really not heeding the wishes of Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the intervention and interjection and the opportunity to reflect on that, because when I woke this morning and began reading the media that had broke over the evening and saw that there was at least one – I think it was two referenced – employee of the government of Alberta within Indigenous Relations directly speaking to media about their grave concerns and the fact that they know that their minister has been raising concerns around Bill 1 and its lack of consultation, its lack of engagement with the folks that are supposed to be partners, that work being led by the Minister of Indigenous Relations and the department that supports that minister, it caused significant concern for myself and, I'm sure, for many others, to see people feel brave enough to come forward, when they work in this building, to speak about the concerns that they have around their inability to do their job when the Premier's office shuts down any feedback and doesn't allow for that type of voice to be raised and significant concerns to be heard and, in turn, acted upon.

8:40

We've seen it under the current government in other areas of deep public concern as well, as it relates to people wanting to whistle-

blow as it relates to their own safety and well-being within this building, for example. So for the government to say that we can have the public weigh in on items that only we, the majority government, deem them to be able to vote on a referendum question is – it should be concerning to all of us, I think, that the government wants to continue to consolidate power around a few friends and insiders to the Premier.

I know many people, probably, in this place will say, like: well, you know, it's a new Premier; let's try to give her a chance. But I would say that the record so far on these first six bills that we've had an opportunity to debate in this place doesn't bode well for the voice of private members, for the impact of improved processes, or for the public at large. We've seen an incredible attempt to rein in power and control around a few specific people that the Premier chooses to surround herself with, and I think that that is not beneficial to the public at large or to the roles and responsibilities that each of us carries as members of this Assembly.

Let's go to some of the stuff in this bill that is probably a step in the right direction. I am going to speak specifically around the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act – that's, again, a Justice bill – specifically the piece around child and spousal support orders from other provinces and how we will have an expedited enforcement process. Some of the pieces right now that are definitely slowing that ability of spouses and children to receive fair compensation relate to the fact that the orders can't currently be provided over the telephone or electronically, that they have to have original documents transmitted, for example, and received. I think having electronic or telephone transmission will be an improvement. It will help expedite the process.

I think the other piece, around removing the need for sworn documents, is also beneficial. I think there are other ways that we can ensure their authenticity, including notary and ensuring true copy. So I think that this will be a potential improvement to the legislation. I think it will put us more in line with other jurisdictions, and it has the potential to ensure that partners, spouses who are entitled to compensation and children who also are entitled to compensation, compensation which they need, usually, to pay the rent and keep the lights on and keep food on the table – I think removing some of the red tape in this bill could be a benefit.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Happy to rise on this bill. Now, changes in this bill include amendments to the Provincial Court of Alberta and Court of King's Bench – there: King's, not Queen's. Good. I got that. I had to think about that for a second. Still have the reflex to say Queen's, but it is indeed the Court of King's Bench. The Alberta government will be enhancing the court's ability to fulfill its duties to provide fair, accessible, and timely resolutions for Alberta. It will be achieved by allowing more claims to be dealt with through the Provincial Court, which uses a simplified and more cost-effective process than the Court of King's Bench.

Now, I heard the member opposite talk about access to justice. I certainly would agree that that's an important issue, and I guess the change from \$50,000 to \$200,000 for Provincial Court claims, instead of going through the Provincial Court bench, should actually, I believe, provide more access. Now, it is arguable: what is the right number? I suppose that's something that's the perfect argument, Madam Speaker, because we could argue about that for six days and not agree: is the right number \$1 or \$10 million? Well, it's highly likely to be somewhere in between, and we've chosen

something in between, and what was here before is something in between. I think that's a fair thing to comment on.

Nonetheless, it's been a number of years, and I sincerely hope that most if not all members of the House would think it might be time to increase that number. If the members on the other side want to quibble about whether the number is the right number or not, again, I suppose we could fight about that all day, but at least, I hope, we can agree that it is indeed high time and perhaps then some to increase that number to provide what the member opposite suggested was concerned about, which is access to justice.

Provincial courts, of course, are located across 72 communities and will provide Albertans with easier access to legal proceedings and quicker resolutions while, we hope, maintaining the same fair and high-quality rulings that Albertans depend upon.

Now, the last time civil court claims were increased was indeed 2014. Again, I'm hopeful that this change will be seen by most Albertans as a positive thing. Indeed, once you get past that limit, generally speaking, you need to hire a lawyer. I appreciate that you can represent yourself, but there's a saying about a client that represents themselves. Somebody probably wiser than me made that claim, and I won't pass judgment on the claim; I'll just say that there is a point where one is probably wise to get professional judgment when they're dealing with some matters.

The bill will also support our hard-working farmers by eliminating some bureaucratic record-keeping requirements for buyers, sellers, and distributors of grain. Our farmers work tirelessly to feed the people of our province; indeed, Alberta farmers work hard to feed people all across this planet, and they should not be burdened with excess and redundant paperwork and regulation. I hope we can consider that a good piece of legislation.

Work will be done to support single parents in their ability to collect child and spousal support payments from ex-partners who live outside of the province. Under the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, Alberta would work with other jurisdictions to allow for the electronic exchange of certified documents in order to facilitate the enforcement of these orders. Let's face it, Madam Speaker. If there is a parent living in another province that is legally obligated to provide funding to the parent with custody and their children, I sincerely hope we can all agree that having some teeth in the legislation to require those payments to be made to provide for the basic needs for the parent in custody and, mostly importantly, for those children – I sincerely hope that members of the House consider that to be a positive change.

Of course, we're not really leading the pack on this. On one hand, you could say that maybe we are; on the other hand, when you're leading the pack, you take some risk of making the first mistakes. In this particular case similar steps have been taken in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, so I think, based on the experience we have and learning from those other provinces, we can have reasonable hope that this particular change will be a positive one and one that's been proven in other places. Isn't it nice that we can bring those learnings here to benefit Alberta families and, particularly, Alberta children? It would allow Alberta to join these provinces in enhancing single parents' ability to collect critical child and spousal support. I'm feeling very positive about that.

The bill introduced also includes the Trustee Act. This proposed amendment would allow and provide Albertans with certainty that trusts will not fail when left temporarily without a trustee; furthermore, the act would remove the transfer of trust property to the courts, thus making it easier for such property to move directly to a new trustee once one is appointed. I think that's also important. Certainly, the courts would always, always do the best job that they could. Certainly, our government is not doubting that; I hope

nobody in this House is doubting that. Nonetheless, a trustee that may have better personal knowledge of the family, the children, the parents: I think that we can agree that there's a better chance of a good job being done when that familiarity takes place.

Additional changes to the Referendum Act. This act demonstrates the government's commitment to strengthening democracy in the province by ensuring that Albertans have a direct say on important matters. The proposed adjustment would clarify the requirement to bring legislation to the Legislature, and this only applies to constitutional matters. I think the member aside certainly seemed to me to suggest that all of those resolutions would have to go to here. I'm pointing out that this is just for constitutional matters, so indeed not all of those would have to come to the House.

#### 8:50

Now, here's what I think is really important. One of the most pertinent changes included in Bill 5 is allowing the Legislative Assembly security to carry firearms. This change was proposed by the Speaker and the Sergeant-at-Arms in order to better ensure the health and safety of elected officials, staff, and visitors to the Legislative Assembly. The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for directing, controlling, and managing security personnel while the Speaker's office is responsible for the overall security of the Legislative Assembly, its committees, and members.

Now, Madam Speaker, following the 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill – and I just have to say that this is part of the reason why this piece is so important to me. I actually was there. Some members of the House may remember that, and some may not. I can tell you it was not a pleasant experience, not because I did anything right, wrong, or indifferent. By sheer happenstance I was leaving the grounds of the Parliament building. At the time when the shooter was coming through the front gates, I was trying to get out of the front gates. You know, one of the few claims to fame I may have in this world is that the next day every newspaper in Canada had a picture of the shooter coming through the gates and an old, fat, bald guy about three steps ahead of him heading the other direction.

But here's what's important. That's kind of fun for me to tell, but what's actually more important is that at that time our national Parliament allowed very few firearms in the Parliament. In fact, the Sergeant-at-Arms, if I have my facts straight – I think I do here, and if I get corrected, I'll live with that. I believe the Sergeant-at-Arms is the only one allowed to have a firearm. It was the Sergeant-at-Arms that stopped the perpetrator of the crime by shooting the perpetrator. I don't think anybody would argue that wasn't a legitimate action to take, but what if there were zero guns? Wow. I'm just a little bit afraid of how much more damage there would have been.

It actually leads us to the question that we're answering here today with this piece of legislation: should there be a measured and well-thought-out number of people with firearms in a Legislative Assembly or a Parliament in Canada? After what I saw in 2014, I certainly feel that the answer is yes. This legislation actually answers that question for the people of Alberta. If there's ever an issue that all members of the Legislature, no matter what party we belong to and what else we believe – I think that something we should all have in common is that we want each other to go home safe every day. Even if we think the folks on the other side are wrong about everything, even if they think we're wrong about everything, I sincerely hope that we all want each other to get home safe at the end of not one or two but every single day that we come into this important place, because that actually serves Albertans the best.

This piece of legislation deals with that and, I think, in a responsible way. The review that was done concluded the Legislative Assembly

security service should be allowed to carry firearms in the Legislature Building and the surrounding precinct. Of course, training of the Legislative Assembly security personnel as peace officers will take place, ensuring that they have the most up-to-date training to keep Alberta's legislative buildings and grounds safe for elected officials and indeed the public that are here, because we work for them and they are indeed the most important people although all human life is important and all needs to be protected. This change would bring us in line with other Canadian jurisdictions such as Ontario, Manitoba, and now Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

In closing, Madam Speaker, the bill covers a fairly wide breadth of territory, yet it is a positive change for the people of Alberta. I believe it increases access to justice, improves the efficiency of collection of child support, reduces needless paperwork for grain dealers, and it is indeed in line with what this government is always focused on: making life better for Albertans. On those grounds, I intend to support this bill, and I recommend the same, that all members of this Assembly support this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise. Of course, I would certainly agree with the Member for Calgary-Hays. I believe everybody in this entire building needs to go home safe every night, especially when you're wrong because I want you back here the next day so that I can continue to tell you how wrong you are. I want that opportunity over and over again.

Probably most of my comments here this evening are just going to be around a couple of different subjects. On the whole, around Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), I'm in support. I guess it's more around questions, and we'll get the opportunity to delve deeper into some of those questions when we get the opportunity in Committee of the Whole.

[Mrs. Aheer in the chair]

I want to, of course, always layer the sandwich here a little bit. I know the Member for Calgary-Hays was talking about when it comes to maintenance enforcement and paying those – and as a father of two stepchildren certainly I saw challenges with respect to getting those payments. You know, when we can make changes that expedite that type of thing, that is not a bad thing, to say the least. I certainly would have loved the chance to have benefited from that, but unfortunately back in those days there was a challenge around that. So definitely supportive of that change in Bill 5.

Again, I'd probably be remiss – as has been mentioned, there are multiple changes across this, which kind of makes Bill 5 a little bit of an omnibus bill. And I'd be remiss if I didn't remind that members that served in the 29th Legislature, you know, very effectively in opposition very much disagreed with omnibus legislation. So I can't help but ask: what's changed? I don't want anybody to think that I've forgotten about that, Madam Speaker, so I will continue to remind them about that, and that maybe ties back into the whole wrong part that I originally brought my comments to in the beginning.

One of the changes that we do see here is around the referendums. I think my friend from Edmonton-Glenora had mentioned this, around why there seems, I guess, a desire to not have the Assembly involved in this process. The reason I'm asking this is that I think back to the recent referendums that were held here in the province of Alberta, specifically around equalization. I bring this up because what I found when I was talking to people about that question around equalization: there wasn't a very clear understanding of

what that was. I very quickly lost track of the number of folks that thought that it meant changing what was currently there, and that actually wasn't the question. The question was: do you want to remove equalization, period? So when you kind of start to talk people through that, it was: oh, that's what it meant; I didn't quite understand that.

So I think it's incumbent a little bit upon the Assembly that when we are potentially posing referendum questions, Albertans can very clearly understand what they mean, and that wasn't the case with the question around equalization. I think there still is a role that the Assembly could be playing with regard to trying to clarify those things. Again, happy once we get into Committee of the Whole what some of the reasoning is around that, what they heard, then, of why it seems so straightforward that maybe we should, you know, back off, hands off a little bit.

The other part that I want to talk about, which, again, the previous speaker had also brought up, was moving us in line, moving that cap with regard to some court rulings from \$50,000 up to \$200,000. I certainly agree: \$50,000 might've been fine way back when that was first established; it's not fine anymore. Again, you know, I could make the exact same argument. What's that proper number? Is it \$200,000? I don't know. But it would be interesting to know what kind of information the government has managed to bring together to inform that decision a little bit.

9:00

I guess, more importantly, with that information, when will they actually plan to make that actual change to that level? That, then, of course, now starts to ask the question: will we see an increase in court filings and, obviously, then in court cases that will be coming forward? I know that in the past the province has struggled with regard to capacity around efficiently getting through court cases that are coming through for various reasons, not even including how we've gotten through the pandemic over the past couple of years.

Going forward, I'm wondering if the government has managed to come up with maybe some predictive models or something like that in terms of: what kind of increases do they think will result in increasing that cap? Maybe at different levels, you know, if we increased it to \$100,000, we would see this many more court filings, at \$150,000, and so on and so forth. With those increases, is the government prepared to be able to help the court system in terms of any other additional resources, especially staff?

As we all know, we can come up with all the great technology in the world, but if we don't have the amazing people that work in that system running it, we're going to start to run into problems. We've got to make sure that we have all of that backup there for them. I'm wondering: what kind of plan is in place? As I said, I'm not expecting any kind of finite details. I mean, that starts to get into the realm of the whole polishing of the crystal ball, at which point why don't we start asking about the lottery numbers at the same time for that? But it would be helpful to know where that might be going.

I guess one other thing I did want to touch on around the Sale of Goods Act. As somebody who had come from working in the food industry, you know, my 26 years at Lucerne Foods, at the ice cream plant, I know that tracking the transportation of goods was important, especially if there was some kind of a problem, whether it be contamination of an ingredient or a recall of some kind of a product or, as maybe was suggested, just simply outdated information or a practice that no longer happens and has morphed into some other procedure, which happens as you find more efficient ways to do things or you've simply gotten away from a certain practice because you no longer produce that, whatever the case may be. I'd be interested to hear some of the feedback on that so that we can

understand why the proposed changes around the Sale of Goods Act will be beneficial.

Again, I'm not necessarily against removing some of the paperwork. You know, as the red tape critic I've always said that we don't need to do 15 copies when only 10 will do. But, at the same time, we don't want to put the system in any kind of jeopardy, especially when we are talking about food. With the increase in allergies, cross-contamination, things like that, we want to be able to ensure that our food system is secure, that it is safe for everyone to eat here.

Like I said, as I'm not necessarily, you know, opposed to any of the changes, I would certainly like to see some more clarification around some of the questions that I've been having. Again, it's about ensuring that Albertans can be confident in what's going on with proposed legislation. It's one thing to tell them that decisions are being made elsewhere, but we certainly don't want people to think that the Assembly might be, I guess, being circumvented here, a little bit in reference back to referendums.

Again, I know that members of the 29th Legislature did have significant issues around any more extra powers and whatnot being afforded to ministers to make decisions or, of course, around the claim: well, it's all coming in regulations. I know that members served very well trying to remind the government at the time: well, perhaps you should put it in legislation, not in regulation. So part of that layered sandwich there, again reminding folks what changed from that position back then, when you wanted to see a lot of things in legislation, and now, when you're seeing more of a desire to put things in regulation.

You know, we don't want Albertans to think that we're circumventing the responsibilities of this House. Unfortunately, we have now seen a couple of attempts by the government to do that. We saw that during the one health bill, where they were trying to provide the opportunity to modify legislation, bring in new legislation, delete legislation without the consent or oversight of the Assembly. We saw that again with the recent sovereignty act, which caused great, great concern and still is, quite honestly. We don't want that, of course, happening here with Bill 5, because I think we've got some changes within here that are very, very good, that I've talked to already.

I do look forward to more debate going forward here, especially Committee of the Whole. Hopefully, I'll get a few answers to some of my comments as we move forward. I know that some of my other colleagues have some other things to say about this, but I guess that at this time I will take my seat and see what else in the debate comes up. I'll be taking notes vigorously.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate in second reading on Bill 5? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 5, which is the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). There's a bunch of stuff in here. I'm going to start with the interjurisdictional support orders. Once again, I'm starting with something that I think is good about the bill. I think that anything we can do to support the ability to do these interjurisdictional support orders, especially these sorts of things, which are, like, allowing electronic means and telephone and that sort of thing, is really, really good.

The interesting history on this is that once, long ago, it used to be next to impossible because maintenance enforcement is a provincial agency in each individual province. Essentially, what could happen

was that the parent who didn't have the child, who didn't have primary custody, could move to another jurisdiction and just stop paying the child support. That's obviously not a very good situation, and that left a lot of children in poverty, and children in poverty is a very bad thing. Over time provinces have developed the ability to sort of enforce each other's support orders through various mechanisms, and this takes that one step further, and I think that can only possibly be a good thing. To all those people out there who think that we never agree on anything in this place: we agree on this. So there we go. That's two things – three things – tonight. [interjection] Yeah, I think that's a pretty good thing, so I'm glad to see that that is changing. I think, again, it's a big step in the right direction.

Now, of course, I couldn't just leave it at that, could I? One thing I do have to point out when we're talking about this is that maintenance enforcement, or the orders, I guess, for child support, has usually originally gone through the courts. Now, there's a table that kind of sets out, based on the payor's income, what the child support will be, so there isn't much of an argument. There's not a big argument over how much you're going to pay unless the person isn't sort of – sometimes it's unclear what the income is, or people try to write things off. Like, there can be a little bit of an argument, but for the most part the support is based on what the income of the payor is.

**9:10**

What that's designed to do is to bring both households up to a similar level, essentially to say, you know, that if you're a wealthy individual, you can't leave your children in relative poverty. You're required to support them to the level that they otherwise would have been supported at, and I think that's a fairly reasonable rule. I think that's a fairly reasonable rule.

Often enough times one of the things that legal aid does that a lot of people don't think of – a lot of people, when they hear "legal aid," think of criminal matters, but actually legal aid does a lot of family matters, and those family matters are actually often more difficult to retain counsel for. Legal aid often had close to a six-month wait to get a family lawyer who would take the legal aid rate and the legal aid retainer to handle a client. That's really, really challenging. It leaves a lot of people in a lot of trouble, and what it means is that not only do you wind up with a lot of unrepresented people in court, but you also wind up with a lot of situations where the person who has more money is able to advance the better argument.

While we're talking about this piece and the importance of sort of greasing those wheels and making sure that children get the supports that they need, I think that I just can't let it go past without commenting on the fact that this government is woefully in violation of its obligations under contract to fund legal aid. That is incredibly problematic. They're also in violation of a conversation they're supposed to have around the legal aid tariff.

Again, this isn't an issue that always bubbles up in the public that high, but one of the reasons it's next to impossible to get a family law lawyer to take on legal aid cases – and I don't want to say "next to impossible," but there are far more people needing representation and wanting to go through legal aid, even people who are getting approved, than there are lawyers to take that case. Admittedly, it can be challenging to get a family law lawyer at all right now in this province. Certainly, the tariff, which was set at \$92 an hour, sounds like a reasonable amount of money, but you have to bear in mind that that's not what the lawyer is paid. [interjection] Oh, sorry. An intervention.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member, for allowing a quick question. As I was listening to you speak so eloquently about the matters of

family law and the impact that Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), might have on it, it occurred to me that there may be some impacts on child support payments that are adversely affected by this legislation in that it may not empower the individual who is not getting support to have the means to actually get legal representation to go after that support. Is this bill going to help the situation any more, or does it address it at all?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. I mean, I think that's one of the challenges, that this bill addresses the enforcement of interjurisdictional support orders. Once you have the order against the other party, if they move to another province, this makes it easier to get the money, but it doesn't do anything about getting the original order. It doesn't help those individuals who are seeking support or where there's a dispute about support, because there are still some things that can come into dispute like who has custody, that sort of thing. This doesn't help with that, and I think that that is problematic.

Another thing – oh, that was what I was saying. What I was saying was that the government went to review the tariff rate. The reason that's important is because that actually pays for, you know, the rental of the office. It pays for the support staff, that sort of staff in a lawyer's office, for access to legal databases, which is actually extremely expensive. I knew, when I was in practice, a couple of my colleagues from my class had gone into criminal defence work, and they basically practised legal aid criminal defence work full-time. Most of them practised out of the backs of their cars because they couldn't afford to have an office on what the current tariff rate is.

It definitely is a problem, both the overall funding to legal aid and therefore the people that can seek legal aid. And the refusal of the government to engage in this tariff review process particularly is a problem for people in the area of family law. That tends to be worsened when there are children involved. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that that is another thing that the government could do to make this better, but this thing is still good – just another thing.

The other thing this does is that it allows sort of an increase to \$200,000 of – well, it allows cabinet to potentially increase Provincial Court's jurisdiction. This is an interesting proposal. I would love to hear more from the government about it, about why they're doing it and who they're doing it for and what the intended consequences are. The reason I say that is – essentially, what it means is that currently you can go to what many people will call small claims court, which is just Provincial Court civil division, for anything up to \$50,000.

There – I don't want to say there are because there may have been an increase in the complement since this government came in, and I'm not sure. In 2019 there were nine Provincial Court judges in the civil division. Nine; that's not very many, obviously. I mean, if you were to increase the remit from \$50,000 to \$200,000, you're potentially looking at sort of four times higher, so four times more cases. Perhaps more than that – right? – because the amount that people are claiming is not going to be, like, perfectly distributed in that way, but let's say even four times.

What that means is appointing a bunch more judges, which is fine if the government is going to do it, and might I add that if they are going to do it, those judges require support staff. They require court clerks and judicial assistants and sheriffs and a bunch of folks to make that work. If the government wants to do that, that is fine. I will point out that what that does do is that justices at the King's Bench level are remunerated through the federal government. The federal government pays the judges when they're at the King's

Bench level. Judges in the Provincial Court are paid by the provincial government.

That's, you know, several hundred thousand dollars a year per body that the province is agreeing to take on rather than having the federal government take it on, which is, again, their choice if they think that there are good reasons for doing it, but I would like to hear a little more about what those reasons are. There are definitely some reasons in favour of this, but, again, it's important to hear what those reasons are. Now, the government will cite access to justice, and in some ways, yes, it is easier to file your claim in Provincial Court. The forms are less complex. The system is maybe more easily comprehensible to someone who is representing themselves.

Arguably it gives more people that ability, but it cuts both ways. Giving more people the ability to sue means that more people get sued. Yes, we have a problem with people who would like to sue who have valid claims and cannot get their suits into court. That is a problem that we have and that the government should be concerned with.

**9:20**

We also have a problem with people getting sued – so people who are the recipients of a lawsuit, they're on the receiving end of a lawsuit – and the claim is not a valid claim. This is a thing that happens also, because anyone can sue you. Anyone can sue anyone over anything at any moment. So, yes, allowing more people to sue arguably gives more people access to justice, but it also puts more people – because you're not just going to increase the number of valid claims; you're going to increase the number of invalid claims also, which means that there are people who are going to get sued and who are going to have to go through the time, trouble, and expense and just general personal life stress that is involved in getting sued who have done nothing wrong, who have done nothing to warrant it. Yeah. Increasing access in that way kind of cuts both ways.

I would love to hear from – because the government, I'm sure, keeps statistics on this, so I would love to hear from people about, like, how they're measuring what the legal needs are and how this better meets the legal needs. Because there is out there in the province – and I suspect other places, but I'm most familiar with Alberta – a problem of unmet legal needs. It's a big problem, and it's growing every day. A lot of it is in family law. Some of it is in civil law. It's all over the place, and the problem doesn't just arise in terms of those who are least able to afford it. Like, probably people up to the median income and above can't afford to pay for their legal needs currently, so it is a big problem. It is something that the minister and the courts and the entire legal system should greatly concern themselves with.

But what I would like to know is: what sort of analysis was done on what the unmet legal needs are and why this is the best solution as opposed to any other solution? I would raise, once again, legal aid. If the province is going to take on the increased cost – because this, allowing claims up to \$200,000 in Provincial Court, is not a thing that's going to help anyone access justice unless it comes with the resources to process those claims. So unless the government is willing to pay for additional judges and additional support staff to deal with those claims, it doesn't help. [interjection] Oh. Sorry.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for allowing me to quickly intervene on the topic of legal aid. I have spoken in this House about the, I think, unprecedented public protest by acting members and legal aid profession lawyers

on the streets in this province, begging, demanding, protesting the government's inaction to addressing their acute needs to keep their system functioning. I know that I worked in that system as a volunteer, and it's been an ongoing lack for decades and has finally come to a head with this crowd in the streets of lawyers actually protesting. I've never seen that before, and I don't think the public has. So what indeed needs to be done to address that acute critical need, as you mention legal aid in particular?

**Ms Ganley:** Yeah. Thank you very much for that question, because you're right. The problem extends beyond just those who qualify for legal aid, but it definitely covers those who would otherwise qualify for legal aid, and it is incredibly problematic. The reason you're seeing criminal lawyers and now family lawyers as well sort of come together to try to take the government to task on this issue is because it is a critical problem.

It's also another violation of another agreement. I think that's one of the most frustrating things, that there was a lot of time and energy put in not just on the part of the government but on the part of legal aid itself and the Law Society of Alberta, who obviously are an important partner in this as well, to come to an agreement in terms of how to go forward with legal aid, in terms of what funding was necessary to meet those most core, most basic needs. Like, this isn't a luxurious system. This isn't a system that's going to fix all the problems. It was a system that was designed to, like, at least – at least – hit those minimums, those basics. A lot of time and effort went into setting up an agreement to go forward, and everyone signed it, and this government just tossed it out, much like they tossed out the contract with doctors and threatened to lay off nurses after the pandemic. I mean, it's another step. It's another step. Yes, legal aid is in a critical shortage, and certainly we ought to see more funding going there. Yes.

That being said, you know, compared to putting this money, say, into legal aid, why is this the government's solution? That's the question I have, because I think that when the government talks about access to justice, what they should be doing is looking at what the needs are and how those needs are best met. I'm not saying that this doesn't do it; I'm just saying that no evidence has been provided that it does do it. At the same time that this costs more money, we have legal aid still continuing to be underfunded. At the same time, incidentally, Madam Speaker, the government is continuing to raid the victims of crime fund to fund its other programs.

So this is – yeah. It's problematic, and I would like to know a little more about it. It might not be problematic, but I would like to know a little more about this specific thing: what it's intended to achieve, why the government thinks that this is the best throw they have on access to justice, and what they're going to do about things like legal aid, what they're going to do about the other side of the coin; i.e., more people get access to the court system, but more people wind up on the receiving end of lawsuits that are potentially unmerited. And those people can't even go to Legal Aid and seek legal aid because the funding just isn't there.

Yeah. I mean, this has the potential to be a good thing. It has the potential to be an extremely problematic thing. Overall, I would say, I mean, that we're generally supportive of the bill. I do have questions. I would say, again, that it's one of those "yes; and" things.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 5?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

### Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** I seek a speaker for Bill 4. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. Across this province our front-line health care workers have dedicated their lives to ensuring that we receive the best care possible. Even during unprecedented times with unimaginable pressures our front-line workers acted with unwavering dedication to serve all Albertans. Whether it be the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current wave of seasonal flu or respiratory viruses, or simple everyday health care needs, our physicians continue to show up for Albertans.

Across this country, however, front-line health care workers are not being given the support that they need. As a father I need to be assured that when my family needs care, it will be there when they need it. For that to happen, we need to have the right supports in place, supports that acknowledge and address the challenges our physicians are facing in delivering essential health care services. That being said, I'm proud to be able to support this government in upholding our commitment to giving our world-class front-line health workers the support that they need.

9:30

This bill allows us to not only uphold that commitment, Madam Chair, but to strengthen it as well. By ratifying a new agreement between the government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association, we can rebuild our relationship with physicians and ensure that Albertan families receive the best care possible. A new agreement will stabilize the health care system, target areas of concern, and effectively support Albertans' health care needs. With its significant investments the new agreement will also provide a path forward to address the challenges that the health system is currently facing.

Madam Chair, this bill contains the solutions we need, concrete solutions, with financial resources behind them to address these challenges. Under this bill Alberta's physicians will continue to be among the highest compensated in Canada with an average increase of 4 per cent over the four-year term. Not only is this in line with other recent public-sector agreements, but there will be larger average increases for specialties facing greater pressures as well. Under this bill we will see \$252 million in new spending over four years on target initiatives, \$59 million in annual funding, and \$16 million in one-time investments targeted at communities and specialties facing recruitment and retention issues.

Now, this funding will address pressures, including recruitment and retention programs, so more Albertans can access family doctors along with more support for practice viability. The list goes on, Madam Chair. Lump-sum increases for primary care networks, PCNs, of \$20 million in each of the 2022 to 2023 and 2023-24 will provide additional support for primary while the modernizing Alberta's primary health care system work takes place. In comparison to Budget 2022, we expect physician services budget spending to be

an additional \$450 million in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, \$573 million the next year, and \$770 million in 2024 to 2025.

Madam Chair, under the leadership of the Minister of Health our government has been sincere over the past year in showing a willingness to listen, to acknowledge the challenges in the health care system, and to do something about it. That's why outlined in this agreement is our commitment to remove section 40.2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, or Bill 21 as some people call it, to take away any government's ability to terminate this agreement in the future. As a government this agreement allows us to provide stability during historically volatile times. It will allow us to work together with physicians or partners and to provide innovative solutions regarding things like payment models that work best for family physicians to keep their practices viable.

Madam Chair, the agreement also sends a very positive message to physicians and the AMA that the government values the relationship and is working collaboratively to strengthen our health care system. We hope the stronger relationship may also strengthen attraction and retention efforts, especially in rural and remote communities. For physicians, this agreement gives them the voice that they are entitled to, and it recognizes physicians as leaders in the health care system and will allow them to have an expanded role at the table.

The fact of the matter is that we have just experienced a historic global pandemic, one that inevitably has highlighted some of the cracks in our country's health care system. I would hope that the members opposite agree that this agreement sets the right tone and will help us put our best foot forward over the next four years as we start to repair the cracks and move the system forward so Albertans can access the care they need when they need it. Madam Chair, that's why I'm supporting Bill 4, so that we can continue doing our job and tackling the challenges that are before us in the health care system to the betterment of all of our families.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 4. It's interesting. As I listen to the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and his comments talking about how indeed the bill which rescinds the government – he's suggested it's going to be any future government's right to tear up a contract that the government had made with an organization. In this case it was doctors. To suggest that would be forever done with: I'm thinking that in doctors' minds that is the farthest thing from what they believe to be the truth because, indeed, if it happened once, they probably feel quite certain that it can be made to happen again. This is not a permanent peace accord. It perhaps is a period of truce, but it certainly is not something that will be forgotten or forgiven.

I remember the final words in one of the movies that I've seen a long time ago, *The Killing Fields*, about the war I believe it's in Cambodia where lots of – lots of – people were taken hostage and murdered by the Khmer Rouge. One of the individuals who was incarcerated was a journalist who was Asian, and he was associated with an American. He ended up spending lots of time in an internment camp and finally was able to escape. The American journalist went overseas to see him, and he sought forgiveness, and the individual who had been suffering in incarceration said: nothing is forgiven.

I think that's the same thing that holds true for the doctors in this province who suffered the ignominy of having their contract torn up under the terms of Bill 21, now being rescinded, that power being rescinded under the terms of Bill 4. The government members

are looking for a pat on the back. They're looking for forgiveness. I won't deign to speak for the doctors, but I can't imagine that forgiveness is the first thing on their mind when they see Bill 4, because indeed the hatchet, the guillotine still hangs above their head. The memory of that Bill 21, which eviscerated their contract, will never ever be forgotten and will forever be a stain and a blight upon the relationship between government and our doctors and indeed the whole health care system in this province.

While Bill 4 does repeal the government's right to extinguish or tear up or rescind or kill or eviscerate or cremate, however you want to describe it, the right to doctors' contracts, the government has continued to find other ways, other means to diminish the role of the medical professionals in this province while boasting about Bill 4, which retracts the switchblade the government used to carve out this signature from the contract with doctors.

The new Premier adds insult to injury by refusing to stand in this House and simply, very clearly encourage people to get vaccinated against the flu. Why? They seek a pat on the back, Madam Chair. They seek a pat on the back and congratulations, yet they won't do the very basic things that will actually gain them some reward from the medical community in this province, and that is by advocating from the highest office of this province, from the Premier's mouth, that people actually get their children and themselves vaccinated against the flu, which is causing our emergency rooms to be overloaded. For one small utterance the price that we're paying – or for lack of that utterance, the price that we're paying is an unforgivable one. It's petty that we can't hear the Premier say those words: get yourself vaccinated. We hear it in government advertising. We hear the Health minister say it. But for the Premier to deign to say that is somehow beneath her. Somehow it's a slight to her right-wing rump, which is actually dictating to the government its own policy.

That's an embarrassment, Madam Chair, that Albertans are scratching their head at. I find that on the doors repeatedly I hear about the things that the government has done, and one of the top-of-mind things that is remembered by people in this province is how doctors' contracts were torn up. People still have a very great respect for the medical profession in this province, and they do not put the blame at the foot of doctors and nurses and LPNs for the failures of this government to manage the pandemic and manage the now respiratory disease outbreak that we have this province going through. They put it squarely at the foot of the government, and it's plain to see why when the Premier won't even come out and say to Albertans: I encourage you to go out and get vaccinated against the flu. It's a safety measure. It's a health measure to protect each other. It is mind boggling that one sees this type of behaviour from the Premier. It's really mind boggling to Albertans. I've witnessed it time and time again on a doorstep.

9:40

It's embarrassing, frankly, to see the sin of omission by a Premier who knows full well – knows full well – even though she doesn't want to admit it publicly, that vaccines work and they work against flu transmission. It will help from having our hospital system overwhelmed in the next little while if it already isn't overwhelmed.

I've spoken with doctors at the Misericordia hospital who, in response to my question about "What would it take to be the final straw that breaks the camel's back?" both looked at me and said, "It's already broken." It's already broken. We've gone beyond the point of it being the straw that broke the camel's back. We're seeing outcomes that are much, much worse than they otherwise would have been had other measures been taken. We're seeing premature deaths happen as well, Madam Chair, and that's a disgrace to this province and disgraceful behaviour by this government, that indeed



we're having those things happen in their hospitals, and it just simply requires a more forthright acceptance of real facts and real science by particularly the leader of the government, the new Premier of this province. So congratulations? No. That's not what doctors and not what nurses are going to be extolling upon the government. They want to hear from the Premier: get vaccinated; wear a mask indoors.

I mean, my grandfather – I've told this House before – over a hundred years ago, while harvesting away from home for a few months, returned near the end of the fall harvest, got a ride close to home on a farmer's wagon. That farmer picked him up and proceeded further down the road, close to their homestead, a short while closer to the homestead picked up another young man, and they continued on. Both got off at the same homestead, my grandfather's homestead. To his dismay my grandfather realized that the young man who got on was his own brother. He didn't recognize him, Madam Chair, because he was wearing a mask to protect themselves against the Spanish flu in 1918.

A hundred years ago, over a hundred years ago, people knew well enough 60 miles north of this city of Edmonton, this Legislature, to protect themselves from the Spanish flu, a pandemic then, yet here in this day and age, in 2022, we have a Premier who won't utter the words: please go get yourself vaccinated; I encourage Albertans to protect each other; come together as a province and protect each other. That's the type of leadership we're seeing in this province, and for that this government hopes to be congratulated? For rescinding something as onerous as the ability to tear up a government contract with doctors? Unforgivable, Madam Chair. Unforgivable.

Other ways that the government is finding to create a poor relationship with the doctors, nurses, and other health care providers in this province continue to astound me. I hear, on one side of the coin, the government members saying: my goodness, they're doing wonderful jobs; they're doing excellent things. And then they, on the other side of the coin, felt justified in tearing up the doctors' contract. What changed then and now? Why was it so justifiable to tear up a bona fide, legitimate contract . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Because an election is coming.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, probably because a lawsuit was coming. That might have been one reason, sure.

But now they're apologetic for it? I haven't really heard apologies, but I've heard the request for congratulations for doing so. Nothing so despicable can I think of has ever happened in terms of relationship between doctors and the government of Alberta.

It's emblematic, Madam Chair, of the type of dictatorial powers that this government likes to exercise and then apologize for later. They tried to get away with something in Bill 1 that we railed against and all Albertans railed against, legal scholars railed against, giving themselves the power to change legislation and create legislation within cabinet behind closed doors. Now, that little element of it, which was a significant departure from normal legislative practice in the Westminster parliament, was taken out of the bill, but there are still many, many parts to that piece of legislation, Bill 1, which will affect us forever if indeed it's allowed to stand. You can bet that we won't allow it to stand should we hold office in May of 2023. Bill 4 is yet another example of the draconian tactics that this government will use and then apologize for later, expecting thanks and forgiveness to be granted by the province of Alberta, by the population of Alberta, and that's not going to be forthcoming. This is one of many Achilles heels that this government has created for itself in hopes of serving its right-wing flank, which has taken over the party, which is now sitting on the front benches of the party.

The government is not recognized by the people in this province. There is maybe a small percentage, maybe 15, 20 per cent. I'm not sure of the percentage, but I'll tell you what, Madam Chair. I uttered the other day that Mr. Diefenbaker and other major Conservatives historically in this country would be rolling in their graves to see what this purported Conservative party has become. I know that my own mother, who is a former Conservative supporter, would with her limited capacity right now even turn the TV off when she hears the current Premier coming to speak. That's saying something, because I thought that she was not capable of that type of analysis still. But, believe me, the Premier has elicited things from my mother's capacity that I didn't think still existed. I was pleasantly surprised about that but very disturbed that it took that length and that depth of a problematic, dictatorial capacity exercised by our Premier to show that that capacity still existed in my mother's critical analysis ability.

Nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Chair, that the doctors and the health care professionals in this province are coming to congratulate the government for rescinding the onerous measure in Bill 21 by enacting Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act. There's a very large fear that will always remain within that profession that they can do it again. They did it without shame the first time, and, believe me, that maxim rings true from the last line of the movie *The Killing Fields* with respect to doctors and the relationship between doctors and the government of Alberta: nothing is forgiven.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak once again to Bill 4. I want to extend my thanks to the members of the Assembly for their comments during second reading and during Committee of the Whole, in particular to my colleague that I'm looking across the way at, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, for his comments. I also want to thank all members here for their support for this bill. It is truly greatly appreciated.

As I said during second reading, Madam Chair, we acknowledge that the health system is under pressure and is facing significant challenges. Physicians and health care professionals are facing strain. It is a difficult time, and their dedication to caring for Albertans is truly valued. Once again I say thank you to all of them.

Now, these challenges, contrary to the assertions made during second reading, are not unique to Alberta and are not the result of government policy but, rather, are the result of a particularly challenging respiratory virus season and the impacts of COVID. They are happening in jurisdictions across the country and indeed the entire world, Madam Chair.

Alberta's government is taking concrete action to address these challenges facing the system. Examples include a new official administrator for AHS and a concrete AHS reform plan. That plan tackles EMS response times, decreasing ER wait times, reductions in surgery wait times, and longer term reforms through consultations with front-line workers to be able to push down decision-making and enable and support front-line workers in providing care to Albertans that they greatly need and so greatly deserve.

Of course, the new agreement with the Alberta Medical Association is another example of concrete action. We are confident the agreement will help stabilize the health system, target areas of concern, and support Albertans' health care needs. The agreement has significant investments to address the current challenges and issues brought forward by physicians during our conversations, Madam Chair. It is an agreement that focuses on

partnership, working closely with the AMA, and on stability by adding an estimated \$750 million to the budget to stabilize the health care system, including \$260 million in targeted funding to address various pressures.

Finally, it is an agreement about innovation. This is about working jointly with doctors to promote different pay models. There were comments made during second reading about physicians leaving Alberta. To be perfectly clear, Madam Chair, physician retention and recruitment is one of our top priorities. We know there are barriers to care for those looking for support and treatment close to home and family, and we are committed to providing access to health care professionals, including physicians, no matter where Albertans live.

9:50

The latest data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows that in the last four years Alberta's physician supply grew by almost 4 per cent and that the number of specialists grew by just under 10 per cent. According to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta there was an increase of 176 physicians in Alberta at the end of September 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. Alberta performs more physician practice readiness assessments than any other jurisdiction in Canada, and the majority are for family medicine placements in rural Alberta.

According to the latest data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information Alberta had the second-highest proportion of foreign trained physicians in the country in 2021, at just over 34 per cent. [some applause] Thank you. But we know there is more work to do, particularly to have the right number of doctors in the right places throughout our province, so we will continue to work to address these issues.

Madam Chair, I also want to take a moment to address comments that members made during the second reading debate regarding the issue of trust. Since becoming Health minister, one of my top priorities has been the relationship with physicians. I've listened to them, acknowledged the difficulties they're facing as well as the challenges that we are facing collectively in our health care system, and I've committed to taking action to address these challenges. I was personally at the bargaining table. I respect Alberta's physicians, full stop. We'll be working with the AMA as very close partners in the weeks and months ahead, and we will continue working together to implement the agreement to address other key issues related to physician compensation.

Madam Chair, the bill before us is about following through on our promise to the AMA and to physicians, and it is a further step toward continuing an environment of partnership. It repeals section 40.2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. This section of the act allows the government to terminate compensation-related agreements, and if the bill is passed, the government's mechanism for terminating the new AMA agreement will be removed, as we committed to do in the agreement. The legislation is no longer required. There is now a defined term for the agreement and a process and timelines in place for negotiating and amending a successor agreement. Bill 4 also proposes a housekeeping amendment to update language in the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to reflect the updated title of the Minister of Justice. It was previously the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

To conclude, Madam Chair, I want to thank Alberta's physicians and all health care providers for their tireless work and selfless commitment over the past few challenging years. Our government appreciates the tremendous contributions physicians make on the front lines in the health care system each and every single day. Alberta's government is deeply appreciative of their critical role.

Once again, I thank all members of this House for their support of Bill 4.

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak once again.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill because what it does is reverse a decision that I think was one of the worst and most egregious things that this government has done, and that list is a very long list. This government is patting itself on the back, talking about upholding their commitment and ratifying a new agreement, but what about "Sorry"? What about "We made a mistake"? What about "We apologize"? None of those words seem to be coming from the folks over there.

Madam Chair, they ought to apologize because not only is this reversing a bad decision that they made, but they cannot reverse the damage the decision caused. Physicians take a long time to train. Four years of undergrad, four years of medical school, internship, residency: they take a long time to train. You're looking at at least a decade. So those physicians that this bad decision on behalf of the government has forced out of our province will take a very long time to replace.

Albertans are suffering. Albertans are suffering right now. There are tens of thousands of people in the city of Lethbridge alone without a family physician. Part of the problem with why our ERs and our paramedics are presently overwhelmed is because many people have no access to primary care. When people have no access to primary care – and let us be clear. The government's original decision to tear up that agreement was aimed at family physicians; it was aimed at primary care. There is no question. It was clear in their messaging. It was clear in their actions. That decision has had huge impacts.

What happens when people don't have access to primary care, Madam Chair, is that they get sicker, and it costs more to treat them. It is worse for the individuals, it is worse for the system as a whole, and it is worse for the budget and the bottom line. It's worse in every conceivable way, and this government just stomped in and made those decisions without considering the ramifications of their actions. They had no regard to duty, to the rule of law, to contracts, to promises, to any of that.

You know, this was an egregiously bad decision. No one is saying that there aren't challenges in other jurisdictions. No one is saying that everyone isn't struggling with respiratory illnesses and health care systems, but this government chose to make a bad situation worse. They chose to stomp in and rip up the contract with doctors. They chose to publicly attack family physicians and drive them out of the province at the worst possible time. They chose to drive the health care system to the red line over and over and over again, exhausting health care professionals throughout the province. They chose to threaten nurses with laying them off as soon as the pandemic was over. They chose to try to roll back the salaries of respiratory therapists and many other health care professionals in the midst of a pandemic, when it was the worst possible decision.

No one is saying that there aren't challenges in other places, Madam Chair, but what we are saying is that this government was handed the best health care system in the country, possibly in the world, and they have done everything they can to drive it to the brink of disaster, with no word of thank you to the health care professionals who have given up time with their families, who have suffered from enormous stress during this pandemic, who have worked around the clock to try and clean up the mess that this

government made. To have the minister stand in his place and say, “You know, since I’ve become minister, our relationship with doctors is top priority”: well, that’s not good enough. It doesn’t fix the damage that was done.

Sure, the government has repealed its ability to tear up the contract with doctors, but, I mean, they didn’t have the ability when they came in, and they went ahead and passed legislation to grant themselves that ability. So what gives us any assurance that they won’t do it again? They’ve demonstrated a total disrespect for laws, for contracts, for promises, for what people are owed, for duty, for the health care system, for the public. I don’t know. You know, they’ve repealed it for now because they say that it’s no longer necessary. Well, Madam Chair, it was never necessary in the first place. When was attacking doctors necessary? What made that necessary? I don’t think anything.

Yes, this is a good bill. It fixes a very big mistake that the government made. But normally when you make a big mistake and you try your best to undo it, even though, again, you can’t undo the consequences, you can’t undo the damage to the trust – there was a contract in place. There was a promise – a contract is a promise – to these physicians, and this government went back on that promise. They broke that trust, and it doesn’t just reappear. That’s not how trust works. Once violated, it is very difficult to get back, and it doesn’t undo the damage that tearing up the contract did. It doesn’t undo the damage that this government had done. Worse still, you know, the government is undoing this one thing. Meanwhile the fact that they pushed the system to the verge of collapse: no apology for that. No apology for this action.

10:00

We have a Premier now who won’t even tell people to get their flu shot in one of the worst flu seasons in recent memory. We have a Premier who won’t tell people to get their flu shots. We have a health care system that is overwhelmed and a government unwilling to do the least that they possibly can. So, sure, this is a good step. Congratulations to the government for reversing an atrociously bad decision. Congratulations. That’s a little thing we call damning with faint praise.

Madam Chair, I am appalled that the government would not apologize for this decision. I am appalled that the government would refuse to apologize, would expect to be congratulated. You know, this should be a moment in which the government is willing to stand before the people of Alberta and admit that they made a mistake, that they were wrong, and apologize for it. At least they’re reversing the decision, but the first step to rebuilding trust with the people of Alberta would be an apology. I think that that is the least that this government could offer. I think that physicians are owed that apology. I think that the damage that this government has done to our system will last for decades, and I think that that is extremely problematic, and for that, they owe an apology to every person in this province for the damage that they have caused.

I think, Madam Chair, that I have made that point fairly clearly at this point. I could go on at length, but I will leave it there. With that, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 3

#### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 3, the property rights amendment

act. I know that all the members of this House had been waiting with bated breath to hear from the member representing Edmonton’s downtown on the question of property rights. I recognize that this is not something that generally is an issue within Edmonton’s downtown. I will say that this is something that I have heard from constituents about. Now, admittedly, not many, but it has been brought to my attention. For example, just recently I was out at an event and I met a gentleman. We were talking, and he said: hey, by the way, my dad is your constituent, and I’d like to get him in touch with you because he has an issue on his property with an abandoned oil and gas well.

Now, I recognize that that’s not specifically about the sorts of things we’re talking about here in terms of adverse possession, but it is connected with the question of property rights. Indeed, I was able to help his father. He was having some trouble accessing the documents online to be able to file his application to be able to make a claim about the neglect of the particular company that’s responsible for the oil and gas well that’s degrading on his property. His father is living here in my constituency now but, of course, still owning the property out in the rural area of the province.

I am also aware of the impacts that these sorts of situations can have just through, of course, situations between landlords and tenants. I know that this is something that has been exacerbated lately, particularly with challenges around housing prices. I remember recently reading a story online of a woman in Ontario who had used all of her savings to buy a property, a condominium that she was going to move into, a townhouse, and, in buying it, discovered that there was a tenant living there, that she had not known about, who was refusing to leave the property. This woman found herself in a situation where she’s essentially living in her car while somebody illegally occupies her property while she waits to get through in Ontario, where their landlord-tenant dispute system is so badly backlogged. So I recognize the challenges that there can be when you run into these situations where you have somebody that is illegally occupying a property.

I know this has been quite a process. This is a question that’s been debated for some time. Indeed, the current Premier, the first time she was here in this House as Leader of the Official Opposition and then a member of the government party after she crossed the floor – but before that part she indeed was speaking quite a bit as the leader then of the Wildrose Party about the issue of property rights in the province of Alberta. So this is something that has been going around for some time, and there’s been a lot of consideration, and we’ve seen quite a process that has gone through to get us to having this bill in front of the House today.

Indeed, I was taking the opportunity to review some of the history, and I was reading a blog post from Stella Varvis, who is with the Alberta Law Reform Institute, about some of their review that they did as part of the consultation. I believe this was around 2020. The blog post was published in August of last year, in 2021. She talked about some of that review that they did. Indeed, they went out and talked with Albertans, and approximately 87 per cent of the folks that they surveyed agreed that adverse possession should be abolished in Alberta, so strong support. The respondents offered comments like: well, whoever holds title to the land should be entitled to keep it, that no one should be able to take land from the person who paid for it, that adverse possession is indeed theft, and the law should not be something that rewards bad behaviour.

Now, it was interesting. There were a few folks that were not in favour of abolishing. Some interesting arguments such as suggesting that adverse possession promotes responsible land ownership and stewardship or suggesting that it’s a good way to adjust property boundaries. I can’t say that I find much sympathy with that, Madam Chair, the idea that a property owner should have

to regularly go out and inspect to make sure that nobody is squatting on their property, that nobody happens to have built a shack or taken over some other space or moved a fence while they weren't looking and therefore they should be punished by losing that portion of their property. That does not make sense to me.

[Mr. Gotfried in the chair]

Certainly, I'm happy, I think, to support this bill. This is a reasonable step to ensure that a property owner is not unduly punished or taken advantage of by a disingenuous actor. There are a few thoughts as we sort of take a look at this legislation and consider what some of the potential impacts might be, again, agreeing with the overall principle of the bill and the concept and moving in the direction but certainly some questions about the impacts it might have.

Now, certainly, I think, as some other members on our side of the House have noted, there are some questions about wanting to be sure that there is absolute clarity that this legislation will not impact Indigenous and treaty rights, to ensure that they're respected within the context of this legislation, including for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit rights holders.

Now, of course, as others have noted in debate today, Mr. Chair, just this morning we all awoke to find an article from staff from the government of Alberta, folks that worked in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, who spoke out very clearly about an utter failure, in fact, a refusal on the part of the government to consult with First Nations on their signature piece of legislation, Bill 1, the sovereignty act. It's an egregious oversight, an intentional choice to abrogate and ignore the duty to consult that this government knew it had. The condescension that we have seen coming from this Premier as she tries to suggest, "Well, it's not really a big deal; we'll talk to them after the fact; it's not really what's important to them; there are lots of other things" flies directly in the face of reconciliation.

**10:10**

I'll be honest. I feel badly for the Indigenous Relations minister for the position that he's been put in by his own government and his own cabinet colleagues and the utter disrespect that's been shown to First Nation leaders in the province of Alberta. I don't care, Mr. Chair, how much this government talks about how they're going to – well, we'll make sure we'll give you more opportunity with oil and gas, and we'll work on other things. The fact is that it is a fundamental step of disrespect coming from a government that is, in that act, declaring their own sovereignty and talking about their own rights and how they have to stand up to the overreach of Ottawa to then turn around and do exactly the same thing to First Nations leaders and First Nations in the province of Alberta.

It's an insult, Mr. Chair, which is why we want to ensure that with this bill the government has indeed done due and proper consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit rights holders and certainly looking for them to make clear on the record their intent with respect to Indigenous rights holders with respect to exercising their treaty rights and their traditional activities on the land.

It was interesting, actually. I listen to a podcast called *Canadaland*. They cover a wide range of topics, and this morning they were talking about the creation of Wood Buffalo national park and the process by which that land was – there's no other way to put it – stolen from the First Nations here in the province of Alberta. There is, unfortunately, a long history of this kind of action by government and not all in the past, as, again, we see with the sovereignty act that same sort of arrogance, entitlement, and disrespect still exists in government today.

Certainly, I think it's important that when we are bringing forward a piece of legislation like this, which indeed is doing a good

thing – again, to be clear, I support the principle of the legislation and the removal of adverse possession, but we need to be absolutely sure that as we do that, there has been the proper consultation and that nothing in this act will in fact impact those treaty rights. We certainly do have the question, and I apologize if perhaps during the debate when I have not been present in the House, a member of government has stood or perhaps the Minister of Indigenous Relations or the Minister of Justice has stood and explained what consultation took place with First Nations, but certainly I think that would be important to put on the record in this House.

Now, the second piece, Mr. Chair, is, as noted by the Alberta Law Reform Institute in the blog that I mentioned from Ms Stella Varvis – they proposed that there be a tribunal, an ombudsperson, or an alternative dispute resolution to be considered along with a legislative amendment so it does not create additional capacity issues in the courts. We know that we have faced real challenges in the court system. We saw that happen during COVID-19. We saw the issues that that generated and indeed, as I noted, for example, the situation of the woman that bought the property in Ontario who has been forced to live in her car because she cannot get into the system that exists because the capacity is overreached.

Certainly, if we are going to implement this and it's something that is going to require an individual to go to the Court of King's Bench in order to get remedy, if there is no access there due to a lack of capacity or indeed due to a lack of funding – and indeed we've had much discussion about the current challenges with funding for legal aid for individuals that may not be able to afford a lawyer or are, say, in certain situations. If we do not have an opportunity for them to seek some other resolution, then, in effect, the change that's being made in law is ineffective for them. It is not accessible to them because they do not have the means to be able to actually access the justice that they are entitled to.

Now, certainly, this is something we have discussed as well when it comes to issues with condominium boards, and indeed that is something I still hear from my constituents about, Mr. Chair, because, again, that is an incredible challenge, an incredible burden for individuals who are facing a situation with their condominium board and something that may in fact be unjust. But being forced to have to go through the court system and having no other option, facing a board that has much deeper pockets than they themselves do, ironically pockets that are funded by some of their own condo fees: it presents an incredible challenge and makes it very difficult for them to in fact obtain justice. It's unfortunate that this government chose to put the brakes on that process and took that option off the table and have kind of left those folks hanging after a lot of promises and time invested to try to get there.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

So I think it's important that as we consider this property rights amendment act, we consider whether or not the courts are going to be able to handle the additional capacity for individuals who may need to bring a case forward regarding adverse possession or are trying to regain control of their property or evict someone that should not be there.

Certainly, again, we saw the foot-dragging, the resistance from the Minister of Justice as defence lawyers have fought to get changes on funding, to get the amounts that are due to them under legal aid that were committed and that this government has failed to live up to. Indeed, if we were going to add a lot of extra burden onto the court system at a time when we know we are still challenged for capacity, the question is: what is this government going to do? Is there going to be additional funding? Are there going to be additional steps? How is it going to move forward to

ensure that this additional caseload – and, again, it is right that individuals be able to pursue this justice and have that opportunity, but we need to have the capacity in the system for them to be able to do so.

Lastly, Madam Chair, as I said, as in the case of the constituent who came to me for assistance in obtaining the paperwork to be able to move forward with a claim regarding the oil and gas infrastructure that is degrading on their property, it's my understanding that the committee that was undertaking the review that has led to this legislation indeed heard from many landowners on the context of surface rights, specifically like this situation from my constituent, where an oil or gas well has been orphaned or abandoned or where companies have tax arrears and money that's owed to the property owners. So it would be helpful to get a bit more clarity on how or if this legislation will actually help these individuals as they are seeking remediation of their property or seeking to be compensated for the arrears that they are owed.

If, in fact, this bill is not going to help them to get there, the question is, then: what steps is this government intending to take? What help are they planning to provide to help individuals be able to seek that? Of course, we know that has been happening in a larger context, and we have seen some small steps from government towards helping municipalities who are in a similar position of trying to recoup taxes that are owed from oil and gas companies but not nearly the amount that was needed. Certainly, we hear from municipalities quite regularly that they need more assistance from the government, particularly given that this government has downloaded so many of its costs onto municipalities while at the same time cutting key funding in areas like MSI.

All that said, as I've noted, the steps that are being taken in this legislation are indeed appropriate. We should be moving forward to eliminate the existence of adverse possession in the province of Alberta, so I'll be happy to join my colleagues in supporting Bill 3.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 3. I'll start with a couple of words: it's time. I'll probably end with the same words.

Madam Chair, I first became aware of adverse possession in about 2016, when one of my constituents was facing a claim of adverse possession. Oddly, we always think of adverse possession, squatter's rights, in a rural context, but this was in an urban context, in my constituency. Sadly, the good-neighbour policy is not something to be presumed. In this case a fence had been in the wrong place for about 10 years. I was just reading up on the Law Reform Institute's citing of this, Moore versus McIndoe. Jim McIndoe is my constituent, as was Mr. Moore as well.

That fence had been in place – they knew it was in the wrong place – for the 10 years plus a day. It was a little bit longer than that. The person who claimed the adverse possession was not an easy neighbour. Hence, they knew the fence was in the wrong place, but they left it in place, but when the fence was starting to become a little bit decrepit, they contacted the neighbour and said that it was time to move that fence, to rebuild it, which they would pay half the cost of, and to put it in the appropriate place.

**10:20**

Shortly thereafter they received a claim of adverse possession against about 800 square feet of his land, which then resulted in my getting involved with that. That was 2016. The result for my poor constituent, because the other one gained, was to lose about 800 square feet of his lot. Now, it happens to be a lot that's on a lake,

fairly expensive property. Loss of that 800 square feet, which included about eight feet of lake frontage, between that and his legal fees, was over \$150,000. For someone to claim his land with no compensation, in fact the opposite at about \$150,000 loss of land and cost to him – that got me involved. That got me pretty upset about the whole thing, again proving that the good-neighbour policy is not one to be presumed.

Madam Chair, if you look back a little bit, as early as 1989 the Alberta Law Reform Institute took a look at this. In fact, Sandra Petersson did a full report in 1992. Guess what that report was basically coined as? Something for Nothing. That's exactly what my constituent's neighbour got, something for nothing. In fact, that neighbour had been cited previously for encroaching on some community lands, which was a lake access, before and had been sued and had to move his fence. This was not only somebody who was not a great neighbour, but they were a serial not-great neighbour. Very sad for the situation at that time. So the Alberta Law Reform Institute took a look at that in 1989, 1992, and 2003, where, in fact, one of the quotes in their report was that the recognition of the proposition of adverse possession was absurd.

In 2012 MLA Ken Allred, who I interacted with significantly on this – he happens to be a land surveyor by profession as well – had Motion 507, which was passed but was never taken forward. Sorry; that was in 2011-2012. He managed to get a draw of Bill 204, and that passed second reading and, unfortunately, was ended through a proroguing of the Legislature at that time. We also know that, interestingly enough, Bill 204 seems to be a magic number, because Pat Stier brought that forward in 2017, and then I actually had the Bill 204 draw in 2018, which was pushed back to the Alberta Law Reform Institute by the then Minister of Justice and was again delayed. So I'll use those words that I started with: it's time.

Since that time, in watching it very closely, there's been, obviously, research done by the Alberta Law Reform Institute and many other bodies. In July 2019 there was an interim report; in April 2020 we had a full report. Again, the number one recommendation was the abolition of adverse possession with some conditions on some of the other legislation that needed to be changed with it. We've had, you know, repeated recommendations for the abolition of adverse possession from the Alberta Property Rights Advocate, from the Resource Stewardship Committee based on many, in most cases, reports from the Alberta Property Rights Advocate.

Interestingly enough, there was another article around that time, done by Miller Thomson law firm. The title of their report for the public's consumption was What's Yours Is Mine, and that is what adverse possession has been in this province, sadly. It is outdated, and it's time to move it on, Madam Chair. When we look at some of the quotes around some of the issues there in What's Yours Is Mine, it says: "The reader is then transported back in time to medieval England to bear witness as historical forces forged the law into twin principles of extinction and acquisition. From the regal court of Henry II . . ." So here we reach back into history and see where this came into play: typically squatter's rights, maybe centuries of possession of land and use of land.

But, Madam Chair, we're now in a time where it is time to move forward with this. I thank the Minister of Justice for bringing this forward after repeated and repeated and repeated attempts, a couple of those during a previous government, who punted it off to review, to committee, back to the ALRI when it was very clear to us that there was a risk. My constituent Jim McIndoe continually called me and said: Richard, when are you going to stop this happening to one of my neighbours, one of your constituents?

Many of you may know I was in the home-building business. When we start thinking of this in urban context – just think about it. You've got an infill lot that's 25 feet wide. The fence on one side goes a little bit short, six inches back into the wrong side, and the one on the other side goes for 10 years. You get adverse possession claims on both sides. Now the people have a 24-foot lot. They don't meet setbacks anymore, so legally the city could come and say: your lot doesn't reach setbacks any more; tear the house down.

This is a time bomb waiting to hit us in the urban environment. We think of it in a rural environment, but if it hits somewhere and people don't lay – you know, the fence goes in. Where do fences usually go? You pull the old posts out, and you put the new ones back in the same hole because it's the easiest thing to do. It goes decade after decade after decade in communities. How often do they call a surveyor and say: could you make sure we're right on the centre of the line? It doesn't happen. But it can be, as we found out in this situation, that a neighbour who is maybe not exercising the good-neighbour policy says, "Ah, thanks; it's mine; I'll take it," with zero compensation. Then they have to go to the city, and they actually have to have a subdivision appeal, which shouldn't be allowed. He said to me: well, if they can take, like, eight feet of my land and a foot and a half of the front off, maybe I should just split my land into two, sell them for \$2 million a lot, and we'll build a couple of nice condos on this spot on the lake. It gets from the ridiculous to the absurd, Madam Chair.

It is past time. I'm really appreciative of the work done by the Minister of Justice to finally take this and put it to paper. I know that MLA Ken Allred is there cheering us on to get this done once and for all. He and I have been talking almost consistently since 2016, when I first became aware of this. All the fits and starts of trying to get this passed, and we're finally there.

This was also a commitment, because we approached the 2019 election, and this was still a festering part of what we needed to get done to protect Albertans and their property rights. That is on the 2019 UCP platform. Guess what? We're going to get this done before the next election. We're going to keep checking off the check boxes on that platform and deliver to Albertans what we said we would deliver, and that's going to be property rights for Albertans and their protection in one of the best land registration systems on this planet. We have that to back this up, to protect your property, to protect my property, to protect my constituents' and all of our constituents' property.

Madam Chair, now is the time. It's time for us to get this done, for us to quit delaying, for us to quit punting it down the road, and to pass this legislation. I'll be voting for it. I hope everybody else in this Chamber will do so as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Absentee landlords and adverse possessions: I was searching before to be speaking to this bill. I was searching the information and looking at the context, like, why these bills were in place. It goes back two centuries, as my friend the member from across the aisle actually tried to give some examples of from Britain and other European countries. In the U.S. the Homestead Act, absentee landlords, and adverse possession have a history. It was brought forward initially by the American Senate members or the members in 1860, and interestingly it was vetoed by the then Democratic President, if I'm not forgetting the name, James Buchanan. The next

President of America, Abraham Lincoln, actually in 1865 reintroduced the homestead laws.

It has so much significance to understand why this law was in place. There was a public demand. There was lobbying, union activism, intellectuals' calls. That bill has done a lot to provide the rights to purchase land by landless labourers working on the properties for generations without having the right to own the land. Not only that, but that also provided for the very first time the opportunity for African-Americans and slaves to purchase land before it went to the auction. Looking at this, it has significance in history, and when we look at it in the current context, things are changed big time.

**10:30**

This bill, Bill 3, you know, is a correction to Bill 206, that the UCP brought in in 2020 and that failed to address the many issues that were supposed to fix our property rights, that there was a call for in Alberta. I just wanted to say for the record that we do support this legislation to bring property rights remedies in line with legislation in other provinces and countries. But also, while I'm supporting this bill, I just wanted to say how the government missed the approach, the same approach and understandings, when they brought forward Bill 1, the importance of clear rules across jurisdictions that can help create economic certainty and good relationships between neighbours and support businesses. This bill, the property rights amendment act, is a clear example of a bill drafted after consultation. The importance of the consultation: that's what we asked a number of times in this House, and the government failed to recognize that while debating Bill 1.

In this bill we see the government's approach, that they clearly believe in the rule of law, that they're working to set clear guidelines around. They failed to do this in the sovereignty act, Bill 1, even from all walks of people: the majority of Albertans, experts, legal advisers, journalists, and economists. As I said, we support the mandate of this bill, that will fix the problems and provide remedies in property rights for adverse possession. But, similarly, there are concerns in looking into the historical contributions of this bill and also what the UCP has done in debating and passing Bill 1, the sovereignty act, the impact of this bill on the Indigenous communities.

So we have a concern that we would like to know about. This Assembly needs to make sure that Indigenous and treaty rights are to be respected within the context of this proposed legislation, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit right holders. The government needs to make it clear on the record in this House its intent with respect to Indigenous rights holders; for example, with respect to exercising treaty rights in traditional activities.

We know that this bill is the result of the Alberta Law Reform Institute's report recommendations. We also see, you know, in this report that the consultation was mostly feedback coming from – I'm just trying to see – mostly landowners in the context of surface rights. So the people, basically, who participated specifically were related to oil and gas wells, wells that had been orphaned or abandoned. Also, there are companies that have tax arrears, money owed to property owners.

So these are my very important questions. At the next, you know, opportunity to debate this bill, I would be happy to see the minister or any government member answering these concerns on whether the Indigenous nations were consulted on this bill or not and whether their treaty rights are respected in this. These are very important concerns. I think that the government members, the next time we have the opportunity to debate this bill, should answer some of those questions I have raised in this House.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 3?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Chair:** I will decide when the question is called.  
I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 4 and report Bill 3.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 3. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 4.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39 in order to allow Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), to be introduced.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(1) in order to revert to Introduction of Bills to allow Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), to be introduced.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Bill 7

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 7, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

As this is my first bill, I'm honoured to rise and move this piece of legislation that will make minor amendments to a number of statutes in order to reflect recent changes in government reorganization. What a time to be alive.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, December 13, 2022.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:40 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 13, 2022

Day 9

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
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Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
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Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
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Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
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David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
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Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

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Gotfried  
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Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Fir  
Goehring  
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McIver  
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Rowswell  
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### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Pancholi  
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Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education has an introduction of a visitor.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today to introduce an outstanding former MLA to the Assembly, through you. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Stockwell Day. Stockwell served as the MLA of what I believe to be the most beautiful constituency, my constituency of Red Deer-North. He served from 1986 until 2000. During that time he served as the minister of labour, the minister of family and social services, and Provincial Treasurer. He later moved on to a successful career in federal politics. I'm blessed to have his guidance and friendship, as many also here in the Assembly today experience. I would ask that we give him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** It seems to me that perhaps I should have asked the minister to do the introduction, because I am pleased to invite to the Assembly and welcome back the former Member for Calgary-South East, the Hon. Rick Fraser; the former Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, the Hon. Luke Ouellette; and the former Member for Calgary-Elbow and leader of the fourth party, Mr. Greg Clark. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, also seated in the Speaker's gallery today are some constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Please join me in welcoming Matthew Rowley, Brian Rowley, and Esther Rowley. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations has an introduction.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the president, Beverly Allard; vice-president Aretha Greatrix; and board member Richard Leask from the Indigenous Congress of Alberta. The Indigenous Congress of Alberta aims to serve Indigenous people from across Alberta who do not feel actively acknowledged by any other representative body. Over the past two years it has supported over 100,000 Indigenous individuals with COVID-related support. Let's ensure they receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the

Assembly the amazing staff of the Edmonton-Decore constituency office. Joining us today in the gallery are office manager Irshaad Khan, caseworker David Mandrusiak, and first-year social work student out of Grant MacEwan Mahat Abdi. Gentlemen, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you Jenn McManus of the Canadian Red Cross. She's the vice-president for Alberta and Northwest Territories, whom I got to know through her supporting Fort McMurray through fire and flood. Please show her the warm reception of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly two of my great friends from Cypress-Medicine Hat. First, we have Garret, one of the hardest workers I know and one of the best directional drillers in all of Alberta, and his wife, Mandi, a realtor and a very hard worker, a great volunteer for Conservative caucuses. Mandi and Garret Campbell, could you please stand and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Turton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you councillor Stuart Houston. Mr. Houston is a close friend, a former mayor, a current member of Spruce Grove city council, and recipient of the Queen's jubilee medal. I'm proud to say that our vibrant community is a better place because of the hard work he has contributed over decades of public service. Councillor Houston, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Postsecondary Institutions and Downtown Calgary

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, over the next decade 100,000 Albertans will finish high school and start looking to the future. This will be the largest group in history. We need to give these young Albertans, our future leaders, real opportunities right here at home or they will leave. At the same time, Calgary's downtown has been forced to contend with office vacancy rates not seen in decades. Overcoming these challenges will be critical to building a resilient economy, but there is a solution.

Alberta's NDP has committed to establishing a new downtown Calgary postsecondary campus. We proposed a downtown campus as part of our Alberta's Future project, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Calgary Economic Development and the Calgary Chamber of commerce recently released reports supporting a new campus, and the city of Calgary has already committed to contributing \$9 million.

Research indicates that downtown campuses support the creation of more start-ups, the development of more inventions, and more licensing deals. We're already starting from a position of strength because of our world-class institutions. The University of Calgary, for example, is the top start-up creator amongst research institutions in Canada. Today we sent a letter to postsecondary presidents requesting a proposal for this exciting new campus. We can convert empty office space into housing and other usable spaces. This new campus can be a place where Albertans can live, work, and learn.

We know postsecondary education is an economic driver. That's why we will move quickly to undo the damage caused by the UCP to postsecondaries, cuts that totalled nearly \$700 million. We will have a real plan to keep education affordable. We will increase access. We will be willing partners with postsecondary. Alberta's NDP knows that investing in postsecondary is an investment in a better future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Member for Calgary-Peigan.

### **Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force**

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues are impacting every community in Alberta, including in our province's capital. These are serious issues which are disrupting the lives of Albertans, and they are so often interconnected. That is why over the past three and a half years Alberta's government has taken significant steps to address these top-of-mind societal issues, from eliminating user fees for publicly funded addiction treatment to announcing \$187 million to address addiction and homelessness in Alberta's two largest cities. This government has taken action, and there is still more work to be done.

That is why I am pleased that the ministers of Mental Health and Addiction; Public Safety and Emergency Services; Seniors, Community and Social Services; and Municipal Affairs have come together to form the Public Safety and Community Response Task Force. This task force will be responsible for rolling out the initiatives funded by that \$187 million. Their efforts will include further increasing addiction treatment capacity, providing addiction and mental health treatment in correctional centres, creating hybrid health and police hubs, expanding medical detox services, deploying harm reduction and recovery outreach teams, piloting a service hub model to increase access to recovery, and improving access to affordable housing options that support recovery.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made addictions treatment and prevention a top priority, and this is one more step in that direction. Albertans can be assured that our government is taking a fair and compassionate approach in addressing the addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues that our communities are facing. Every Albertan deserves the opportunity to pursue recovery and should be supported in that pursuit, and every Albertan deserves to feel safe as they commute to and from work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Bob Neufeld**

**Mrs. Allard:** Today I rise to honour a truly remarkable Albertan. William Robert Neufeld, known to most as Bob, was born on September 12, 1929, and passed away on December 2 at the age of 93. A lifelong resident of Grande Prairie, Bob was a visionary, a community-minded leader, and an inspiration to anyone having the fortune to know him.

I first met Bob and his wife, June, in the fall of 1997. Twenty-five years of friendship later and my family is grateful for these dear friends who became family, serving as adopted grandparents to our three children. Bob was like a second father to my husband. He was an innovative teacher and coach. He pioneered the Grande Prairie composite high school outdoor ed program and the high school hockey league and curriculum, both of which were subsequently adopted province-wide and replicated as far away as Australia. He was a trendsetter and a visionary, bringing passion to his role as an educator and shaping programming for thousands of students all over the world.

**1:40**

There is so much to share about Bob that I could fill hours. Here are some highlights. He was a founding member of the Grande Prairie Storm hockey team. He was the founder of Camp Wapiti in 1963, and for the past 59 years and counting, Camp Wapiti has allowed youth to learn more about nature, the outdoors, and the faith that guided Bob his

entire life. He was a founder at Nitehawk ski hill. For those who use the hill, Bob's bump training area is named after him. He was the founder of the Wild Kakwa Society, working over three decades to gain official recognition of this nature reserve. He was a lifelong member of McLaurin Baptist church. Not many can say that they were a member of anything for 93 years.

The longest serving ski instructor in Canada, teaching for over 50 years, in April of this year Bob was honoured for his service at a celebration in Jasper, where he gleefully took to the slopes at Marmot Basin at the age of 92. Bob received several awards, including the sovereign's medal for volunteers in 2005, the Alberta commercial travellers sportsman of the year in '68, and the honour medallion presented by the Canadian association for health, physical education, and recreation in 1978. In addition, it will be my tremendous honour to award Bob the Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee medal posthumously.

Bob Neufeld was a champion of our community and our province. We loved him dearly. May he rest in peace.

### **Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act**

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House every day to represent the constituents of Edmonton-Meadows, their hopes, their ideas, and their concerns as we work to build a better future for all. My constituents couldn't be more clear that they don't support the job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act. In my riding I have heard from business owners who are worried about the economic impacts this government's actions are having on their livelihoods. COVID was disastrous for businesses. They needed support, but this government abandoned them. Now the government is asking small businesses to face further economic uncertainty just so the Premier can make useless power grabs. When will it stop?

I've also heard from members of my riding who are immigrants. They have faced unfair challenges over the last three years, losing their jobs, struggling to feed their families, and worrying about whether or not they could make ends meet. The sovereignty act gives the provincial government an undemocratic amount of power but leaves immigrants in this province to face chaos, uncertainty, and unpredictable futures. Mr. Speaker, over 23 per cent of Alberta's population are immigrants. They are a fundamental part of our province, and they have every right to feel confident that this government cares about them.

I want to be clear that an NDP government will care about them. We will grow immigration and get people better access to credentialing. We will support small businesses, helping them combat the rising cost of inflation and shortage of skilled workers and more. We will repeal the job-killing sovereignty act, move immediately to restore investor certainty, and build an economy filled with good-paying jobs. I can't wait to make all of this a reality come May 2023. Alberta NDP will build a better future for all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a statement to make.

### **Health Care System**

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a first-class province that prides itself on delivering exceptional public services. We have highly trained professionals across all areas who are committed to serving Albertans year-round. We hold ourselves to world-class standards, and our health care services are no exception. Alberta's government has prioritized health care and has allocated a record budget of \$23.59 billion to further strengthen the health care system.

Alberta has the best front-line health care workers in the world, and we will work to have the right supports in place to ensure Albertans



get the care they need when and where they need it. The Premier, the Minister of Health, and AHS official administrator Dr. John Cowell have announced our government's plan to improve EMS response times, decrease emergency wait times, and reduce wait times for surgeries. Since the pandemic Alberta Health has been running at overcapacity, and people have been facing long wait times during emergencies and for key surgeries.

I recognize the inconvenience and distress this has caused for those who are on the waiting list and their families. That's why getting back on track has been a top priority. We want to offer a health care system that Albertan families can trust and depend on. I am confident in the initiatives that Alberta's government has put forward to address the issue.

I want to share important news on emergency wait times. Currently the emergency wait time at Alberta Children's hospital is two hours and 19 minutes; at Peter Lougheed Centre, two hours and 43 minutes; and at Rockyview general hospital, two hours and eight minutes. The complete information for emergency wait times can be seen at the AHS website. The government of Alberta has accelerated the changes, improvements necessary to once again efficiently offer consistent, quality care for Albertans across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Human Rights in Iran

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 10 each year we mark Human Rights Day and the 71st anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being. Today I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the human rights violations happening in Iran right now.

Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, was arrested on September 13 in Tehran by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing a hijab in an improper way. Iranian authorities said that Amini had a stroke while in custody. She died in a hospital on September 16. Protests, which erupted in many parts of Iran following news of Amini's death, have continued daily and expanded around the world even as Iranian authorities restricted access to the Internet. At least 488 people have been killed since the demonstrations began in mid-September, and according to Human Rights Activists in Iran over 18,200 people have been detained by authorities.

Yesterday the government in Iran carried out the second execution. Majid Reza Rahnavard was hanged in public on Monday after being convicted of killing two members of security forces. This public and open execution is intended to terrify the people of Iran. They are designed to stifle opposition.

More than before, the Iranian people need us to hear and amplify their voices. The Alberta Iranian community has hosted many demonstrations here in Edmonton and Calgary in support of freedom of expression, protection for human rights, and specifically for the brave women of Iran, who are leading the charge and risking their lives. I stand in this House along with all members of the Alberta NDP caucus to call on the Iranian government to stop this repression, and I also call on Albertans to support the Iranian people in denouncing the human rights violations taking place in Iran. I also call on this Premier, her cabinet, and all members of this House to do the same and stand in solidarity with the Iranian community and the many Iranian Canadians that now call Alberta home.

### Multiculturalism

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, during the holiday season we can clearly see the extent that multiculturalism has enriched the lives of many Albertans. Newcomers from all over the world, of many backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, cultures, and languages, have been coming to Alberta with the hopes of fulfilling their dreams. Today, in addition to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, people from more than 200 ethnic groups call Alberta home and celebrate their cultural heritage with pride. They are at the heart of our success as a vibrant, prosperous, and progressive province. The diversity of Albertans is a fundamental characteristic of our heritage, of our identity, and it's important for everyone who lives here, whether their families came here centuries ago or only recently, in the past few years.

Our schools, places of worship, workplaces, and other foundational institutes benefit from multiculturalism. As we continue to build a more inclusive and open province, we recognize that multicultural society is a work-in-progress. We must continue to promote the values of respect, inclusion, and many other commitments that have sought to promote multiculturalism. Along with Alberta's strong multiculturalism policies, we must recognize the rich cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This may require us to confront painful truths about our history and society, learn from them, and take meaningful action together to address those issues and ensure everyone is treated with respect and able to participate equally in economic, social, cultural, and political life in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, during this holiday season, let's celebrate the cultural diversity that makes us who we are. Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I had the opportunity to meet with the chiefs of Treaty 6. We spoke about their concern with the Premier's sovereignty act, which they assert will impact their treaty rights here in Alberta. The chiefs reiterated to me that the Premier passed her flagship bill without any consultation with them, something that contradicts the very statements the Premier has made in this House. Will the Premier admit today that she failed to consult with any of the currently elected chiefs of Treaty 6? Will she correct the record and then apologize?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times before, when we drafted the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, the very first principle in that act was to respect treaty rights and land claims and Aboriginal rights as defined by section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That was essential in the discussion. This is not about interfering in our First Nations and their ability to be self-governing. This is about us asserting Alberta's right to be treated fairly and equally in Confederation. We just want to be treated the same way as Quebec. That's what the bill is all about.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, respect would be demonstrated by apologizing for failing to consult.

Now, another one of their concerns is the Premier's new power to direct public agencies, everything from police forces to municipalities. The Premier also mused about withholding grant funding from organizations that don't comply with her political agenda. So this is a

question that I'm asking on behalf of Treaty 6 Grand Chief George Arcand Jr: will the Premier pledge to never withhold provincial funding from First Nations who do not recognize or support her job-killing sovereignty act?

**Ms Smith:** That's an easy one. Yes. I've said on the record that I support Jordan's principle, which is the exact opposite. I want to look for opportunities so that we can partner with First Nations to address their issues on-reserve. Part of the agreement that we signed last week, an MOU, was to support our First Nations in mental health and addiction. I'll be meeting with the Treaty 6 chiefs tomorrow to talk about their areas of concern. Every time I meet with chiefs – and I've met with about seven or eight in the last week – they identify issues that are causing tension and concern in our relationship, and that's what I'm going to work with them on solving.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is an issue, that is a problem, a concern for chiefs is the fact that this Premier did not consult with them prior to introducing the sovereignty act. Meanwhile, while the chiefs all acknowledge, for instance, the value of the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, which the opposition also supports, they told us that they are concerned about the impact of this act on their ability to protect their air, their land, and their water, to feed their elders and their children. Will the Premier pledge to never use the sovereignty act to interfere with the land rights of treaty holders in any way, even where they disagree with it?

**Ms Smith:** Once again the answer is yes. This is all about making sure that Ottawa stays out of our jurisdiction. The way I've described it to the chiefs that I've spoken with is that they have fought a battle over the last number of years to get sovereignty respected and to extract themselves from the paternalistic Indian Act. We get treated the exact same way by Ottawa. They interfere in our jurisdiction all the time, and we are looking forward to pushing back and being treated exactly like Quebec.

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

### Health Care System

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier suggested that after just three weeks with Dr. Cowell she's hearing that health care is now, quote, better than ever, so much so that Dr. Cowell is already, quote, moving on from ER and ambulance crises. But here's what that actually looks like: ERs overwhelmed with sick children, more unfilled paramedic shifts, more nurses leaving front-line care, public health officials resigning, and a Premier who will not endorse the flu shot. Is this, quote, better than ever? What exactly does the Premier think a crisis looks like?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we identified three priorities that Dr. John Cowell is going to be addressing. He has made progress on addressing a fast track into our emergency rooms, and we're beginning to see the results. A few weeks ago we were seeing wait times of 12 and 14 and 17 hours. We're not seeing that today. In addition, we're going to see changes happening with EMS. We're looking forward to announcing some of those in the new year. Based on the feedback that we've gotten from our paramedics, now the big issue is that we've got 69,000 surgeries on our surgical backlog, and we've got to make sure that we start addressing that so that nobody has an unreasonable wait.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the crisis in ERs and ambulances is not addressed. Come on.

Now, aside from having John Cowell talk to people at AHS for three weeks, the Premier could also take real, practical action to set standards for health care in this province. In an op-ed published yesterday, the former HQCA chair, Dr. Trevor Theman, says about our Bill 201: setting and reporting on standards make good sense. Dr. Paul Parks, president-elect of the AMA, agrees. Why doesn't the Premier listen to these doctors and then stand up and declare she will vote in favour of Bill 201 here in the Legislature?

**Ms Smith:** I can tell you why I won't vote in favour of Bill 201. It's because there's a clause in there that would deny the private sector the ability to do chartered surgical centres. We have an excellent example of a chartered surgical centre that opened up in Edmonton. They're going to be doing 4,500 surgeries. If this bill passes, what's going to happen is that it's going to limit the ability of private-sector entrepreneurs to be able to get in and start clearing the surgical backlog. I have no problem supporting the reporting of standards, but the NDP have gone too far.

**Ms Notley:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, if the bill passes, this government will be held to account for reporting and meeting standards of public health care which otherwise they've been ambivalent about. All Albertans deserve to get the health care they need when and where they need it. A good start would be setting those proper standards. Our proposal empowers the Health Quality Council to do just that, yet the UCP has refused to even debate our bill. The Premier could commit to supporting it today and starting real work, not a conversation for three weeks but real accountability and responsibility. Why not?

**Ms Smith:** The NDP is a little bit late to the conversation, because that's exactly what we announced when we put Dr. John Cowell in place on November 17. We identified at least 10 different measures that we're going to look at. I've had a meeting with the statistics division of Alberta Health Services. They have identified the measures. They've asked for a few weeks to be able to get the benchmarks and then be able to show some improvement in reporting. I'm looking forward to the NDP supporting our measures when we're able to reveal those in a couple of weeks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Mr. Sabir:** "Alberta drivers are getting hosed, often royally." Those are the words of *Calgary Sun* columnist Rick Bell, and he's right. Alberta has the highest rate of auto insurance in Canada according to a new report by Ernst & Young. Older drivers, younger drivers, those with experience, those in an accident: everyone is paying more here. The Premier refused to commit to any action yesterday. Rick Bell thinks cutting insurance costs is a slam dunk. Why doesn't the Premier agree? Why does she refuse to act?

**Ms Smith:** I've learned that you ignore Rick Bell at your peril. He always has his finger on the pulse of what people are talking about, and it is true that we have seen an escalation in insurance going back to, quite frankly, the NDP's time in government, when they were . . . [interjections] No. It is true. Between 2015 and 2019 insurance went from \$1,178 to \$1,406. That's 5 per cent per year. Exactly. It's only increased 12 per cent in the last . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** The point is, Mr. Speaker, that the approach of the NDP didn't work, and it ended up causing people to lose their insurance,

having to pay up front. We absolutely agree that there does need to be a solution. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is the one with the call.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, that was a lame answer, but we have a solution. Later this week I will be tabling private member's Bill 206, which will impose an immediate one-year freeze on auto insurance. This would give us time to clean up the mess caused by this UCP government, and it will take effect immediately upon proclamation. Will the Premier rise in this House right now and commit to supporting my legislation?

**Ms Smith:** There's no question that Albertans are in the middle of an affordability crisis, and the issue of insurance goes back to 2015. They didn't solve it. I know they're trying to suggest that they did, but here's the fact of the matter. Alberta does have the second-highest insurance rates in the country. We used to have an advantage in our insurance, and clearly we . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Clearly, we need to take a closer look at it. I've tasked the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance to work together with the minister of affordability to find a solution for Albertans, and I'm looking forward to reporting that back when they've had a chance to talk to the industry.

2:00

**Mr. Sabir:** Another non answer. So many of my constituents rely on their vehicles for work. I will be sharing the Premier's comments with them.

We know that the UCP connections to insurance lobbyists run deep. They helped Jason Kenney get elected in 2019, and they have backed numerous members of that cabinet. Albertans are rightly asking if it's only UCP insiders who can get ahead under this Premier. They are getting hosed. They want transparency. Will the Premier commit to tabling, by end of the business day today, a full list of the meetings her ministers have had with insurance industry lobbyists?

**Ms Smith:** I haven't met with any insurance industry lobbyists, but we are going to meet with the insurance industry because if we're going to find solutions that are both short term and long term, then we need to engage with the industry to find out what those would be. I know simplistic solutions like the one proposed by the NDP . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. You might not like the answer, but the Premier has the right to give one.

**Ms Smith:** Look, I know that the simplistic solutions proposed by the NDP of capping rates at 5 per cent per year – it resulted in an increase of 5 per cent per year. We are in a position where that solution didn't work either, so we need to talk with the industry and find a solution.

#### Finance Minister

**Ms Phillips:** Yesterday the Finance minister talked at length about how hard he's working to hijack Albertans' retirement savings and to force us all to file our taxes twice and cost us hundreds of millions of dollars to do so. To his credit, when the minister wants to inflict bad ideas on Albertans, he does so with confidence, with zest, with esprit de corps. His sneaky income taxes are no different. We've

just found out from a freedom of information request that the Finance minister knew months ago how much more we'd be paying in income tax, but he hid those amounts from Albertans. Premier, in the interests of transparency, why aren't we getting those tax increases back, retro to 2019?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, it just is amazing how the members opposite simply don't want this government to look for opportunities and solutions for Albertans. We inherited a fiscal train wreck from the members opposite, who were spending 4 per cent more every year while their revenues were going down. We presented a budget in 2022 that ultimately resulted in a \$500 million surplus. Had we continued on their track, it wouldn't have been a surplus; it would have been a \$6 billion deficit.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, just as he refused to answer the question, he refused to be honest about his income tax hikes for years, even when asked about it in this House. He let our taxes rise with inflation. As a result, we're all paying more. He wouldn't tell us how much more, but the Finance minister knew that by 2024 his sneaky tax hikes would be taking \$868 million a year more from Albertans, a cumulative \$2.2 billion in higher income taxes, but he hid that information. Why doesn't the Premier fire this Finance minister, that refuses to level with Albertans? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we were very transparent with Albertans in 2019. Any programs that we paused the indexing on: we were clear with Albertans that when we brought our fiscal house in order, we would resume indexing, and that's exactly what we're doing. More importantly, we're not spending the next generation's income, like the members opposite would. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Phillips:** The Finance minister claimed that he didn't increase income tax. That was false. His last budget miscalculated inflation. Oops. The same budget also claimed that wage growth would be greater than inflation. Wrong again. He refused to even acknowledge the harm he was causing as 40-year-high inflation took more and more from Albertans. The Finance minister got it wrong. He implemented Jason Kenney's bad ideas. He put party over province. He didn't level with Albertans about how much he was costing us. So why, Premier, beyond his 46 per cent of the vote, does he still have a job?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have two case studies here. The members opposite, when they were in government, raised taxes on everything that moved, increased regulatory burden, sent tens of billions of dollars of investment packing, and delivered successive deficit budgets. We dropped taxes, created the most competitive business environment possible. We're attracting investment, leading the nation in economic growth, and we've got a balanced budget. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

#### Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every community in Alberta is facing addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues. Constituents consistently raise concerns. We have seen numerous stories coming out of Edmonton of assaults and attacks on hard-working Edmontonians commuting within the city, and the

government has a responsibility to act. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: can you please explain how this government intends to address addiction, homelessness, and public safety in Alberta's capital city?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely right. Every community in our province has been impacted by addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues, and Edmonton has been hit especially hard. Today my colleagues and I announced the creation of the Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force, and I look forward to working with them to provide more life-saving services to Edmontonians who are struggling with addiction and homelessness while enhancing public safety.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that there's no one solution to addiction and its associated social issues and given that collaboration with all aspects of a community is essential in supporting those who are affected by addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues and given that the task force that was announced this morning is responsible for implementing initiatives that will help provide more life-saving services to Edmontonians, can the minister explain who will be serving on the task force and why the representation is important as the province continues to tackle these issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have brought together a talented pool of local leaders who work collaboratively on addressing these issues in Edmonton. The membership will include councillors Hamilton and Cartmell, Chief Billy Morin, Chief Issac A. Laboucan-Avirom, four cabinet ministers, and others as well. Other municipal and emergency services representatives will be there to help out. I am confident in our ability to work together to tackle these significant issues facing Edmonton, the capital of our province, a place where I grew up. I'm happy to help, and so will the rest of our government. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has committed \$187 million to address addiction and homelessness in Edmonton and Calgary and given that Edmonton continues to be hard hit with addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues and given that this government has committed to building a recovery-oriented system of addiction and mental health care, can the minister please explain what initiatives the Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force will be responsible for implementing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force will implement a series of initiatives as part of a \$187 million plan to address addiction and homelessness in Alberta's urban centres. This includes further increasing addiction treatment capacity, providing addiction and mental health treatment programs in correctional centres, creating a hybrid health and police hub, and so, so much more. I look forward to working with this talented group, and I'm

sure that we will be able to come to a conclusion in order to help Edmontonians with regard to mental health and addiction issues going forward.

Thank you.

### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, in 2013 the current Premier stood against an Alberta pension plan. She knew that removing Albertans from the CPP and replacing it with a provincial pension was wildly unpopular and went against the wishes of the majority of Albertans. An Alberta pension plan is an absurd proposal that will unnecessarily complicate retirement for many Albertans. It will also allow this provincial government, with its terrible track record, having lost the trust of all Albertans, to gamble with their retirement. Will the Premier stand here today to agree with herself from 2013?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, part of my mandate letter from the Premier was to investigate the merits, the opportunities, and the risks of an Alberta pension plan, and I intend to do just that and report to Albertans. I believe there is great potential in an Alberta pension plan, the potential to bring down premiums and the potential to improve pension benefits for Alberta seniors. But we will complete our work and report and engage with Albertans; the NDP would have us not do so.

**Ms Gray:** Given that finding supporters of this idea is worse than finding a needle in a haystack and given that top economists, academics, and worker representatives have all said that Alberta leaving the CPP is incredibly unpopular and will not happen without, quote, a very big fight and given that this government has done nothing to prove itself capable, can the Premier please explain why she's so willing to defy the wishes of the Alberta public on something that is risky, that is expensive, and that is going to cost Albertans' retirements?

2:10

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite continues to rule out the consideration of an opportunity for Albertans, for Alberta businesses. Why would they pre-empt the report? Why would they not be interested in taking a look at the facts, the actuarial work? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore will remain in order.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to complete our work, the actuarial work, the econometric work, and we're going to report to Albertans and engage Albertans because they deserve to know.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that the analysis has been done and the idea is bad and given that Alberta pensions are not the Premier's fun money and given that during a debate she opined that they could use this money to fund other government programs, it is clear that an Alberta pension plan is a waste of time and resources. It is not supported by Albertans, and as my colleague said, and I quote, it is catastrophically stupid. Will the Premier stand here today, back away from this awful idea, protect retirement security for Albertans, and focus on the real issues?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are focusing on the real issues, the issues of affordability, the issues of health care, the issues of investment attraction and job creation. At the same time we're taking a look at the opportunities, the benefits, and the costs of an Alberta pension plan. We're looking forward to a report.

### Technology Industry Investment in Alberta

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, in the UCP's first budget the Finance minister called economic diversification a luxury and proceeded to cut several tax credits, including the Alberta investor tax credit, which delivered a 3 to 1 return on investment. As a result, investors pulled out of Alberta, venture funds that were on the verge of being announced dried up, and companies that were expecting investments were left empty-handed.

**Mr. McIver:** Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. You might not like the question, but the member has the right to ask it.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, is my time restarting?

**Mr. McIver:** Still wrong.

**The Speaker:** I don't restart their time. I won't . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Four, three, two . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will come to order. Oh, my. Of all people. [interjections] Order. Order. We've come this far.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will go from the top.

**Mr. Bilous:** Oh. In the UCP's first budget the Finance minister called economic diversification a luxury and proceeded to cut several tax credits, including the Alberta investor tax credit, which delivered a 3 to 1 return on investment. As a result, investors pulled out of Alberta, venture funds that were on the verge of being announced dried up, and companies that were expecting investments were left empty-handed. We also saw investors leave for other provinces. To the Minister of Technology and Innovation: why won't this government reinstate a tax credit which was working to attract investment and diversify the economy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Let's talk about facts; let's talk about numbers: in 2016, \$68 million in venture investment; in 2017, \$37 million; in 2018, \$100 million. That was under that government when they were in power. In 2019 we turned a corner, \$227 million; in 2020, \$445 million; in 2021, \$561 million; and in the first three quarters of this year, \$509 million. We're on track for record investment in venture capital. We are getting the job done.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you to the minister for confirming that the investment we're seeing today was because of the tax credit that our government instated years ago.

Given that investment in early-stage tech companies has dropped significantly and given that we're seeing tech investment grow across the country but Alberta pales in comparison – we aren't even keeping pace on a per capita basis – why is this government holding our province back and hurting our competitiveness?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP never let the facts get in the way of a good story, but let me correct the record. In the first half of this year we saw a 66 per cent increase year over year in investment in venture capital in Alberta when the rest of the country was down by over 20 per cent. We are leading the country in the rate of investment in venture capital and in the tech industry. The

NDP had a failed program that was seen as overly burdensome and that the industry didn't like. We are instead creating the conditions to open up economic activity and investment across every industry, including technology. Technology is not just an industry; it's the future of every industry. These numbers show that we are getting the job done.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that the minister recently said that the AITC did not create long-term sustainable tech companies even though I recently met with a company that said it would not be here today if it wasn't for the AITC, given that the minister also said the worst thing we can do for tech is to make it easier for people to invest in tech and given that the minister also said he doesn't want to put taxpayer dollars at risk even though the venture fund he used to work for relied solely on taxpayer dollars, how can the minister be so out of touch?

**Mr. Glubish:** They clearly have no problem misrepresenting the facts, as that member just did.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Glubish:** Let me correct the record. The fact is that I said that the worst thing we could do for investment is to encourage people to invest in bad deals where they lose their money because then they will never invest in tech again. We want to create the conditions to ensure that good companies get investment and that investors make money because then they will be addicted to investing in tech, and that's a good thing for the tech industry in Alberta. That's what I said, Mr. Speaker. He grossly misrepresented the facts, and shame on him for doing so.

### Affordability Plan and Fuel Prices

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, inflation and affordability are the largest issues facing Albertans right now. While this is not a problem unique to Alberta, federal fiscal mismanagement and looming increases to the carbon tax threaten to make inflation worse before it improves. This government has made strides recently in providing cost relief to Albertans, including electricity rebates and reducing the provincial fuel tax. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: how will our government continue to respond to the inflation crisis and deliver relief to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 2:16.

The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through our affordability action plan we are taking steps to protect Albertans from inflation-driven cost-of-living increases. If passed, the inflation relief act will provide stability on utility bills, including up to \$500 in electricity rebates and natural gas price protection, to help Albertans power and heat their homes this winter, with peace of mind. We are passing on even more savings – 13.6 cents a litre, including GST – to Albertans at the pumps by eliminating the provincial fuel tax for six months. We are also providing \$600 over six months to low- and middle-income families, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans, making sure that people who need it get the support.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that fuel is one area that was identified as being heavily monitored, it's good to see that the Competition Bureau of Canada is looking into it as it has become a national issue. We also have the consumer investigations unit

monitoring Alberta communities for potential gouging. However, despite the suspension of the fuel tax, gas in Edmonton is still \$1.20, Airdrie is still \$1.30, and Grande Cache is as high as \$1.40. To the same minister: has the government identified if there's any gouging whatsoever?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question as it appears the NDP doesn't have a critic for Service Alberta. I'm glad somebody is asking the important questions because right now we know that Albertans are struggling with high costs. Yes, the member is correct: the consumer protection unit has been monitoring prices at the gas pumps in Alberta. I'm happy to report that there have not been any incidents of price gouging. In fact, prices are in line with market conditions, and the best part is that Albertans continue to enjoy the lowest prices in the country.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that even though Fort McMurray is a region that provides billions of dollars to our government treasury on an annual basis by mining the hydrocarbons used to make this very fuel – fuel prices are at about \$1.50, around 30 cents higher than in Edmonton. Recently a constituent that used to manage a gas station in Fort McMurray said that the cost of transportation to Fort McMurray only adds about 2 cents per litre. Again to the minister: why are prices in Fort McMurray 30 cents higher than in Edmonton, and is there anything that the government can do about this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. There are a number of factors that go into the price that we see at the pumps. One of them, of course, is the price of crude oil. Another one is supply and demand. We also know that prices will vary by retailer. We know that the path forward for lower prices is through increased competition and more choice for the consumer and, of course, a healthy economy, and that will continue to be our priority. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a question.

2:20

### Economic Indicators

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month 15,000 Alberta workers lost their jobs. Despite this, the national unemployment rate continues to drop. It's clear that the UCP government is more focused on separating with Canada than even bothering to keep up. Families aren't asking for American-style private schools, they're not asking for American-style private surgeries, and they certainly aren't asking for American-style tax cuts for corporations. My question to the minister of jobs and economy is simple: will the minister stand in this place and apologize to those families who are struggling to afford Christmas presents this year?

**Mr. Schow:** Will you apologize?

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize for the four years that the NDP put us in the decade of darkness, starting the situation where our economy retracted. What we will see is that – as the minister just mentioned previously, we've seen record amounts of investment in venture capital here in Alberta, and we've seen record amounts of that investment, 75 per cent, in Calgary, in fact, where right now we need to fill up some office buildings. We're seeing people flock to Alberta because it's the place to invest and it's leading the country in growth. I'm not going to take any lessons from the NDP where they closed our economy down.

**Mr. Dang:** Given that venture capital doesn't pay for Christmas dinner and given that Alberta's growth in average weekly wages since 2019 is one of the lowest of all provinces in Canada and given that the government has been extolling Alberta's job growth and wages for years and given that we know this UCP government likes to brag about how closely they work with these big wealthy corporations, will the minister today take accountability and apologize to the working families who have to stop at the food bank on the way home while he rubs elbows in boardrooms?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, our sympathies are with any family right now that is having troubles in Alberta. That's why we're so excited to tell Albertans and the member opposite that, you know, housing starts in Alberta are up 22 per cent, the value of building permits up 9.6 per cent. All experts agree that Alberta will lead the nation in GDP growth in '23-24. We're not going to apologize for something that's actually working out well for Albertans. Albertans have the jobs. They're going to see significant savings and significant money from our minister of affordability.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that building permits and housing starts are about as useful to little Timmy as a lump of coal and given that according to the Alberta Living Wage Network the living wage needed to achieve a standard of living in Alberta is higher than our current minimum wage and given that Alberta is the only province to not raise its minimum wage this year – so that gap is only getting larger – and given that everything the minister has said is going to be too little, too late, will the minister commit today to raising the minimum wage so that next year families won't have to choose between their heating bills and Christmas presents?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we don't have an affordability measure of \$7,200 for politicians who break the law, we do have significant financial relief coming to Albertans at a time when they need it the most. We have \$500 in electricity rebates. We have fuel tax relief every time you fill up your car with gas or diesel. We have natural gas price protection so you can heat your home with confidence. While I'm open to suggestions from the member opposite, we are busy. We're not at a computer. We are helping Albertans at a time when they need it.

### South Edmonton Hospital and School Construction

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, the south Edmonton hospital is critical to so many people living in Edmonton and nearby municipalities. It would provide additional capacity that my constituents desperately need. Our NDP government was proud to approve this project in 2017 and pledged to have it open by 2026. This government abandoned those timelines. They said that they intended to start construction by 2023 and open it by 2030, but then another change: the government's own

website for the project pulled it down, and the '23 start date is now blank. For the record can the minister state clearly when the south Edmonton hospital will be open?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. It is true. The NDP started this process with an announcement of money but no plan. Now we are working through a business plan with Alberta Health Services to find out exactly how we're going to serve the people of Edmonton, what facilities will meet that need, and then, moving forward, when we can start the project, how long it will take, and what it will cost.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Loyola:** Given that Edmonton hospitals are overrun with multiple respiratory viruses like RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 and wait times are getting as long as 18 hours in some instances and given that we are facing a massive capacity issue in our health care system, which the south Edmonton hospital would help address, but given that this government has slowed down this project for years, potentially adding millions in costs to the construction, will the minister finally do the right thing and commit today to the full funding of the south Edmonton hospital and guarantee that it will be built, staffed, and open before 2030?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are proceeding with a good plan to find the best way forward to meet the needs of those people in Edmonton. Yes, there is a capacity, but this is what happens when you go forward with a political announcement with no plans to back it up. We are having to go back and do that work to show the people of Edmonton how we can best meet their needs. There are many needs. Whether it's the Stollery children's hospital or other hospitals, they all need help. They all need support. We are building that plan so we can serve them better. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the UCP can't be trusted to deliver the health care Albertans need and given that the same is true for education and given that parents in the south Edmonton community of Edgemont have long been seeking a school closer to their homes and given that thousands of new students have enrolled in Edmonton public schools but not a single new project was announced last year and given that the Leader of the Official Opposition has committed that she will build the Edgemont school when she is elected Premier again, can this government explain why it has ignored desperately needed south Edmonton schools and hospitals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. I draw the member opposite's attention back to the fact that the Edmonton public school division actually did not prioritize that particular school in their previous capital budget. Thankfully, we've had conversations. They understand that if they want schools in growing areas, they need to make them a top priority, and that's exactly what they're doing. I look forward to bringing my capital budget up in the months to come.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has a question.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Airdrie-East I've heard just how much our health care system is struggling in the rural areas of our province. EMS response times have gone up drastically, and these delays could be tragic for Albertans if we don't do something. Can the Minister of Health answer this: how will the government specifically improve EMS response times in rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for the question and her passionate representation of Airdrie. As stated in this House before, this is a priority, and we're making some progress through the AHS metro response plan. They've cut the number of trips into the major cities, including Calgary, and out of areas such as Airdrie and other surrounding communities, and we're seeing some improvements in these response times. In Airdrie in October the median response time was around eight to nine minutes compared to the target of eight minutes. Now, the longer responses were still above target, so we have more work to do, but we're going to stick at it until we get those response times down.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for the update. Given that our government has provided funding for many new ambulances this year, including one in my own constituency, and given that Alberta Health Services struggles to find paramedics to actually staff them – hundreds of shifts are being left unfilled every week – and given that over 9,000 shifts in Alberta, including 463 shifts in Airdrie, have been left unfilled this year, can the minister please tell us what the plans are to improve these staffing shortages?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for the question. As you know, EMS has seen an unprecedented 30 per cent call increase since 2021, the summer. Similar pressures exist across the entire country. We increased, as noted by the hon. member, EMS's budget by \$64 million this year, and the main purpose for that is to add staff. EMS has hired 364 new staff members since January 1, including 264 paramedics, and since June '19 they've added more than 450 paramedics, an 18 per cent increase. Now, they'll keep hiring until we can actually get all those shifts filled, and we're working with Dr. Cowell to be able to roll out a plan on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Minister. Given that our rural ambulances are being dispatched to the urban centres to fill gaps in their own city and rural residents are left waiting for help by the paramedics who are too busy attending city calls and given that those rural residents aren't getting the critical help that they rightfully deserve, Minister, what do you plan to do to keep paramedics and ambulances working in Airdrie and other rural communities?

2:30

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are moving swiftly to improve response times and continue to make this a priority so emergency care is available when and where it's needed. Again, our goal is to have more ambulances

available for emergency calls and fewer ambulances needlessly tied up in transfers or waiting at an emergency room. We've made progress. I'm very pleased. That is part of the 10-point plan to be able to reduce the number of calls for ambulances coming from rural areas into the large communities like Calgary. That's been reduced by 40 per cent. We're going to keep working at it till we actually get those response times down.

### Education Concerns

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, teachers across the province continue to endure extremely challenging working conditions because of the UCP's absolute failure to support students, staff, and families. A recent ATA survey showed that class sizes have ballooned to 30, 40, and often even more students in many classrooms across the province. This pressure on teachers is not only causing great harm to their well-being, but it's also negatively impacting students who are forced to try to learn in overcrowded classrooms. Will the Minister of Education admit that this is the UCP's plan? It's clear that they don't value public education.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely ludicrous. In fact, the member opposite a while ago admitted to the fact that she didn't read the curriculum. Obviously, she also hasn't read our budget. We have increased funding to the highest level ever in this province, \$8.4 billion. That, in fact, has created an opportunity for school divisions to hire 800 more teachers and 800 more educational assistants. The members opposite did nothing to address class sizes.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, given that Jason Kenney and the current Education minister cut funding that was dedicated to reducing class sizes, funding that was in place when the NDP was in government and other governments before, and given that the UCP, under the current Education minister, has decided to try to hide the ballooning class sizes from the public by refusing to publish class size data, data that had previously been available to Albertans for generations, will the current Education minister admit that trying to hide the impacts of her cuts was wrong and disclose class sizes in this House today?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again misinformation. Again, they do not understand the fact that in the previous budget we were funding 730,000 students when 716,000 students actually attended. The previous year prior to that, the 2021 school year, we actually funded 730,000 students; 705,000 students. I'm happy to say that students are coming back. Because of the fact that we have a great province and people are migrating to this province, I'm happy to share that we have more students, and we're funding them.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, given that we do have more students and we also have fewer teachers than we had when the NDP was in government and given that Alberta teachers are struggling with overcrowded classrooms and, on top of that, teachers are reporting an increase in complexity and diversity of the students they're supporting and given that the decline in support for students has resulted in a six-month to one-year wait for speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychoeducational assessments, will the Minister of Education commit to emergency funding today to stop that gap, to make sure kids can get assessed this year, while she's still the Education minister, or do we have to wait for the election?

**Member LaGrange:** Again the member opposite has not done her homework. We are actually doing that: \$10 million to address the backlog of assessments, \$110 million over three years, doubling the

number of mental health and wellness projects and pilots throughout this year, addressing mental health issues, addressing enrolment growth, addressing assessment backlogs, Ukrainian students, and so much more. I could go on and on. I'm happy to go on and on. Mr. Speaker, \$700 million on top of everything. I could keep going.

### Legal Aid Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be a part of an NDP government that in 2018 signed a long-term agreement to increase funding for Legal Aid Alberta. We provided \$70 million more over four years. We did this in recognition of increased demand and the right of every Albertan to be fairly represented. Can the Minister of Justice tell this House for the record why this government tore up this critical funding agreement and risked leaving so many Albertans without legal aid in the process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice has the call.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, as he knows, the government is only one of the funders of legal aid. Legal aid is funded. It has all the funding that it requires to make sure that Albertans have access to justice. We've also throughout '22 received requests from various members of the criminal defence bar on concerns they have with the current tariff rate. We're happy to get that information from those folks. I'd also say this. We had been in the middle throughout '22 of doing a modernization project, reviewing the 40 items in the tariff. Now that that modernization project is complete, I'll speak more to that later.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this minister has a habit of putting down his stakeholders rather than working with them and given that the UCP cuts to legal aid and inaction to properly support legal aid prompted repeated demonstrations by the lawyers' association and given that I attended some of these demonstrations and heard first-hand just how badly cuts imposed by this minister and this government have hurt our justice system, a simple question for the minister: how did he get this so wrong?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, none of that is true, Mr. Speaker. Legal aid is funded. It has all the funding it requires to make sure that Albertans have access to justice. We have just finished a modernization project for the 40 items in the tariff, working with legal aid, empowering them to be able to do that review, and now we're happy to continue to work with legal aid, making sure that they have all the funding that they require to make sure that Albertans have access to justice, that they deserve.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that legal aid roster lawyers have stopped accepting files for serious offences, including sexual assaults, homicides, and family law matters, and given that we may never know the true extent of the damage caused by this government, will the minister tell this House how he plans to determine how many people were denied justice as a result of the chaos this government created, and will he commit today to restoring the legal aid funding agreement signed under the NDP government and revise legal aid tariffs and eligibility guidelines?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, none, Mr. Speaker, because everything he just said is not true. Legal aid has all the funding that it requires. People have access to justice. In fact, we have in the last couple of months increased the tariff amounts for the criminal defence bar by 8 per



cent. Everything the member has said is completely and totally untrue.

### Provincial Debt Repayment

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, during the 2021-22 fiscal year Alberta's government debt-servicing costs alone were over \$2.6 billion. This amount exceeds the total operating expenses of the Children's Services, seniors and housing, and Municipal Affairs ministries combined. Can the Minister of Finance please share with this House: what is the plan to repay the debt as soon as possible so we can stop paying the interest to bankers and start focusing on providing the services that Albertans deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. Paying down debt is one of our top priorities. In fact, our goal is to pay off debt as it matures. I'm pleased to say that we're planning on paying off all the debt that's maturing in this fiscal year; that's \$13.4 billion. During a time of inflation and increasing interest rates it's critical that we pay debt off as it matures instead of going to markets to borrow at what might be twice the cost of capital, because that will double our interest costs.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans also support growing the Alberta heritage trust fund to support future generations but given that the debt governments have racked up over the past 14 years threatens the future, can the minister, who I respect for his long background in ranching and accounting, tell us how best to balance the need to reduce the debt with the opportunity to increase long-term savings in the heritage savings fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a great question. You know, what's really great is to actually be debating the intention between paying down debt and additional investment in the heritage savings trust fund. We can only do that because we have a balanced budget. I've asked for the analysis, and the analysis I've received is this: if from the start of the heritage savings trust fund all of the earnings were reinvested in the fund, we would be sitting at close to \$300 billion in that trust fund today.

2:40

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that Premier Ralph Klein famously declared in 2004 that Alberta had paid back all of its debt in full but given that the latest fiscal update forecast showed \$75 billion of taxpayer-supported debt since 2004, what does this minister, who is a proud grandfather and not a career politician, plan to do to ensure that the fiscal discipline of this government's first three years continues into the future so we can pay back our debt?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, running surplus budgets is not only responsible fiscal management; we're being responsible to the next generation. We're not downloading irresponsible fiscal decisions onto our children and grandchildren. I appreciate the question. At the end of this fiscal year we're projecting a net debt-to-GDP ratio under 10 per cent. That will ensure Alberta has by far and away the strongest balance sheet of any province. Continued fiscal discipline will matter into the future along with positioning this province for investment attraction and economic growth. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

Hon. members, this does conclude the time allotted for Oral Question Period, but before you go, if I can remind you of two quick things. We had the pleasure of being joined by some former members this afternoon. They are here primarily because of the reception that is being hosted between the former members' association and the current members. If you are able this evening: 6 p.m. in the Capital View Room. Also, members would have received a memo from the Speaker's office earlier today indicating that the packages for your constituency offices are available for pickup at my office.

In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the daily Routine.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have quite a bit this afternoon, so I rise to move a number of motions. First, I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 16, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its approval of the motion moved pursuant to Standing Order 8(8), agreed to on December 5, 2022.

I also give oral notice of Government Motion 17, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS-19.3, the following statutes appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed, which was tabled in the Assembly by the Clerk of the Assembly on behalf of the then Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on March 14, 2022, Sessional Paper 24/2022, not be repealed:

- (1) An Act to End Predatory Lending (2016 cE-9.5) s5(2);
- (2) Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (2016 c26) ss2(b), 11(a), 31, 41.

I also give oral notice of Government Motion 18, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that

- (a) the 2021-2022 annual report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for review;
- (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (c) in accordance with section 21(4) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Finally, I give oral notice of Government Motion 19, sponsored by myself.

Be it resolved that

- (a) the 2019-2021 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review;
- (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (c) in accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the Social Health Equity Network of Lethbridge and Area 2022 Lethbridge Child and Family Poverty Report, and I'd like to acknowledge the authors: Echo Nowak, Ronda Reach, Janelle Marietta, Dr. Sharon Yanicki, Stasha Donahue, Germain Wells, Mila Luchak, Erin Mason, Lori Harasem, and Heather Loewen.  
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Madu, Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions, pursuant to the Land Surveyors Act the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of the proceedings of the 113th annual general meeting, April 21 to 23, 2022.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report 2021-2022; pursuant to the Farm Implement and Dealership Act the Farmers' Advocate office annual report 2021-22; pursuant to the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act the Livestock Identification Services Ltd. report to the minister and summary of activities April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022; pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation 2021-22 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, now we are at points of order. At 2:16 the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). At that time, 2:16, the Minister of Technology and Innovation rose to answer a question from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and said twice – I don't have the benefit of the Blues – that that member is misrepresenting facts, and "shame on him."

If we look at (h), (i), and (j), certainly, the member was stating facts. If he disagrees with it, the minister has every right to correct those, but telling the other member that he's misrepresenting: that's making false allegations against another member. That would be covered by (h). Imputing false motives to another member: why would the member misrepresent anything? And the language he used was certainly abusive and insulting. So under (h), (i), and (j) the minister's comments were offside these rules, and I think the minister should retract and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you have given caution to the Chamber in the past about doing things indirectly that you cannot do directly. Suggesting a specific member misrepresented the facts: whether I agree with it or not is irrelevant. I do withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker:** I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.  
Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 2

#### Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate December 8: Mr. Turton]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has the call.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide some comments on Bill 2, a bill that does provide some inflation relief to families, to working people, to people with children.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I've just received some news, Madam Speaker, that I will share with the House, and I'll tie it into this bill. My friend Curtis Noble, who is a firefighter in Medicine Hat, who has been active in the Alberta association of professional firefighters and paramedics for some time, a friend to me, a father to his three children, committed to his community, to his family, to his friends, in particular our mutual friends Megan and Andrew Hilgendorf. He worked very hard and has worked very hard for presumptive coverage for his brothers and sisters in the firefighters, for better health care, for a better education system.

2:50

He's in the ICU this afternoon. The prognosis is not positive, Madam Speaker, and he's on my mind as I deliver these remarks. Last time I saw him, we had a pretty good Alberta moment. He came into town and he and Andrew stayed at my place to go see the Corb Lund show. They refused to let me pay for the ticket. They drank too much of my expensive Scotch, I think as an exchange, and we all stayed up really late after having a good time at the Corb show.

Families all across this province work hard to contribute to their communities. Curtis is one of those people. He has worked hard for a well-functioning public health care system, and now he is using it. I'm glad that he can receive the care that he needs in the Medicine Hat hospital, and I thank those medical professionals for all of the care that they are giving to him. His three girls – Leah, Julie, and Keelin – are also on my mind. We will make sure that we update the House as to his progress and to recognize his service as a professional firefighter in the city of Medicine Hat.

On Bill 2, we are considering this piece of legislation because Albertans are hurting from 40-year-high inflation. There is no question that this bill is needed to provide some relief for working people and for people living in poverty. At a glance, you know, people living in low income – for example, in Lethbridge 11.2 per cent of residents at last count. I just tabled this report, Madam Speaker, written with funding by the city of Lethbridge, from the Social Health Equity Network of Lethbridge and Area, and I want to commend the folks that worked on this report, many of whom have been doing such work in Lethbridge on antipoverty work for many years. Certainly, a couple of the report's authors – Dr. Sharon Yanicki, Stasha Donahue, Lori Harasem – have been hard at work for as long as I've known them, which is probably 15 years, maybe more.

Using the 2019 census family low-income measure after tax for Lethbridge, 15 per cent of children and youth aged zero to 17 are low income, and children living in lone-parent families have a greater likelihood of experiencing conditions of poverty than those in two-adult families. Almost half of children in Lethbridge of lone parents live in poverty. Children live in deeper poverty than adults, with children aged zero to five experiencing the highest rates of low income across age groups.

This is compounded by racialization in the city of Lethbridge. Madam Speaker, for Lethbridge CMA the low-income rate across all ages for those who identify as Indigenous is 27 per cent for children ages zero to 17. The low-income rate is greatest for First Nations children, at 42 per cent. Wow. Access to housing, food security, and education and early childhood development are all

affected by living with low income, and of course we talk about this in terms of the social determinants of health. Nowhere do we see this more than in the city of Lethbridge.

The recent survey for the greatest degree of poverty is, of course, folks who experience homelessness. The point-in-time survey: Lethbridge is one of the seven participating cities in Alberta that participates in the point-in-time homeless count. It's conducted in 65 municipalities across the country. This is the third time it was conducted. According to the survey 454 people in Lethbridge are experiencing homelessness. That's more than double the 223 people recorded in 2018. Those numbers, collected over a six-hour period on September 27, were released last week. Indigenous people make up 6.6 per cent of the city's population but were overrepresented in the results, making up 72 per cent of unsheltered people and 36 per cent of sheltered homeless people. [interjection] Oh, yes. Yes, I will accept this intervention.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, I really appreciated hearing about some of the issues in the Lethbridge area, the area you represent, and certainly we know that homelessness has exploded here in Edmonton, too, since 2019, and I guess that's when the UCP was first elected. It has doubled here in Edmonton, and a lot of that, I know, is due to the lack of investment in affordable housing, in permanent supportive housing, in so many significant areas that support people to be able to be well housed.

Another thing that we know is that Alberta has much lower than the national average of other provinces in terms of housing availability, in terms of affordable housing. You know, 4.3 per cent is about what the national average is in the other provinces, and Alberta has about 2.9 per cent. Really, I just wanted to go ahead and talk about that.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, hon. member. I also want to thank her, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, for her advocacy both in housing and affordability for seniors as well, both in her time as a minister and as an opposition critic.

When we learn about these specific numbers and instances of deep poverty with respect to housing and homelessness and instances of living in low income for children, particularly Indigenous children in the city of Lethbridge, that I have just raised with the House, this bill leaves out the past years of allowing income support and assured income for the severely handicapped, the AISH program, and the seniors' benefit to lose ground to inflation. There was really no need for this over time. It was not a question of fiscal rectitude or whatever the government might claim. It was a question, at the time, when inflation was a smaller amount, in 2019, in 2020, of simply trying to find operational savings in areas where they essentially thought they could get away with it. That took advantage of folks, the folks at the lowest end of the income scale, folks who were at risk of experiencing homelessness. We've seen that double over this government's tenure in the city of Lethbridge. Certainly, when one's basic assistance programs, whether it's AISH or income support, are not keeping pace with inflation over time, that adds up, and especially it starts to add up when we're in a year where now we are looking at a compounding 40-year-high inflation.

This bill goes some way to fix that – that is to say, it indexes these programs to inflation going forward – but it does not fix what was lost in 2019 to now. For example, someone receiving assured income for the severely handicapped would be \$3,000 better off if we had just continued with the legislation that all UCP MLAs voted in favour of in the fall of 2018 and then cynically ripped away from people at their first available opportunity in the budget of 2019. That could be fixed in this bill, and I think it should be, a good-faith

attempt to ensure that we're doing the work that we need to do in the context of commodity prices going up as much as they have.

There was one additional deposit in the heritage fund – sadly, not two – because, of course, that money gets saved in order to fund future program expenditures in health care, education, and social services. But this legislation could be amended to fix these, essentially, what amounted to sneaky income tax increases on the personal income tax side with a failure to index brackets to inflation and, on the other side, a clawing back of benefits around income support and seniors' benefits.

**3:00**

I will say here that these housing and homelessness numbers, shocking as they are, and these child poverty numbers that are astonishing, in particular incidence of poverty among Indigenous children in Lethbridge: many of these issues can be and are addressed through income support programs. One of the income support programs that we still have not seen a restoration of is around that housing supplement for income support recipients, which has been cut. I think that is part of what has led to so many people living in unsheltered homelessness in Lethbridge, which is a massive issue in our city and one that remains not even grappled with, let alone having a strategic plan to address it from the UCP government.

I'll begin with that piece of the legislation, which I think has, in many ways, my most effusive praise for Bill 2 in that indexing those programs going forward rights a wrong. It was wrong to pause that indexation on the backs of people who can least afford it, and it was wrong to delay and delay and delay. It remains wrong not to do it retroactively.

Secondly we have this other matter of the \$100-a-month payments to people with children. You know, I'm thinking here of my friend Curtis Noble, who is in the ICU currently in Medicine Hat and has three kids, because I know he was off work for a little while and I know he was getting treatment for PTSD. I was really proud of him for that when we last talked about it, I think, in June, and I said: you're going to rock this; you can do this; there's a life beyond PTSD; the "post" is the first word in that acronym for a reason.

I think of families like his. You know, that \$100 a month per child for six months probably helps quite a bit when you're off work and you've got three kids. The cost of living, we all know, has gone pretty bananas, maybe not when you're buying bananas in the grocery store – those have remained fairly stable – but I don't know if anybody has had a look at the price of eggs lately, depending on where you go. I've noticed that one's moderated a little bit, but certainly there have been many, many things when I'm going through my usual – I try to do it online still because of time – grocery order where I just go: whoa; some things have really gone up. Even potatoes, curiously, have gone up quite a bit.

So I can imagine that, you know, families are really going to be looking forward to these cash payments, but this is a program that leaves out nearly 2 million Albertans. A single-income earner, someone working full-time on minimum wage, does not get anything from this. You know, there was a significant lag of time between the Premier's announcement a few weeks back – it'll be almost three to four weeks now – and the introduction of this bill. During that time they could have gone back to the drawing board, given, as we know, that within the documents, within the mid-year fiscal update, within some of the costing for these programs and for this bill, which has been a little bit confused – it's been a bit tough to untangle whether the government actually knows how much they're spending on these initiatives – they've got a sort of line item in there and keep sort of saying: oh, yeah; future provisions, future provisions. Albertans know that that means closer to the election.

Certainly, there was a Leger survey that indicated that, in particular, people in Calgary saw this program as a bit of a cynical ploy. Be that as it may, a lot of families do need it, even though I think people recognize it for what it is. It says that they're provisioned for more initiatives, and I think it sums to about \$1.3 billion if I'm not wrong. Like I said, it . . . [Ms Phillips' speaking time expired] I'll provide more at a different time.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to be able to rise today to be able to speak to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I do so with great excitement because of the relief that I know this is going to create for Albertans. Specifically, this act will have an impact especially on low-income seniors, those living with disabilities, and others that rely on social benefit programs like AISH, seniors' benefits, and income support.

I can tell you, after spending almost the entire summer door-knocking and connecting with many of my constituents at the door, it became increasingly apparent, the challenges that many in our community are facing, especially folks on fixed incomes. Life has slowly but surely become unaffordable, forcing folks into situations where they have to choose between food and rent or paying utilities. So this is timely, and it's necessary. When the Premier first won her leadership race, she gave each of us MLAs 30 minutes just to get to know us, to find out what the issues are that we're concerned about. We then spent the next 45 minutes discussing the challenges that we had seen and that I had been seeing at the doors in Calgary-Klein. I was just so excited to see that she shared my heart and concern, especially for the disability community and those who work in that sector as well.

For me, this is personal. You know, for my whole career I've worked in the not-for-profit sector. My own family has experienced challenges over the years. My own grandmother fled domestic violence and ended up in a situation where she was trying to raise her two sons alone and with the challenges that came with that. My father was homeless, of course, as a teenager. It took a full community coming around him to help him overcome that, with the opportunity, then, for him to be able to go pay that forward. As all six of us boys have worked in the social sector, this is close to our hearts.

I believe that this is no different for the disability community, that relies on programs like AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, as well as PDD. What we've seen is the cost of living just slowly rising and making things more and more difficult for people as affordability gets less and less for folks in our community. This is why for a long time I have been an advocate for indexing of these supports. As the members across mentioned, this shouldn't be something that we have to revisit every eight years to come back and beg the government for a bump up but something that keeps up with inflation as we move forward.

I am struck by the level of cynicism from the other side – and I've heard a few comments not just today but in debate on a different day – about how we're doing this six months before an election and that this is somehow some sort of ploy to get re-elected. I just need to remind members across that they didn't index AISH and other supports until five months before the election. So I'd like to throw it right back at them and maybe have them answer for that. Was that just a ploy to win votes, or was it doing what was necessary to make sure that we were helping people in the community? I would suggest and hope that it was doing what was necessary to help people in our community, for them and for us. Should we wait six months until the next election to help Albertans

through this crisis? The answer is definitely not. That's why this government is acting and it's acting now.

The difference, however, Madam Speaker, between that party when they were in government and this party when we're in government is that we are indexing AISH, income support, and seniors' benefits, and we have a balanced budget. Our economy is working. It's roaring. We're seeing growth in sectors right across the board. We've been able to put ourselves over the last three and a half years into a financial position so that the long-term viability of these programs is not at risk.

**3:10**

Under that government they were at risk. They were at risk. Honestly, I think we have an important question as we approach an election. If we want to make sure that these programs can continue to be indexed and that we continue to have the financial wealth to be able to help support Albertans that are vulnerable in our communities, we need to make sure that we keep this government in charge so we can continue to grow our economy and we can continue to have strong balance sheets. Again, a hundred billion dollars in debt put these programs at risk not only for today but into the future, and we need to make sure that the viability of these programs is protected.

It was clearly outlined in my mandate letter just how much of a priority this was for our government, to make life more affordable for Albertans, especially for low-income and vulnerable Albertans. That is why we were very quick to increase benefit rates, which thousands of Albertans will see before Christmas. Bill 2 has a long list of measures that will bring help with affordability. The electricity rebate has already been in place for quite a few months now, providing money relief for millions of Albertans. With Bill 2 that is being extended for another four months.

If you remember back for a moment when the electricity rebate was being put in place, the NDP, of course, criticized this as a fake rebate. Five hundred dollars does not sound like a fake rebate to me, Madam Speaker. That's very real. Absolutely. Five hundred dollars is going to make a significant impact, I know, for my constituents, again, as they have to make those difficult decisions. Five hundred dollars is a lot of food on the table for people. For some families that's weeks' or even months' worth of groceries. That is enough money to cover an average person's groceries for two or more months.

Now we're hearing very similar rhetoric from the members opposite in regard to our targeted relief payments for seniors, families, and low-income and disabled Albertans. Madam Speaker, what I'm getting at is that the NDP enjoys creating a lot of fear. It's what they know best at the end of the day. When the government makes an announcement that we are providing \$600 in relief, people are happy because that is something that is going to make real change for them and their families.

I'd like to take just a couple of minutes to shift gears and talk a little bit about Alberta's relationship with Ottawa. Obviously, Alberta is not the only place in Canada that's facing an affordability crisis. Fuel, utilities, groceries: they are all more expensive across this entire country. Here in Alberta it is unrealistic to think that anything the provincial government is able to do can fix the nationwide inflation crisis. However, we are able to provide support for those that have been impacted, and we're doing that. Additionally, we can call on the federal government to fix the problems that they've created. We have been doing that since before we were even elected back in 2019. Our government's first bill of this Legislature was to repeal the carbon tax that the previous NDP government, of course, had put in place.

Talking about the 13 cents a litre off the gas tax, maybe we'll flip that and have a conversation about if this government was putting forward a bill in this Legislature right now to actually increase the gas tax. Could you imagine if we were doing that right now, having a discussion about increasing the gas tax? I am 90 per cent sure that the members opposite would be losing their minds, and rightly so, because right now we should not. That's the last thing that we should be doing, increasing taxes on Albertans, especially on gas taxes. We know that the higher cost of the gas tax has a significant impact on the cost of everything.

Of course, it would be utterly absurd if we were sitting here right now talking about increasing the gas tax, but the reality is that the federal government has just done that with the carbon tax. By doing that, they have increased the cost of everything. But now if we were increasing the gas tax, I'm 90 per cent sure we would be hearing a lot of noise from the other side. The federal government increases the gas tax: not a peep. Not a peep. [interjections] Actually, Madam Speaker, I'm hearing the members opposite defending their good friend and ally Justin Trudeau and his carbon tax policy and their federal leader, Jagmeet Singh. When are these guys going to stick up for and defend Albertans and push back on this carbon tax? This government is taking real action by the elimination of the gas tax to help Albertans during an affordability crisis.

Madam Speaker, Bill 2 is an example of our government taking an approach that will ensure that those who need it are going to get the support that they need. We see the need. We are addressing it. In addition to this bill, our government has also put \$20 million in support for food banks over the next two years. During the pandemic we were the first government in recent history to financially support food banks in Alberta. We provided \$6 million to help restock shelves during the pandemic and make sure that Albertans didn't go hungry. That is \$26 million more than the previous government ever spent on food banks, so I do not believe they have credibility to be able to criticize this action.

There are thousands of Albertans that are eager to contribute to food banks, which is why we chose to run a donation-matching campaign. Our food banks are very talented at involving the broader community in the solution, and that's what we need. We can't just rely on government alone to be able to get through this crisis. We all have a role. We all need to take part, and this matching program allows these food banks to be able to leverage these dollars to engage the broader community and make sure that all Albertans are part of the solution.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to simply re-emphasize my support for Bill 2. These measures have made and will continue to make a huge difference for every Albertan as they navigate this inflation crisis. This is not a crisis that will be solved by simply cancelling your monthly subscription to Disney+. That is why we are providing legitimate relief that will have a real impact for Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 2 and comment on some of the previous speaker's comments on this bill. It's interesting – and I will always find debate in this Chamber interesting – that there are so many differences of opinion of what's said in this Chamber. I'll lay out at the outset that there are some measures in this bill that I can get behind, that I can support. There are a couple of specific issues that I have with the bill, and I'll speak at length to those.

But before I launch into the bill specifically, I just want to talk about the affordability crisis that currently exists in Alberta and the approach that this current government took three and a half years ago when they first formed government. There are a number of measures that actually increased costs on everyday Albertans because of programs that the government brought in. You know, one of the first things this government did was to deindex AISH in 2019. Now, I appreciate that it's being reindexed; however, the challenge from constituents that I'm hearing from is that for the three years where it didn't grow or increase because of cost-of-living increases, they've fallen further and further behind. I appreciate that AISH is being reindexed, and my hope and my request for all members in this Chamber is that any future government does not deindex AISH, that we leave AISH indexed in perpetuity. [interjection] I see my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I will give way.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you to the hon. member. I hear you speak about recipients of AISH falling further and further behind. These are people that you talk to on a regular basis. Can you just expand a little bit on what that actually looks like, what that means to fall behind? We know that so many are struggling, and it's not a simple thing such as not being able to do luxurious things. It's quite devastating to hear the stories of those people that are being impacted. We're hearing stories about people not being able to afford rent and groceries and those types of things. I would love for the hon. member to be able to share a little bit about those details and those personal stories that he's hearing from his constituents.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. Thank you to my colleague the hon. member. You know, I've heard a number of stories of folks that have – again, people that are on AISH receive a very modest amount that covers off all of their necessities. The challenge when this government deindexed it is that we were starting to see inflation grow at quite a rapid pace. Now, I don't have the number in front of me of the actual dollars that were lost by it not being indexed over three years, but to the minister who spoke before me – I mean, he talked about some of the comments that our side has made around the electricity rebates and how little the amount was, where the minister was claiming: well, no; \$500 over five months is substantial.

For a person on AISH that is probably even more impactful. We know that every dollar, especially for low-income Albertans, that they can either keep in their pockets or that, you know, through supports from the government, it can increase makes a significant difference, Madam Speaker, in their lives. That's one of the things.

3:20

I mean, I appreciate the member saying that one of our criticisms is that this is coming in six months before the election. I just think that's an interesting coincidence. We'll leave it to Albertans to decide. I appreciate the fact that our indexing came in in a similar type of window. What I will say on that, and part of the reason that I support this element of the bill, is that I'm glad it's being brought in. Regardless of when it's being brought in, it's a positive step.

It doesn't eliminate a frustration that I have that this government deindexed AISH in 2019. You know, I can appreciate how cabinet and Executive Council works. My hope is that some of the members opposite, including the minister because of his background and his experience, would have spoken out against the former Premier saying: we're going to deindex AISH. Now, I'm not privy to those caucus meetings, but it's frustrating to hear that three years later the same group of people who were the government that deindexed AISH are now saying: yes, we're behind this; it's great. Well, where

was that vigour, where was that persuasive standing up for the people on AISH three and a half years ago? But, I mean, I'll leave this.

As far as the bill goes, I've laid out my concerns over the past three years. I appreciate the fact that it's in this bill, that it's being indexed. I wish the government would consider some type of measure to help support AISH recipients for that loss of indexation over the past three years. I can tell you that if it was possible for the government to bring in some kind of amendment – the opposition cannot because that would require dollars – then that would be greatly appreciated, and I think the government would have the opposition's support in doing that. I think it would be fairly nominal, quite frankly – not nominal, but a smaller amount – because we're talking about inflation over three years. I put that on the record. You know, I appreciate this debate.

I think some of the other challenges – and it's interesting, Madam Speaker, that, you know, being in this place you really learn how people's brains work. On this side of the House we had raised the alarm bells around bracket creep when the current government increased personal income taxes. We're talking semantics now. On this side of the House we say that the government increased personal income taxes. On that side of the House they say: no, we didn't; we're just not indexing people's wages anymore.

Now, the irony in that was that the former Premier railed against bracket creep when he was the head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. So there's a little bit of doublespeak going on when it was not okay for governments 15 years ago, 20 years ago to do that, yet for this government that was not seen as an increase in personal income taxes. I mean, at the end of the day call it what you want. It is an increase in income taxes. Now, again, I appreciate that the government is reversing that now; a different bill. That does mean that it will leave more money in the pockets of Albertans, which is a positive thing.

I mean, I'm sure all members in this Chamber hear about the affordability crisis everywhere they go. You know, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I too am surprised when I go to look at the prices of certain items. I know that Albertans are making choices of changing their diet because they simply can't afford to eat the way they used to. Action is needed.

Again, I'll finish my comments about earlier decisions the government made which actually increased costs on Albertans. I mean, in addition to raising personal income taxes, there was a significant spike in the increase in cost of utilities, insurance, tuition, park fees. The fact that the government removed the drug coverage for seniors: I think that's a shot below the belt, quite personally.

The fact of the matter is that Albertans do see that, you know, the number one outstanding reason of why there is a surplus is because the price of oil has been much higher than the government forecasted. Of course, Alberta has zero influence, zero control over the price of oil. It's not because the government are these phenomenal financial stewards of our dollars. It's because the revenue coming into the provincial coffers has more than doubled what was coming in under the tenure of the NDP.

I'll jump back to the bill because I know my time is running short. One of the biggest concerns I have with this – and I'd love to hear the minister or ministers get up and speak on this – is the whole payday lending scheme. I appreciate that the concept is to defer payments so that Albertans can pay later, which would save them money. The problem is that the people that are still paying the rate regulation option are going to be shouldering a larger cost of those loans in six months' time, and that will likely lead to higher and higher utility costs. There is a U of C economist who called this idea a death spiral. You're just deferring costs to down the road.

The problem is: for the people that are going to vie for this option or choose this option, how are they going to afford those increased payments down the road? It's dangerous in the sense that it could be setting them up to fail. I appreciate that the government was looking for a way to help Albertans in the immediate future for higher utility costs. I'm just not convinced that this is the best mechanism to do that. There's a significant potential downside and significant risk that Albertans are going to be bearing.

Another point that my colleagues have touched on is the fact that the affordability measure, or the \$100 a month payments, leaves out nearly 2 million Albertans. We're not talking about Albertans who are earning hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and don't necessarily need that – I'm not saying it wouldn't help; I'm saying, “need that” – in order to continue to live month to month. The challenge, Madam Speaker, is for somebody who is working full-time. A full-time minimum wage job does not see any of this relief.

We know that if you're working full-time at minimum wage, you're not making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. You're not even making \$100,000 a year. Those are the people that are really being squeezed right now when you've got the increase of the cost of gas for driving. You've got costs at the grocery store, increased costs in utilities. For people that do own their homes, we've seen significant increases in mortgage rates. Again, I appreciate that's outside of the purview of the provincial government, but it's still an increased cost. All of this results in newer costs. [interjection] I see my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning rise. I'll give way.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Member. You know, as you were speaking about mortgage rates going up and costs that are going up for Albertans, I think one of the other things that we're hearing about is the increase in municipal taxes. I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts around what the government could have done in relation to ensuring that local municipalities aren't forced to have to increase municipal taxes on Albertans.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you, through you, Madam Speaker, to the member for a great question. We are seeing in some jurisdictions, like some municipalities and regions and communities in Alberta, not just double-digit tax increases on their municipal property taxes; we're seeing tax increases close to 20 per cent. You know what? I get that the government will blame the municipal councillors and leaders for the fact that their – whatever they're going to say – pet projects are raising taxes through the roof. Municipalities deliver 90 per cent of the services that Albertans rely on and receive 10 per cent of the funding. The inversion on that is very flawed.

3:30

When you have municipal leaders calling on the government not to cut their funding, which the current government has done over the past three and a half years – they need more support to be able to deliver services for their community members. We know that municipalities have very few tools in their tool box to be able to increase the revenues that they have to provide services. Councils across this province right now are having very, very difficult conversations on: what are the priorities that they need to fund?

The problem is that if you look at the rate of inflation this last year, it was over 7 per cent. So when a municipality says, “We're going to raise taxes by 3 per cent” and this government criticizes them for doing it, that's still far from the increased costs of operations, of the day-to-day. Now, I'm not advocating for higher property taxes, but I can sympathize with municipal leaders in this conundrum that they're in where citizens expect the delivery of services. They're expecting cities that are growing to be increasing

their amenities. We have increasing costs, and the government is not sharing their revenue surplus with municipalities, who are desperate to just continue providing the same base level of services. This is a problem, Madam Speaker, because the result is that the municipal leaders are increasing taxes on Albertans or on their constituents municipally, which means more costs.

Once again, the provincial government is directly responsible for the funds that go to municipalities. I mean, the Premier and the Finance minister recently spoke about how municipalities are governed by the province, they exist because of the province. So it is the province's responsibility to be able to share some of its revenues with municipalities, who deliver 90 per cent of the services that Albertans rely on. This is another way that the current government is actually increasing costs on Albertans.

Now, you know, I appreciate that in this bill, Madam Speaker, there is, again, the provincial portion of the gasoline tax Albertans will not have to pay for six months. That does help Albertans. We had concerns when they first introduced this measure, but we have seen some savings for Albertans. As my colleague often points out, the challenge with that measure is that it's only benefiting those who drive, so if you're not driving, I don't think – and I could be wrong – that municipalities are taking that savings themselves and passing it on to their ridership. Having said that, I wish the current government would have kept that break on the provincial portion of the gas tax going as opposed to it ending for several months.

I see my colleague has risen.

**Mr. Feehan:** I just am interested in your conversation about the municipalities. I know that you've had a significant amount of experience with the municipalities, and I also know that you're quite aware of the variety of ways in which this government has increased costs on municipalities. I wonder if you can remind the House a little bit about some of the changes that were made with regard to linear assessments, for example, about giving tax holidays to wealthy corporations, about increasing the cost on municipalities for having RCMP officers and actually diminishing the ability of municipalities to make decisions regarding their own budgets and budget increases, you know, all of these kinds of things that have made life in the small towns of this province much more difficult to administer and have resulted in increased costs as well.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. Thank you to the hon. member, through you, Madam Speaker.

I'm just curious how much time I have remaining.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Less than 30 seconds.

**Mr. Bilous:** Less than 30 seconds. Well, that's always a problem.

What I will say to answer the member's question is that costs for policing have gone up significantly as the province has pulled some funding for that. There have been challenges as well with municipalities collecting money that is owed to them.

Madam Speaker, there are elements of this bill I absolutely support. There are elements that are challenges, and my hope is that we will see some progress to improve the bill.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I stand today to voice my support for Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Bill 2 is here to ensure that Albertans who are finding it difficult to make ends meet will be supported by our government. Just recently the Premier and the minister of affordability announced \$2.4 billion in inflation relief measures that will make life more affordable for Alberta families.

Before going further, I would like to applaud the Premier, ministers, MLAs, and our leaders for making difficult decisions during these unprecedented times here. At this time we need to ensure and let Albertans know that they're supported and protected by their government. As well, I extend my appreciation to all working Albertans, families, children, seniors, and our most vulnerable populations that have been under pressure from the increasing prices of utilities, food, and rent. There is no doubt that Albertans are facing price hikes, and I am pleased that Bill 2 will help Albertans during these difficult times.

Every choice we make in this crisis must strike a balance between Albertans' financial needs and the requirement for an ongoing balanced budget and fiscal prudence. We can assist Albertans during a crisis like this one when our financial house is in order. Madam Speaker, over the past couple of years our government has worked tremendously hard to balance the budget and ensure that we acted with speed to address the economic consequences of the pandemic. We created a system of supports for job creators and freed up cash for families and businesses to help relieve the pressure and keep their doors open. We passed numerous legislations, revised many policies to ensure we attract investments which boost our economic growth and, most importantly, improve the lives of all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, Calgary-East is a community that is facing a lot of hardship from the current inflation. I have spoken to many constituents these recent months and heard time and again that life is becoming financially challenging. In recent years I was delighted to see Alberta's government fund and complete infrastructure projects in Calgary-East, including the revitalization of Forest Lawn high school and Clifton Manor to ensure that our children and seniors in long-term are supported, construction of a new playground in St. Kateri, and the completion of Journey to Freedom park. As well, Calgary-East is a growing community with new families, new businesses, like Calgary East Hills. Neighbourhoods like Belvedere would enhance the presence of the city.

As Alberta remains one of the most affordable places in Canada to live and work, Alberta's lower cost of living combined with relatively high average earnings and the lowest overall taxes mean Albertans keep more money in their pockets. Madam Speaker, let's not forget that Alberta's recovery plan's aim was to take a bold action to create jobs that got people back to work, assisted in building infrastructure, and, most importantly, helped us diversify our economy to ensure that our resources are well utilized.

**3:40**

The focus in the past was to eliminate red tape that was holding back the economy since these changes have brought more investments and good jobs into our urban, rural communities and ensured more jobs for Albertans. This was a promised platform that will always be a commitment, a way to protect workers and restore balance and strengthen democracy. As we work together to build our economic strength, to attract investment, and position our province for prosperity, at the end it's all to support Albertans and to provide hope for the future.

Through many provincial government initiatives we were experiencing broad-based investment and economic diversification in our province. Amazon Web Services announced its plan to establish its second cloud computing hub in Calgary, amounting to \$4.3 billion, while Mphasis has recently opened its digital centre in Calgary and committed to create 1,000 jobs. Mphasis also opened their Canadian headquarters this year in Calgary with 200 jobs and will expand to create thousands of tech jobs. RBC has also opened a tech hub in Calgary which will create about 300 jobs while EY, impressed with the talented offers, opened in September this year. A new finance hub will create about 200 jobs in Calgary. Northern

Petrochemical also announced a \$2.5 billion project in the municipal district of Greenview, and Dow Chemical plans to open a project that will be the world's first net-zero carbon emission petrochemical plant, which is predicted to cost about \$10 billion. Another huge investment that has landed in Alberta is Lynx Air, Madam Speaker, Canada's newest low-cost airline. It joins Flair and WestJet as Alberta-based airlines.

These are just some of the many investments creating jobs in Alberta and boosting our economy, Madam Speaker, as we saw the unemployment rate dip down to 5.2 per cent in October. We are also seeing the continuous entry of job creators in our province. Whether new businesses or business expansions, Alberta's government is helping employees, employers create exciting futures for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, although Alberta's economy has made a solid comeback, many residents are still finding it difficult to pay for food and heating due to the rising prices and record inflation. We as a government are unable to address the inflation challenges on our own, but because of our solid financial standing and balanced budget, we're able to provide significant assistance to Albertans and their families in the challenging times ahead. Our current focus is to provide urgent cost-of-living supports and inflation relief and work with our ministries to improve long-term affordability. Since our vulnerable populations are most affected by rising prices and soaring inflation and require greater support, I'm pleased that we are directing our attention to providing supports to our elders, families, and vulnerable groups that are severely affected.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's inflation increased to 6.8 per cent in October from 6.2 per cent in September. The rise is brought by growing gas, electricity, food prices. Families with children often spend a greater percentage of their income on food, energy, and transportation. The average income of seniors and disadvantaged Albertans is lower. All Albertans are receiving broad-based relief from the expense of living while receiving additional assistance for those who most need it, and I'm proud that we are doing this while maintaining budgetary responsibility.

The government of Alberta has already taken a number of measures to make life more affordable, including the electricity rebate, which has already given up to \$250 in relief to 1.9 million families, small businesses, and farms, and the fuel tax relief program, which will be saving Albertans money on gasoline and diesel every time they fill up their cars. Families may be secure in their own ability to heat their homes this winter thanks to the natural gas rebate, which offers natural gas price protection while focusing on providing extra aid to families, elders, and our most vulnerable citizens. I am pleased our administration will expand broad-based services. Our government is aware that the main issue Albertans are now facing is affordability and that they are looking to us to act swiftly to address Alberta's accelerating cost of living.

We aim to concentrate on areas where the government can move quickly and effectively to lower expenses for Albertans while also laying out a better, more affordable future for coming generations. AISH, PDD, income support, the seniors' benefit, the Alberta child and family benefit, extended fuel tax relief, action on utilities, including increasing the electricity rebate, targeted payments for families for each child, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans will all benefit during these upcoming months.

To assist Albertans in heating their homes and paying their energy bills this winter, our government is committed in giving an additional power rebate, better price protection. We will increase the power reinvestment by \$200 this winter, providing a total of \$500 in rebates throughout the life of the program. Madam Speaker, more steps to safeguard families from price increases in electricity, while maintaining the natural gas price protection program, are taken to help all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, it is wonderful that Alberta's government has decided to postpone the entire provincial gasoline tax for at least the next six months. We have seen this fuel tax relief program from June up to September this year, where the provincial government suspended the collection of fuel tax in that prior year. As we saw the downward trend from oil prices, the reimposition of the fuel tax started in October, which is the lowest among Canada's provinces. Currently we are just collecting a fuel tax of 4.5 cents per litre of gasoline and diesel. Following that, the province will alter the provincial gas tax based on the price of oil as it does under the current relief plan. As a result, beginning January 1st, Albertans will save 13.6 cents, including GST, per litre of petrol and fuel. This initiative will give significant help to Albertans who are dealing with high inflationary prices.

In addition to the roughly 1.3 million tax filers who now do not pay provincial personal income tax, an additional 80,000 to 95,000 Albertans will now do so by 2023. As a result, many Albertans will either receive larger tax refunds or pay less in taxes as a result of 2022 indexation. Provincial tax rates will be updated to reflect inflation by the government. With these changes, it is less probable that an employee who receives a small wage increase may face tax consequences. We will keep our commitment to retroactively adjust personal income taxes to inflation beginning with the 2022 tax year.

Alberta's government provides more than \$8.9 billion in services and supports to Alberta seniors each year. This includes financial support and health benefits as well as housing and health supports for seniors with low income. These supports are most of the reasons Alberta has the lowest senior poverty rate in Canada.

Madam Speaker, beginning January, the government will reindex AISH, PDD, income assistance, the seniors' benefit, and the Alberta child and family benefit for inflation, making it even more affordable for Albertans. This will make it possible to adjust payments for inflation and provide benefits to assist vulnerable groups in paying their bills in the face of growing living expenses.

3:50

Changes to the Alberta child and family benefit, AISH, the persons with developmental disabilities program, the income support program as well as the Alberta seniors' benefit: Madam Speaker, this increased financial support will have an immediate impact on more than a quarter million vulnerable Albertans, including 43,000 children who are dependent on AISH and income support benefit recipients.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to draw attention to the supporting advantages that seniors and families with . . . [Mr. Singh's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to join debate on Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Certainly, as the title of the bill indicates, there is some relief regarding, you know, this inflationary crisis that we are in currently. We know that we're witnessing the greatest crisis we've had in decades, and certainly it's important that the government take some responsibility to support its citizens regarding this time, so I'm pleased that the government is bringing forward this bill.

It's just that there are some contradictory policies of this government. As they indicate in this bill that they want to move forward, for example, on indexing the Alberta seniors' benefit, they themselves were the government that deindexed that benefit three and a half years ago. You know, it concerns me that the government is sort of patting themselves on the back a bit by bringing forward this legislation, but some of this legislation would not have even



had to come forward if the government hadn't done previous legislation that really did hurt Albertans. I must say that it is like they're doing one thing that's contradictive of something that they did earlier in their mandate.

I do want to just talk about the responsibility of government. Absolutely, when there are events that happen in our world that are beyond sort of individual responsibility – you know, we can't control the price of groceries, which is an example of some of the very high inflationary issues Albertans are facing. We know that the costs of utilities have gone up significantly. An individual cannot control those things. Governments can influence those things. They can't completely control them, but they can make them more reasonable so citizens can cope, can live with dignity. This is an extremely important role of government. Certainly, one of the main reasons, probably, that I got involved in politics is because there are so many significant issues that citizens just can't manage by themselves, so we need just, fair, compassionate government to stand up and provide policies that support our citizens.

One of the things that I, you know, disagree with some of the UCP about – and the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services just mentioned it – is that we can't pay for social programs if we don't have a balanced budget. I completely disagree with that. Actually, governments can do that. They have access to many economic levers, that individual citizens don't, that can support people. Certainly, that was something that we significantly did when we were government.

We know that the oil and gas industry is very important to Albertans and to our economy, to our citizens. Certainly, we've had booms and busts over many, many years in this province. We're all familiar with them. Certainly, when we were government, the price of oil was \$26 a barrel at its lowest, and you know it's been over a hundred during this government's mandate. So there is a significant difference in revenue, especially because previous Conservative governments had repeatedly just relied on the oil and gas industry to get us through. They hadn't diversified the economy, and that was something that we, an NDP government, aggressively moved forward in doing.

But did we slash public programs that citizens needed, especially citizens who worked in the oil and gas industry? They lost their jobs oftentimes, and they didn't have that income to provide for their families. Did we slash public programs? No. We did the opposite. We buffered citizens. We supported citizens because that's what good government does. It doesn't have to be a balanced budget to do that. Governments can do many things with their financial resources that an individual can't. I'm very proud that our government did that, and I'm dismayed that this government doesn't see that that's their role also.

People have been absolutely suffering under this government because of the cuts they made when they first came in that they didn't have to make. The example that I used earlier about the deindexation of seniors' benefits – we know of AISH also. We know that they didn't increase the tax brackets. Property taxes went up, school fees, tuition: there are so many things that this government has done, so they've kind of created their own difficulties. But now with this Bill 2 they're saying: oh, well, we're going to give Albertans – some Albertans, not everyone – some money to help them because, yeah, we agree that there is an affordability crisis. But all along they could have been doing so much more, and people could have been supported quite well.

I speak every day to Albertans who are not making ends meet, who are losing their housing. One fellow told me – and he was a senior. He said: "I haven't had meat in months. I can't afford meat." He relied on the Alberta seniors' benefit and he relied on it keeping

pace with inflation, but he couldn't have a lifestyle where he ate meat because it was too expensive for him.

So the UCP certainly does have a choice, and I think good government, a compassionate government, would actually buffer citizens when times are tough and not focus only on balancing the budget, because governments don't have to balance their budgets. They have a lot of financial levers so that they have much more latitude to provide those public programs.

We know, Madam Speaker, that oftentimes when those programs are provided, when people can live in dignity, people are well housed, people can access health care, people can, you know, go to postsecondary and improve themselves, those actually save governments money because then they're not accessing those more expensive services like emergency medical services. We know that providing a person who is homeless affordable housing with the proper supports costs less for a government than it does them living homeless. So besides just the human rights argument for providing public programs, there is an economic argument. A wise government would not cut these programs in the first place and would provide Albertans with this buffer, this support. Certainly, I feel like that's the main responsibility of a government, to care for its citizens. Certainly, I differ greatly with some of the views of UCP members in this regard.

You know, I'm reminded of way back when Premier Klein was in office. I was a social worker in child welfare, and he cut public programs by 50 per cent. He didn't have to do that. He did it because he wanted a balanced budget. So he said that he had slayed this dragon and it was so great for everyone. It wasn't good for my clients. It wasn't good for the professionals I worked with. It was a select amount of people who could benefit from that kind of thing. So I really question this premise of the UCP that you have to balance your budget. You can actually do many things as a government.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat.

4:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 2? Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

## Bill 6

### Police Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate December 12: Ms Ganley]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. You know, we've heard from this government for quite some years now about their intention of moving on a costly provincial police force despite opposition, significant opposition, from the majority of Albertans and municipalities, and they have now introduced a piece of legislation that really gives a lot more control from the government into community policing.

We have a piece of legislation that comes on the heels of millions of dollars being downloaded onto municipalities in policing costs in the last three years. On top of that, they made a significant cut to the Justice budget. We have a piece of legislation that's coming forward from a government that, we know, wants to go against the direction of Albertans and look at a costly provincial police force.

While there are pieces of this legislation that we can one hundred per cent support such as civilian oversight into law enforcement, there are so many things glaringly missing from this piece of

legislation, Madam Speaker. I think that when we look at the cuts that this government has put towards municipalities and the impact that it's had on policing and the justice system, it is detrimental to communities.

We're hearing that, you know, municipalities' services need support. We saw a government that cut funding for victims' services in a time when crime has increased, when supports have become more and more necessary, cuts to nonprofits. It's just a piece of legislation where some of it is good, Madam Speaker, but there's so much left unknown in this legislation.

We're seeing a government that wants to create a lot of things that are left to regulation, which is quite concerning knowing the history that this government has with interference in some criminal matters and policing matters. I don't know that Albertans trust this government to come up with regulations that aren't part of this legislation. There are things that should be in this legislation that just simply aren't available.

When I've looked through this, you know, our government, the NDP, started the Police Act review, and we were doing things like consulting with Albertans. That was a priority for our government, to be able to listen to those that are involved in policing and have feedback from those. Yet we've heard that some significant legislation has gone through and, with this piece of legislation, is intended to go through without consultation. We heard from Treaty 6 that there was no consultation on Bill 1, the sovereignty act. That went through. Now we've heard that there's been no consultation on this bill.

Now, when it comes to Indigenous communities, I would argue that they have some significant input and voice that needs to be at the table when it comes to policing in this province. We have an overrepresented community of Indigenous people that are in our court systems, that are in our jails, that are being charged unfairly, and the fact that this government has left them out of the conversation for the consultation for this piece of legislation is quite concerning. I would be curious to know what the reason for that is. We heard the Premier over the last few days state that she has in fact met with Indigenous communities regarding legislation, and then, immediately following, we heard Indigenous leaders come out and say that that is not true. So what are Albertans to do, Madam Speaker? We have a piece of legislation that's come forward where they're saying, "Just trust us; we're going to make up these things in the regulations," yet we know that no consultation happened with Indigenous communities.

I'm curious if consultation happened with municipalities. This legislation is going to have some significant impact on municipalities all across this province. When they're looking at putting a committee forward that is 50 per cent supported – not supported. I would like to retract that word. There's no support indicated in here, whether that comes financially or what. They are going to be appointing 50 per cent of those boards, and I find that significantly concerning without adding the piece that there is going to be financial support along with that. We have a government that's saying: "We want things to happen in the province. We have a direction that we want to see policing take, and we're going to appoint" – I've been corrected – "49 per cent of the boards. But how we're going to do that is going to be left in regulations." So knowing that there wasn't consultation that happened to create this piece of legislation, I'm very fearful that consultation may not happen when they're appointing the individuals that are going to be on these committees.

I know that there are some significant concerns and questions when it comes to the relationship that this government has with the RCMP. Now, in the province of Alberta we have some wonderful working relationships with the RCMP. Right here in Edmonton we have K Division. Now, what is going to happen when this piece of legislation comes forward? Will there be any sort of agreement that

needs to change or anything required formally with the RCMP K Division?

I can speak from direct experience, Madam Speaker, when it comes to working with K Division. I had the privilege of working with Alberta ICE. For those of you that don't know what that is, it's the Alberta Internet child exploitation unit. It is a provincial strategy, an integrated unit that works with the RCMP, the Calgary police, the Edmonton police, the Lethbridge police, and the Medicine Hat police. What they do is that they directly work with child luring over the Internet; the child sex trade and tourism; voyeurism involving victims under the age of 18; accessing, possession, distribution, importation, manufacturing of child pornography; and any other child-related sexual abuse. I would say that this unit, that represents all Albertans, is essential, and I'm concerned that these well-established relationships and partnerships could be at risk because of the government's plan to come in and start dictating their priorities to local policing.

4:10

Now, as a child welfare worker that worked as an investigator, I didn't have the expertise to work on Internet exploitation. I relied heavily on the expertise of the ICE unit. The Edmonton police that I worked with also relied on the information that the RCMP and the specialists in this unit had. We were working with criminals out of Florida that were impacting individuals in Edmonton. Now, as a worker, knowing that I could pick up the phone and contact our federal partners through the RCMP K Division meant that I knew I was doing the best thing that I could for the families and children that I worked for.

There are so many relationships within the police service in communities all across the province that exist because the community came forward and said: "We need this. This is an area of concern in our community, and we as a community, a municipality have decided that this is a strategy that we would like to have involved with the police." I fear, Madam Speaker, that with this piece of legislation, Bill 6, the government is going to come in and start dictating what community policing looks like.

I can think that in Edmonton-Castle Downs at one point we had a NET team, a neighbourhood empowerment team. That came about because our community leaders, through the Edmonton Castle Downs Rec Society and multiple different organizations, came together and said: "We have a need. We need some community policing. We had a high break-and-enter space within Edmonton-Castle Downs. We had a lot of car thefts." And what the community asked for was a neighbourhood empowerment team, and that was provided because the community came forward and said, "This is what we see in our community." It wasn't the provincial government that came in and said, "This needs to happen." It was a community initiative that came forward and created a wonderful relationship with EPS and the community leaders that were naturally there.

I can think of some other wonderful relationships that have happened in Castle Downs, Madam Speaker. We have some beautiful community facilities in Castle Downs. We have the Edmonton Islamic Academy, that is right next door. We have the Al Rashid mosque, that is right next door, and we have the Castle Downs YMCA. They were seeing that some of the kids in the community were a little bit restless and that there were some struggles with community policing in the area. So what the community did was that they came together and had a conversation with EPS, with the hate crimes unit, and with the natural community leaders.

With the support of EPS and the relationship building that took place, they were able to create a wonderful space where youth could get involved with EPS. They were doing basketball games. They were playing hockey. They were doing things where the police in

the community said: this is something that's needed to enhance and build relationships in this community. That happened organically because the community came forward and said: this is what we see; these are possible solutions. EPS was incredible at coming forward and offering their feedback and insight and listening to community. There wasn't an additional layer of having to have the minister come in and provide direction on what the community should be doing. EPS and the community leaders believed that they knew what was best for the community, and they were successful in that because they live there, they work there, and they see what's going on.

We have a policing system in north Edmonton that many feel is supportive, but we also have a policing system that many feel is not working. I've held town halls, Madam Speaker, to talk about the racism that's happening within the community and how the community feels that police are contributing to that. Rather than shying away from it and having to go through a provincial whatever to direct some sort of plan, we had the hate crimes unit come and directly talk to the community and share and listen about what was happening on both sides. The community naturally did this.

I fear that when we're looking at a provincial government and a minister that want to get directly involved and have their hands on every component of municipalities and communities across Alberta, we're going to get further and further away from what communities actually need. They need to feel heard; they need to feel involved. The best way to get buy-in is having all parties at the table that are directly involved coming up with solutions. It's a simple mediation format. When you have both sides represented equally, sharing concerns, you can come up with a beautiful solution.

When you have a minister and a government that are coming down saying, "This is what we need; we need to appoint 49 per cent of those involved in the communities," we are getting further and further away from grassroots community engagement, community enhancement, community safety, and that's concerning. These are things that the government shouldn't be so... [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 6, a bill which, you know, I have mixed feelings about, a little bit of disappointment. I certainly have said in the past that I have some concern that too often when the UCP government has a bill with some good points in it, they put something in it that becomes a poison pill and makes it impossible to support. I'm a bit conflicted over this particular bill because I think it fits into that area. I do think there are some things that are important here that I'd like to support, and I really want to encourage the government to find a way to pursue them. Even if I vote against this bill, I want them to pursue some aspects. I'd like to address those pieces first.

[Mr. Turton in the chair]

I guess that the pieces that I think are important and good for this government to proceed with are the shift toward having increased citizen oversight of police forces in the province, the idea that there will be people who sit on commissions who make decisions on the local basis about the nature of the police. I think it's something that's a good thing. I think, you know, all societies should have control over their police forces by the people that are being served by the police forces because it just makes sense that we need to have civilians making decisions as to the length and the breadth to which

police can act to control citizens. We don't want to be in a situation where the power rests solely with the police forces over citizens. As such, a movement toward some kind of citizen oversight is a good decision. I have some concerns about the mechanism that the government has put in, but perhaps I'll speak to my second part that I do really wish to support in this bill before I go on to some of my concerns.

The second thing that I like is the decision to actually move ASIRT away from its present circumstance to under the control of the citizen board because, you know, I never think it's a good idea to have police policing police. The way that ASIRT is set up right now, it's essentially current and retired police officers who are making the decisions about the police's behaviour, and I just always think that's problematic. There certainly should be a role of police officers in ASIRT, describing appropriate police procedures and the reasoning for them and so on, so I certainly want a presence of police in helping to review the behaviour. The police said it also helps them to understand where things have gone wrong, where there are problems, and hopefully they bring that information back to the police forces and change behaviour where it's required to change, but there should also be a very strong external review of that kind of behaviour.

I know that, you know, when I was a member of the Alberta College of Social Workers, we had a committee that reviewed social worker behaviours. It certainly had social workers on it but also had civilians on that review committee to ensure that the review that was done by the committee over the social workers' behaviour was done with an eye to making sure that the profession wasn't simply protecting itself but was actually protecting the public. I think that's exactly the same concern that I have with ASIRT if it's too much of the police being in a position of being able to protect themselves rather than assess themselves and evaluate themselves and change themselves when necessary.

4:20

I guess I wanted to say that those things are pieces of the bill that I hope will continue to move forward and find some life in the future, but there are other parts of the bill which I am very, very concerned about. I'm going to divide that into two pieces. One of them is the issue of control and ministerial control over the bill, and the second piece is a First Nations concern that I learned in my meeting with the Treaty 6 First Nations this morning, who, by the way, tell me they do not support Bill 6.

Let me go through the first piece about my own concerns about Bill 6 and talk about why it is that I am concerned about the mechanism of control that is being put in here. Now, as I've said, I'm certainly happy to support a citizen-based overview of police activities, but I am very concerned that in this bill all of the decision-making about who sits on the board goes back to the minister again. You know, many times over the last three years I've stood up and said, "Why is this government always trying to take power out of everybody else's hands and bring the power back into the minister's office all the time?" whether it be about pensions I was concerned about or whether it be about health care or, in this particular case, about policing services.

You know, the section of the bill which says that this should be about citizen oversight suddenly becomes null and void when we realize that it's actually the minister that's making the decisions about things, and that starts with the decision about who sits on the boards and the fact that the municipalities are directed to create these boards but the minister gets to review who the municipalities put on the boards. These kind of things are just unnecessary overreach and a distrust of the public by this government, and I just don't think that they're necessary to do that.

It appears that even when a municipality is setting up a board, my understanding in reading the act is that the government will actually

be appointing 50 per cent of the members to the board, so it really isn't a municipal board that's being set up. It's not local. The control of this goes to the provincial government, and then if there's any problem with the local board, it goes to the provincial board, which is a hundred per cent appointed by the provincial government. So really what we have is a board which, you know, undermines municipalities' efforts yet again.

We certainly have seen this government make multiple decisions to undermine municipalities over the last number of years, everything from adding provincial government votes onto municipal elections, which they absolutely opposed but this government did anyways; to giving tax holidays to, you know, highly profitable corporations, which caused grief for the municipalities; to changing rules around linear assessment, which caused problems for the municipalities; to promising to increase the number of RCMP officers and then charging it all back to the municipalities; and then decreasing the municipalities' abilities to make decisions around taxation. So it seems to be that this government really dislikes municipalities. We seem to be moving in the direction of essentially making municipalities redundant.

This government is clearly moving to a place where they want the provincial government to control all aspects of life in this province, don't want a check and balance with local authorities, and I think that that's very problematic. You always have to question why a government is slowly drawing in all the lines and bringing them together and creating significant power in the provincial government that used to be more diversified and more spread out around the province. We've seen them also do the same thing with school boards, taking power away from school boards and making decisions about who's in the union and who's out, about where their pension plans will be, decisions about making mandates for health care in the classes. We've seen the government pull all that away.

We go to the ballot box, we vote in school board elections, we go to the ballot box and we vote in municipal elections, and it turns out that it doesn't really matter what you vote in either of those sets of elections because the power has been taken away from those entities and shifted to the provincial government. That's got to be a concern for all Albertans because it's, first of all, unnecessary. We certainly have seen this province be quite successful with having school boards actually have the power to make decisions over schools, and we've seen municipalities be quite successful in making decisions over the municipalities. I think this is, you know, exactly opposed to the direction we were going in when we were starting to talk to Calgary and Edmonton about having supercity initiatives in this province.

I think that people in this province should be very concerned at the number of times I've had to stand up and say: this is an undermining of democracy on some level or another. One by one you might argue with me, "Well, that wasn't so much really a challenge to democracy," but when you start to look at the trend over four years of the number of times we've had to say that this in some way diminishes the democracy – in this case it happens to diminish the democracy in municipal governments, but we've said the same thing with health care, we've said the same thing with school boards, and now we're saying this with police forces. I think that the citizens of Alberta need to be very concerned about where this is going.

I'd also like to take some time to talk a little bit about why it is that the First Nations are concerned about this. The number one reason that the First Nations are concerned is the fact that it is a shifting of power away from First Nations back into the provincial government's hands yet again. The same complaint that I have from a democracy point of view, the First Nations have from their democracy point of view. What they're saying are a number of things.

First of all, they know that the government is essentially using this bill as an incremental achievement of a provincial police force. They're setting this up so that they can then say: we have provincial oversight of the police, so we might as well have a provincial police force that is reviewed by the same committee. We know that this is a step towards something that has absolutely no support in this province – no, I guess that no one can ever say that; that has very little support in this province by the citizens. People don't want a provincial police force. The polls have been very clear about that time and time again, yet this government is pursuing this over and over and over again no matter what they've been told, and now the First Nations are saying: we have said that we do not want a provincial police force; we want to remain with the RCMP.

Certainly, there are some things that they'd like to change, and they talk to me about that on a fairly regular basis, but they want to remain with the RCMP because of their relationship with the federal government. In speaking to some of the people at the meeting this morning with Treaty 6, I was approached by the CEO of one of the corporations within Treaty 6 who said to me: you know, we've reviewed this; we looked at this, and we can see that having a provincial police force is going to cost this province a lot of money, a billion dollars' worth of money, over just staying with the RCMP. But then he said to me: but you also have to understand it's going to cost every single First Nation because right now there's a sharing agreement, a 52 to 48 per cent sharing agreement, for costs of RCMP officers between the federal government and the First Nations. So if this government undermines the relationship with the federal RCMP, they're going to cost that cost-sharing arrangement with every First Nation across the province. They said: and they're doing all this without any consultation even though they know it's clearly going to affect the arrangements between First Nations and the RCMP.

So here we are yet again on a day where we challenge this government many, many times for their failure to consult with First Nations, saying again: you're bringing in a bill that they have serious concerns about, and you haven't done any consultation with them at all.

The other part that they're very concerned about is that this bill allows the provincial board to actually review the behaviour of First Nations police forces. It's very clear in there. They're saying: again you're actually taking the power away from the governments of the First Nations and bringing it into provincial jurisdiction. This is federal land with an independent First Nations government making decisions to have a localized police force, and now you're saying that that police force is subject to Alberta laws.

4:30

You know, the irony here is absolutely incredible. This is a government that brought in Bill 1 to say: we don't want another jurisdiction coming in and telling us what to do in our jurisdiction. Now they immediately turn around and introduce another bill that does exactly the same thing to a different government, just like they have with municipalities, just like they have with school boards.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This government is constantly taking power away from other democratically elected organizations and bringing it into themselves, yet somehow they want us to support a bill that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to the bill? The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to weigh in on the Police Act amendments. Having listened to Edmonton-Rutherford for a bit, I'd like to just add that if a council is appointing

members to a commission, if it's one to three members, then one can be appointed by the minister; if it's four to six, two can be appointed by the minister; if it's seven to nine, three can be appointed by the minister. That does not sound like the province trying to take power away from local councils.

Three First Nation police services: those nations with those police services were consulted on this. The nations that are looking to develop their own police services as well were consulted on this. The other thing is that if you're policed by the RCMP, this is increasing civilian oversight to be able to review the policing priorities and the complaint process involved in that, and I don't see why that is an issue.

I'd also like to start by just simply saying thank you to our police service community. I was a police officer for 10 years. It is a very difficult job. I think that a lot of those years in working with the community have prepared me well for this job and the different personalities that you can come across. It's a high-volume, high-stress job. There is a lot of scrutiny to it. Similar to politics, you are probably being filmed and recorded at any given time that you are working with somebody, so your professionalism always has to remain high. It is always tested, and I think that police services across this province and our policing community do a tremendous job, frankly, in providing policing services to the community.

There are probably a countless number of interactions between the police and the community, and a small percentage of those lead to complaints. I am not making excuses for every police officer in this province. If they've done something wrong, they deserve to be held accountable for that, but there are also a lot of police officers who are going to their job each and every day, doing the absolute best they can to fairly and unbiasedly police the communities that they're in because, frankly, they live in those communities as well. They want those communities to be safe. Their families are there, their kids are there, so they are just as interested in a well-policed, safe community that has a low amount of crime as anybody else is.

I think that this act, in updating the Police Act, is a good step forward. I think the objections so far – I think I can easily disregard them. Yesterday I think it came from one of the NDP members that this was the politicization of policing, which I think is a ridiculous comment, frankly, given that – at the Coutts border crossing, yes, there was an illegal blockade, but the members opposite would have had the RCMP charging into a dangerous situation, a situation that they knew was quite dangerous, putting both civilians and the police service at risk and not giving them the time that they needed to properly deal with that, which they clearly showed that they could without the Emergencies Act as well. They just needed a little bit more time, frankly.

But what I'm enjoying that I can see here is that increased oversight is important, having that independent body taking in complaints against the police and making sure that it's a central agency. That people across the province understand what that looks like and what it is, how to file a complaint, what the expectations are, I think, is important. I don't equate that with a provincial police service. I think it's just important that wherever you live in this province, you have an understanding of what the expectations of police are and, if you have a complaint, you know how to do that. Instead of trying to figure out a dozen different processes across this province, you'd be able to just have one central intake. It's easier to hold that agency accountable as well.

More civilian involvement: I've touched on that. I think that that's important, setting the process and oversight. Civilian involvement is necessary because, frankly, if you don't have the support of the community, you're not going to be successful in policing. Police agencies know this, and they know that without the support, they are

not going to have the same success in investigations that they would like, so that's always important.

This bill also touches on diversity, which is also extremely important. Our communities are becoming more and more diverse. I can tell you that I on numerous occasions relied on other members' language ability, cultural knowledge as well to help defuse situations and to communicate with people where English was maybe their second, third language or further down the list. I had my eyes opened to maybe something cultural that I didn't know so I could better understand the community and work with other members. That is growing, I think, quite a bit. I think police services have realized for a while that they need to have more diversity in their hiring, and that is occurring as well.

As far as I understand, too, this review, yes, started under the NDP in 2018. It's been years in the making as well, so a lot of stakeholder involvement has occurred. A lot of feedback from the community has gone into this. I'm happy with the minister's changes and what they've brought forward.

As well, the expanded role of ASIRT in investigating any serious complaints brought forward about peace officers I think is an important step. I think ASIRT is an excellent organization. I don't have the same objection to them investigating complaints. I think ASIRT is an organization, frankly, where if you're in trouble and they are looking into you, they will find out what happened. They're a very skilled group of people who are very dedicated to finding the truth. Also, using independent prosecutors from other jurisdictions to review their work and to recommend charges as well is another added step in that process.

I'm just trying to see what else I have in my notes here as to what I can cover off. I think I've gone through most of the . . . [interjection] Oh, is there an intervention?

**Mr. Getson:** There is, Member, if you'll accept.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Absolutely.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, you know, again, I think you've quite well articulated what the intent of the act is. We've listened to a ton of rhetoric from the other side, so thanks for dispelling that. On a personal note, since you and another member of our team here were members before, can you expand a little bit, if you would, on that personal element of how it makes the front-line police services feel when you've got a group that's touting the bandwagon to defund the police? If you could give us some insight into that as well.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Absolutely. When the rhetoric of "defund the police" carries over from the United States to here, it's demoralizing. I mean, there's no way around that. You know, even comments where I don't – however they were phrased, frankly, it sounds like police were unfairly charging specific communities. That's what I think I just heard; I won't expand more on that or that somehow police are targeting specific communities. I think that these are inflammatory comments which really go against what the vast, vast majority of police officers are trying to do every day, which is just make their communities safer.

Who phones 911 and the non-emergency line and who they're filing a complaint against is not up to the officers, right? They're responding to calls based on what citizens have brought forward. Police officers aren't responsible for who is incarcerated either. If you think there's a particular group overrepresented in jails, I would go talk to the judges. They sentence. They remand. It is not up to police officers to do that.

I think it's important to remember that in all professions there are people who cause problems. No profession is spared from that. It includes doctors and nurses and teachers, politicians even. We all know that from question period a little bit earlier. It exists in every profession, and the mechanisms should exist for people to be able to file complaints, to have their complaints taken seriously and investigated in an unbiased way, and to make sure that public trust is maintained. It is of the utmost importance. As I said before, if the public does not trust you, they're not going to go to you, and that is true of any profession.

Let's remember that when we talk about policing and we talk about the reforms or the complaint processes or individual circumstances that you've come across or heard, these are not representative of the broader interactions that are occurring every day, because if they were, then this problem would not just be something that comes up every once in a while. It would be all day, every day that we would hear about it, and we don't. There are lots of interactions that occur between police and citizens all day. There have probably been a couple of hundred, since I started talking, across this province. They are not all going to result in complaints against the police, and not all those complaints are serious in nature either.

4:40

I just want to remind everybody that police officers are more and more coming from more diverse backgrounds, that the police are trying to evolve. They are trying to work better with communities, as Edmonton-Castle Downs touched on: a number of points where EPS has taken a lot of effort to work with the community, to build that level of trust, which I think is great. I don't think that the changes to the Police Act would inhibit that from carrying forward.

We need to talk more about those examples where police are being successful, because the more we talk about it and the more it gets into mainstream media or social media, I think the more that people are going to respond positively to policing. That interaction will just continue to build off itself. If we always talk about it from the stance of it being negative, then of course, you know, people's perception publicly will be negative.

I think we just need to make sure that we're cognizant of how many officers are out there every day doing the best they can, who would probably do absolutely the best job without the Police Act, frankly. They're just ethical. They're moral people who are trying their best. We do need rules. I'm not saying that we don't need it. We do need to set expectations, but we also need to recognize just how hard they all work.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022: are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to move immediately to Government Motion 16.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Motions

16. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly rescind its

approval of the motion moved pursuant to Standing Order 8(8), agreed to on December 5, 2022.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Government Motion 16 is a debatable motion. Does anyone choose to join in that debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waived.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I now rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(2) in order to allow the Assembly to move immediately to consideration of Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

#### Bill 201

#### Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly is Bill 201, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to join in the debate.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I thank the government members for the opportunity to hold this debate. This is an important bill, and it's not just me that says so. Folks are speaking out who have been involved in the tracking and quality of our health care. Health care professionals who are out on the front lines are speaking out in favour of this act.

Now, interestingly, the Minister of Health did not speak in favour of this act before he moved a motion to delay debate. I'm glad that the government has reversed on that and is giving us the opportunity to actually hold this debate now. But what the minister said was – the minister suggested that this wasn't necessary. Now, what this bill does is that it proposes a set of specific service standards to be set, working with patients, communities, health providers, that the government would be accountable to meet. They'd relate to access to health care services and would be publicly reported. Now, the minister rose and said: "You know what? We don't need that because the government already reports on standards." The fact is that the government reports on some data, and it is not always clear, and it does not always pertain to all of the areas that have greatest concern. What this bill is proposing is a very clear and specific set of standards that provides that public accountability and transparency.

Now, what we have seen repeatedly with this government, Mr. Speaker, is that they are very fond of cherry-picking very specific statistics. We saw that in the MacKinnon report. We saw that again as they talked about the Ernst & Young review of Alberta Health Services. We have heard that repeatedly in minister after minister's talking points about the health care system as they endeavour to try to paint the picture that they need to dismantle our public health care system and force more privatization, more private profit in our public health care system to cure the problem that they claim exists. But the fact is, again, that they are choosing very particular data, and they are handling it themselves.

Indeed, we hear that from the minister when he stands and talks about the number of doctors and nurses in Alberta and doesn't go into the actual things that lie behind that, the fact that he's talking about the numbers of doctors registered, not the numbers of doctors that are actually necessarily practising and billing. Of course, the minister has the information on the number of doctors that are billing in the province of Alberta, and he could certainly choose to make that public and tell us exactly how many family physicians are billing on behalf of Albertans, but he does not do that because it does not serve the government's purpose.

What we have here is an opportunity in this bill to establish, independent of government, some very clear standards on our health care system. I would think that any government that truly believes in transparency and accountability would want to see that. That power would be placed in the hands of the Health Quality Council of Alberta. I think that's a very important opportunity for us, to empower the HQCA to handle that, and they are well equipped to do so.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, they used to have much more independent power to do so before this government passed Bill 30. Now, Bill 30 was passed by the previous Minister of Health, and that essentially took away the independence of the HQCA. That bill stopped the HQCA from being able to report directly to individual members of the Legislature and forced them to report directly to the Health minister, who will then decide whether or not the information he receives from the HQCA will be allowed to go public.

This was noted by Dr. Trevor Theman, the former chair of the HQCA, himself an accomplished physician here in the province of Alberta, in his recent editorial in support of Bill 201. He notes that for the \$20 billion or so that we spend on health care in Alberta, we have precious little easily accessed reporting on how well our health care system and the entities that comprise it perform, and setting and reporting on standards makes good sense. No one would run a \$20 billion business without measurement and reporting as to how well it meets its goals. Now, again, the Minister of Health is maintaining that he thinks he reports enough to Albertans, that there is no need to provide further data, that the carefully cherry-picked statistics and numbers on the very particular things that they like to talk about should be enough for Albertans.

4:50

What Bill 201 says is: let's work together. Let's work with community, let's work with physicians, let's work with the folks who are involved and who have a stake in this to determine what the regular reporting should be to Albertans, on which standards, and the standards specifically on access to care, Mr. Speaker, because that is the crisis we have in front of us, where Albertans cannot access a family physician. Albertans have trouble accessing an emergency room. They're having a real crisis right now accessing pediatric care, and certainly we are all aware of the challenges Albertans have accessing an ambulance when they need one. So having clear, public reporting on those standards and what the expectations should be and a requirement, then, that when we'd failed to meet it, whatever government that might be, the minister is required to put forward an action plan to address that concern: that is a simple and straightforward thing.

This bill would give the HQCA back some of the independence that was taken away from them by this government to perform that service on behalf of Albertans, providing an independent oversight of the standards and how they need to be addressed. As Dr. Theman says, the HQCA is underused. It is underfunded and burdened by its current reporting relationship to the Minister of Health. Indeed, he speaks about, during his time as chair, how many times they were stymied by the bureaucracy within the office of the Minister of Health, the first Minister of Health under this government, that made it more difficult for them to actually be able to report and do

their work on behalf of Albertans. So I believe this is incredibly important.

Now, the Minister of Health and the Premier have also made claims that putting forward Bill 201 would forbid, would stop the province from being able to be make use of chartered surgical facilities. That is patently untrue, Mr. Speaker. What the bill does say is that if a minister puts forward an action plan, that action plan needs to look at investing in the public health care system to address the issue. It does not affect any current funding for a chartered surgical facility. Certainly, we have a number of them that are operating today, and nobody is proposing that we stop making use of them. We recognize that we have real challenges in our public health care system with meeting surgical wait times, and we must use every resource that we have at our disposal.

However, Mr. Speaker, this government has yet to provide any evidence that the kinds of efficiencies that can be realized in a stand-alone surgical facility not attached to a hospital cannot be achieved within the public health care system just as well if not better than by a private provider, who also then has to find a way to make a profit. Multiple folks have stood up and pointed this out. In fact, we have an example of just such a stand-alone surgical facility attached to the Royal Alex hospital here in my constituency. If this government has any evidence that they are unable to provide surgeries as efficiently at that site and as cost-effectively as any of these private chartered surgical facilities that this government is intent on proliferating across the province of Alberta, I would invite them to present it, because that is what we're asking here in Bill 201. Let's just simply put the evidence on the table.

This government has a good deal of ideology around health care, Mr. Speaker. Again, they like to pick and choose their numbers to justify it. What we are seeing right now is the result of a lot of that ideology, unfortunately, with the pressures and the impacts on our health care system, their war on doctors, their war with so many other health care workers. Again, the minister would stand and say, "Well, every jurisdiction is having these problems because of the pandemic, because of other issues," and indeed this government didn't light the fire, but they certainly liberally doused it with fuel.

The fact is that there is nothing in Bill 201 that should be of concern to a government that is indeed dedicated to more transparency and accountability, that indeed in its work to improve our public health care system – they're willing to take such radical changes as firing the entire board of Alberta Health Services, firing the chief medical officer of health, putting it all in the hands of a single administrator. If they truly believed that they are effective in these actions, Mr. Speaker, they should not be afraid to measure it and report on it publicly and clearly.

Bill 201 provides the opportunity precisely for that. It is simple accountability. It is simple clarity at a time when Albertans are desperately looking for action to improve our health care system, not just these sort of short-term, lurching, radical actions that this government is choosing to take out of desperation but actual, thoughtful, long-term reform. We do not achieve that without clear data, without clear standards. That is what Bill 201 is offering here. This is a constructive work. Certainly, I'm going to, as a member of the opposition, take my shots at government. We do that. But this is not part of it.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Bill 201. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 201 and talk about the very important need to have public health standards in order to ensure that our public services are available. I want to start by thanking the government for their

agreement to return this bill to the House for a debate. I appreciate that you would do that. It certainly is an improvement over the previous situation where a hundred per cent of the private members' bills brought in by the opposition were thwarted outside of the House and weren't even allowed to be brought in, a very, very undemocratic move by this government. I'm glad to see that their shame has brought them to a place of changing this behaviour.

Well, I just wish their shame would help them get to a place of fixing all the other problems. I'm glad to see we also have Bill 4 in the house, which is fixing another one of their problems. If we work long enough, eventually we'll fix all of their problems, but that will all be done, of course, in May of 2023.

I'd like to say that it's important that we establish in this province the ability to review health care as it's provided in this province and to support some very fundamental principles of health care in protecting the services that are available to the people in the province. It is sort of somewhat ironic that in the last bill that we were talking about, the government was arguing that it was important to have a civilian oversight body reviewing the police force, and now when we suggest that it's also true, therefore, in health care, they somehow have a different opinion 30 minutes later. We'll try to point out why this government should at least try to be consistent on a single day within this Legislature.

We in this country have enjoyed some of the best health care in the world. Nobody is saying that there aren't some difficulties, some problems, but that is the function of government, to take some time, to assess, and to figure out what's going right, what's not going right, and how do you fix that?

Instead, this government has mostly created a situation of great turmoil in this province around health care. They have been fighting with doctors and nurses and other health professionals, like respiratory therapists and social workers and so on, on a regular basis in the middle of a pandemic. They have cancelled the doctors' contract. They've gone into wage negotiations with nurses asking for a diminishment of their salaries. They've done the same for groups such as respiratory technicians and other hospital workers. They've been in the paper on a regular basis saying egregiously nasty things about the medical service providers in this province while we're in the middle of a pandemic.

And then they don't follow scientific advice around how to resolve that pandemic. They won't even share with us the advice given to cabinet by the chief medical officer of health, so we can only assume that the reason why is because they were not following medical advice in the decisions they made with regard to the pandemic, which is still with us and is still affecting the citizens of this province greatly. We have significant numbers of people in hospital right now with COVID, and unfortunately now we're also dealing with other diseases that are flus and childhood diseases, that are sort of giving us the triple whammy right now.

Then this government changes their leader, but they don't change their belief system around the public health system. They still go back in to attack it. They remove the public oversight body for the health care system and institute a single person who is running our health care system off the side of his desk because he has other employment, and he's doing so on a voluntary basis. I mean, this is hardly a commitment to public health care in this province. Now, of course, we see that the two deputy chief medical officers are resigning because the situation is chaotic.

5:00

What we have seen consistently from this government is the introduction of chaos into the health care system, and it's time that we go back to the fact that we have enjoyed incredibly good health care in this country because we started with a series of principles

about the health care that we wanted. Those principles under the Canada Health Act are quite well known, and they start off with a principle of universality, a belief that this health care is for all Albertans, not just people with deep pockets, and that you should be able to access that health care regardless of whether you are someone who is wealthy or has a health care plan through your employment, that just simply by being a citizen within this country you have access to that health care.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

We know that there was a principle also of portability with regard to health care in this province, and that meant that the health care that we have in the province of Alberta is the same or similar, as much as we can possibly make it, to anywhere else in the country so that when we have family members who decide to leave the province of Alberta and move to other provinces, we can be assured that they will be receiving significantly the same level of support in terms of health care. And now this government is, you know, threatening to move it in a different direction away from that so that you actually have to start considering your move to seek employment also based on: well, if I do move to this other province to get a better job or to earn some more money, I might also not get the health care I deserve. This government is threatening the notion of portability in this country.

We know that the third principle of health care that we have established in this country is one of accessibility, and that is that health care must be available where people are and that it can't be impossible for people to get that health care because they happen to live in the north and there's no health care available. We have to then say that as a government we will bring the resources into the north or at the very least ensure that people from the north are given the resources to come south. And that's a very difficult one. We understand that. We know that that can be expensive for both the citizens and for the government. Yet, you know, a government that really cared about health care would be constantly examining that and coming back and saying: how do we ensure that accessibility is there?

We know as well that one of the original principles of health care was comprehensiveness, the fourth one. That principle is that we should have all the things related to your health be covered by this plan. Over time, over the history of Canada, we've come to define the notion of comprehensiveness more broadly than was originally done when the bill came in, in the 1960s, and we understand that there are many aspects to health care that we should be including. We've been supporting that growth here in the province of Alberta, certainly on this side of the House, to look at the comprehensive needs of people in their health, not just simply catastrophic events such as heart attacks and so on but all the things that contribute to that such as drug coverage and so on. I know that the Conservatives have consistently been resistant to that particular principle, but it's one that we should be protecting if we really care about the ultimate health of our citizens.

We know, finally, that the fifth principle of the federal health act was one of public administration; that is, that you should be able to depend on your government to actually establish the entities that are necessary to provide health care in this country. That is, that you can depend on your government to build the hospitals, you can depend on your government to pay the doctors through government mechanisms, and that you should be able to depend on the availability of services such as ambulances to get there. Now, unfortunately we've seen over the last little while . . . [Mr. Feehan's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members looking to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.



**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 201, Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Leader of the Official Opposition. I also want to begin by thanking the Government House Leader for agreeing to bring back this important piece of legislation for debate.

I think our system has been under stress for the last three years. The pandemic certainly has been one reason, but, more importantly, the UCP policies have been driving our system into chaos. We can all agree that Albertans must be able to access health care when they need it and where they need it, but on the ground that's not happening. We know that.

They should be able to get an ambulance in a matter of minutes, access an emergency room in a reasonable time frame, and be able to have a family doctor and be able to see that doctor in a reasonable time. But for far too many Albertans that's not happening. In many places in this province emergency rooms are getting shut down. In many parts of this province people are unable to access family doctors. For instance, in Lethbridge half of the Lethbridge population doesn't have access to family doctors. In Bow Valley there are many Albertans who don't have access to family doctors. These are facts.

I was door-knocking and I came across a constituent whose child fell down and there was some bleeding. The parents took that child to emergency. They waited there for 13 hours to see a doctor, and that's before this new surge in respiratory illness cases. That's before this surge. That's the state of our health care system.

Albertans, rightfully so, want their government to make health care a priority. Every Albertan I have talked to, things like cost of living, health care, kids' education: that's top of mind for them, not this government's job-killing Bill 1.

In the last little while we are seeing longer ambulance response times everywhere across this province. In Calgary AHS has to pull ambulances from neighbouring communities. That is the case for Edmonton as well. Albertans expect this government to prioritize addressing that, and we have not seen a plan from this government. Those who are on the front lines asked for three things, but still we didn't hear anything from this government.

5:10

Alberta Health Services released some aggregate data on ambulance response times, and that data shows that the slowest 10 per cent of calls have gone from 12 minutes or more to 17 minutes or more. Albertans call an ambulance when they think their health and well-being is in danger, when they think their loved one's health and well-being is in danger. They deserve a system that responds to their needs, responds to that urgency. The median response time, according to AHS, in urban areas began to miss targets in the first quarter of 2022, but again there is no transparent, accessible data that Albertans can look at in this piece of legislation. We will do exactly that.

This will require this government to create standards and have an arm's-length body, Alberta Health Quality Council, to report on that so that Albertans can see where their health system is at, what needs to be improved. Earlier, when the Premier was asked whether she will be supporting this piece of legislation, the answer was that they're more concerned that this bill messed up their privatization efforts, their private surgical initiative. [interjection] That's what the Premier said.

Health care is not a business. It is not a business. The delivery of health care is not a business. Getting health care should be Albertans' right; it is Canadians' right. No one should be allowed to make money off sick Albertans. It's a responsibility of this government, us as a society that we should provide health care to those who are sick regardless of their ability to pay. The fundamental principle of universal

health care is that when one of us gets sick, all of us come together to care for that person, look after that fellow Albertan.

That's the fundamental principle. There are no business opportunities. There should be no profiteering off sick Albertans. Government should be delivering health care whenever Albertans need it, where they need it. That's what Albertans expect from this government, and I'm sure that Albertans will have a lot more to say about this government's record when it comes to health care when they go into election. They became government, they tore the doctors' contract, put our health care in chaos.

Throughout this pandemic, where governments around the globe were cheering on front-line workers, this government was engaged in bullying health professionals, even on their driveways. That's what this government was doing. Those who work in our health care system doing important services, keeping our hospitals clean, keeping hospital kitchens going the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, I remember, went on a radio station and he said that they are not front-line workers.

**Mr. Toor:** Who?

**Mr. Sabir:** That's on the record. The Member for Calgary-Falconridge said that.

Those are important people. Those are the people, together with other professionals, that make our hospital system work.

**Mr. Toor:** Oh, come on.

**Mr. Sabir:** They are front-line people. They are front-line people.

This government has shown disrespect for health professionals from day one.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to add to debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Those aren't my words; those are the words of Peter Drucker, who is a business consultant, a business management professional. In other words, if you don't measure, then you don't know how you're doing.

I rise to speak in favour of Bill 201 because it establishes service standards that will be set in working with patients, communities, health care providers, Indigenous communities to ensure that the government is accountable to certain standards. I think that this is very timely, Mr. Speaker. This is not political theatre. This is addressing the fact that we have seen a crisis in health care that's continuing to this day.

Mr. Speaker, you're well aware of this as a rural MLA, the fact that we have a shortage of doctors. There is a shortage of access to doctors. We've had rotating blackouts for ambulances, where they're simply unavailable. We've had certain facilities that have to temporarily close or limit the surgeries or services that they're providing for their community members. Honestly, I'm sure you've heard from many constituents, as have I, that in a province such as Alberta this should not be the case.

I think it's important to provide the government with some tools to be able to address these issues but also to identify where these issues are coming from so that we can provide solutions. Having those metrics available and those specifics will help the government, whoever the government is, to provide targeted relief or additional targeted supports to strengthen our health care system.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I go and talk to grade 6 classes, I ask them if they know who Tommy Douglas is and the fact that he was voted the greatest Canadian a few years back. In fact, he got more votes than even, you know, folks like Wayne Gretzky, and

I'm a huge fan of Gretzky. He's my favourite hockey player. I ask the students if they know why he was voted the greatest Canadian, and they're always very fascinated to learn that it was Tommy Douglas who introduced public health care, the first public medicare, in the province of Saskatchewan, in Canada's history, which then spread across the country. That's something that is very unique to Canada and very precious. We talk about many other jurisdictions globally where there isn't that universal access to health care, where if you cannot pay, then you cannot get the care you need.

My colleague, the member who was speaking previously, was talking about a public health care system, public delivery of health care. Now, we all recognize that doctors are small businesses, essentially, and incorporated and negotiate with the province for their salaries. But the point I believe my colleague was trying to make is that we should be investing in public health care, not looking at emulating other systems that have gone down the path of privatizing health care, which has inevitably led to higher costs.

5:20

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you that I have friends that live in the U.S., and I have a friend who used to be a fan of private health care and who said: "You know what? It should be privatized. It's lower cost. Why am I subsidizing all these other people?" When a family member of his got super sick, actually developed cancer, they ended up having to mortgage their home and went in debt to pay for the care they needed. His tune changed completely, and he has since been a fan of public health care and recognizes what we have here in Canada.

As members in this Chamber know, because I've said it inside and outside of the Chamber, can AHS be improved? Yes. Absolutely. The answer is that it can be improved. We need to do better. We need to do better enhancing the care that Albertans are getting. We also need to get better value for the money that we're investing in our health care system. A hundred per cent. I don't disagree with that, Mr. Speaker. I think part of what we've discovered in this Chamber is that the two different parties have two different approaches to it. But my hope is that the members from the government can recognize the importance of a bill, this bill, 201, and how measuring and having those specifics can help us to drive outcomes that will benefit everyone.

Now, I just want to clarify a point the Premier made today in question period, where she talked about a new chartered facility that's going to be doing surgeries to help with the backlog. Her comment was that this bill would essentially shut that facility down. The answer is that, no, it wouldn't, Mr. Speaker. I've been chatting with folks to try and find out, "Is that true?" and the answer is: no, it wouldn't. It would require that new dollars, future dollars, be invested in our public health care system.

I know that the majority of my constituents and the majority of Albertans that I've talked to are proud of our public health care system, publicly funded, publicly delivered. We want to see that continue, but we also want to see it improved. You know, it's interesting that when we talk about ER wait times, there is some data that AHS releases, but it's interesting to me that they can't go backwards to look at previous wait times in previous years. So there need to be mechanisms for us to be able to enhance the system. Again, Peter Drucker's line: if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. If we don't know what's causing these wait times, then we don't know how to improve them. I appreciate the idea that, yes, we need to fund our health care system, but we also need to fund it to deliver those outcomes that Albertans rely on.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear horror stories about the state the system is currently in. I appreciate, you know, that the Premier will say, "Well, that's why I got rid of the board

and brought in the administrator" and that they're making changes. I mean, the reality is that we need to make some changes, but this bill will hold the government accountable because these standards will be public.

I think that in an era of transparency, where our citizens, Albertans, want to see processes, want to see clear lines, this will provide that. This will give Albertans a perspective and a view into our health care system that they haven't had previously. Again, if the standards aren't met, then the government has to come up with a plan on how to meet those standards. I mean, that just sounds like good planning to me as far as, if we see that there's a deficit, we address these issues, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nally:** Never in four years did you do it.

**Mr. Bilous:** I always find it fascinating that when good points are being deliberated, members of the government have to scream – whatever – insults over to this side or "why didn't you do that?"

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of things that we did address, and I can tell you that there are a number of things that we will fix when we form government next spring. The member on that side can be patient for that to happen. This will be addressed. Here is an example . . . [interjection] Am I allowed to give way on a motion? I don't think I am.

**The Acting Speaker:** No interventions, hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I know my time is limited on this, but this is an example of a reasonable bill that I encourage members to support.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 201, Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act, that was introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I'm proud that this piece of legislation has come forward. We've been listening to Albertans, and we know that health care – public health care, good, reliable public health care – is top of mind for Albertans.

We watched this government bring in their Bill 1, which did not address anything that Albertans are worried about right now. They're not worried about anything that was related to that bill. The fact that we are here this afternoon being able to debate this is very much appreciated, and I thank the Government House Leader for bringing this back so that we could debate this piece of legislation this afternoon.

I and my colleagues in the Alberta NDP firmly believe that Albertans must be able to access public health care, full stop. We know that Albertans are in a place right now where many do not have a family doctor. Many, if they need a doctor, are turning to emergency rooms because they don't have access. In the worst case scenario, if you need to be seen by a doctor in an emergency scenario, we've watched numbers and times increase across the province for wait times for an ambulance. We have an expectation that when you call for an ambulance in an emergent situation, one shows up in a timely manner, in minutes, not hours, Mr. Speaker.

What this piece of legislation would do is that it would ensure that expectations are set up in collaboration with patients, with health care professionals, to make sure that the expectations that Albertans have for their health care system are being met. It would then turn around and make sure that the government is required to act to ensure that these services are being met. I don't think that it's too much to ask that patients and health care professionals have input into what the

health standard expectations are, and then to have the government be accountable for that is a reasonable expectation.

We've been hearing heartbreaking stories all across the province of families waiting 15 hours for access to the emergency room at children's hospitals, trailers being set up so that families can wait inside before they see a medical professional. Just today, Mr. Speaker, in question period we heard the Premier say that wait times are fixed, that EMS response times are fixed. That is simply not true.

I had a very dear friend reach out to me yesterday with an absolutely heartbreaking – heartbreaking – story. Their sibling has been struggling with mental health and addiction and been homeless for years. It's a frequent rotation of living on the streets, living rough, being assaulted, overdosing, interactions with police, interactions with health care professionals, to being turned around back on the streets. This cycle has been going on for this family for years.

5:30

Unfortunately, the situation has gotten incredibly worse. November 22 was the last point of contact that my friend's family had with their sibling, and they decided to reach out to the Edmonton police to file a missing persons report. They had been in contact with all of the hospitals, they'd been in contact with numerous organizations that work with those that are living rough, those that come in contact with people that are using, and those that struggle with mental health. The list of people that she's attempted to reach out to is endless. There were numerous individuals within the policing system that had contact with them, and the police were incredibly informative and helpful and supportive to my friend. However, they weren't able to find him.

Yesterday morning my friend was on her way to work and received a phone call that EPS had located him. They didn't know what the options were. He clearly needed medical help, but the officer told my friend: "We could call an ambulance; we have no idea how long it's going to take for an ambulance to respond. Your brother needs medical attention. What would you like us to do?" She clearly dropped everything and went to him and was so grateful that the police had called her. She's not a medical professional, Mr. Speaker. The police left it up to her as to whether or not to call EMS or to have them respond.

When they responded and met up with her sibling and the police, the police said that their previous call had been a stabbing. The person was actively bleeding out, and it took over one hour for EMS to respond. This happened yesterday morning. Today when our Premier stands in this Chamber and says, "It's fixed; it's good," that is absolutely not acceptable. When Albertans call police and when they call an ambulance, they expect help. I can't imagine what it would be like for that officer to be waiting and have no response. One hour for a stabbing victim.

My friend picked up her brother and went online, looked at the emergency room wait times. The police had suggested that – they're reported – these are the options in and around Edmonton; you can go there. They got there at 5:35 yesterday afternoon. At 10:40 p.m. he saw a nurse. That's six hours of waiting in the waiting room before a nurse was able to come and see him. At 10:53 a nurse came in and said: a doctor should be with you at any moment. Now, this human being was sick, going through withdrawals, had been severely beaten up, in pain, in agony, and still that was the wait time. It wasn't until 3 a.m. that a doctor came in to see him. So when we have a Premier that's saying, "Wait times are good; EMS response times are good," I don't know where that information is coming from, but it is not coming from Albertans that are sitting in waiting rooms, sitting at home waiting for EMS to respond.

When you talk to the nurses and the doctors that are in these ERs and the paramedics that are responding, they are pleading for support. They are pleading for resources. People are burning out.

Bill 201 is exactly the piece of legislation that's needed. We need to really critically look at what's happening in health care, listen to those patients and their stories, listen to the health care professionals that are providing these services. People get involved in this field because they care and want to make a difference. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely heartbreaking to hear health care professionals breaking down, desperate for support, feeling that there's been an attack from this government on them while they're trying to simply take care of people. There aren't enough resources available, and this government hasn't provided any... [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 201, Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act. I mean, certainly, this is a very important bill, especially right now, currently, in Alberta. It is something that could improve our health care system significantly. We are in crisis, as we see every day on the news where there are long lineups to get into the emergencies, EMS, access to ambulances takes a long time. I and my colleagues have spoken about this.

I really encourage all of my colleagues here in the Assembly to seriously consider supporting this bill. It really lays out three purposes, and I'll just go through them. It ensures Albertans have reliable and timely access to public health care, it has standards that are established by independent experts, and, thirdly, it ensures Albertans' lives and quality of life are not put at risk due to lack of transparency regarding health data. These are three fundamental aspects of this bill, and it is very important that we, I think, pass this legislation, because it can make a huge difference for Albertans.

We have had certainly a lot of support in the community regarding this. One of the leading experts – he's a former CEO of the physicians and surgeons and a former chair of the Health Quality Council of Alberta, Dr. Trevor Theman. He is obviously very aware of what's happening in our health system, has worked in that system for a very long time, has been a leader in that system, and he has spoken out in support of Bill 201 very much, saying this is exactly what Albertans need to ensure that we have a health system that is working.

Right now it's not working, and we can see that so, so, so clearly. Frankly, there are many things that the UCP are doing to make it not work. I know that one of the things that was in the Health minister's mandate letter was just about the fundamental importance of primary care. This is what the UCP was talking about, but then on the other hand just recently, actually before the mandate letters were put out, they changed policies to erode the relationship between the patient and the primary care provider. What I'm talking about specifically is the opioid transition program. This is a program where safe pharmaceutical alternatives are prescribed by your primary care provider. The UCP now say that, no, they have to go to an Alberta Health Services clinic. So they're eroding that. There are so many things the UCP are doing to hurt our health system right now, despite what they're saying on the one hand supporting.

I speak in support of 201, and with that I'll conclude my remarks.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to debate second reading of Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act?

Seeing none, I'd like to call on the Leader of the Official Opposition to close debate.

5:40

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in order to close debate on this important bill. You know, we've been

talking to Albertans on their doorsteps, in their communities for years now and particularly in the last 12 to 18 months. Before then, too, but in the last 12 to 18 months in particular folks have been raising their very, very deeply held concerns about the deteriorating state of our health care system across this province, whether it was emergency rooms and operating rooms starting to shut down, at first in rural communities across the province, followed ultimately by major cessations of service in huge urban communities, whether it was the fact that we were hearing increasingly concerning reports about delays with respect to ambulance times and their arrival time, or whether it was about the fact that an increasingly large number of Albertans simply cannot find a family doctor and cannot secure primary health care, which, of course, we know means that there is a cascade effect on those previous two things that I talked about, not to mention, of course, the ongoing wait times with respect to surgery.

All of these things have engendered a growing level of uncertainty and worry on the part of Albertans. Whether they're worrying about their own health or whether they're worried about the health of their children or whether they're worried about the health of their parents or friends and loved ones, they are wondering whether they can actually count on our health care system to be there for them when they need it.

In order to fix this, then, you know, we've been attempting to have a wide-ranging debate in this House. Now, we haven't been able to have a wide-ranging debate, but we have been able to spend the last 45 minutes or so talking about the solutions proposed in this bill. The reason this bill is important is because what it does is that it sets out clear standards and it sets out, then, an obligation to report on those standards, and it sets out an obligation to report on what kind of actions will or will not be done to meet those standards if they are not being met.

This is so important, because it is very frustrating for Albertans to be in a position where they feel like their government is sort of gaslighting them, telling them: no, no, there's not a problem here; oh, no, that closure over there is normal; oh, no, there's not a shortage of health care workers; oh, no, the doctors are fine with their contract being ripped up; oh, no, it's totally reasonable to wait 45 minutes for an ambulance. Like, those kinds of answers frustrate people.

The fact of the matter is that the simple act of transparency breeds accountability. What's really good is that the bill actually compels accountability, and beyond that the bill compels resources to be dedicated to meeting those standards. It's time that we start, all of us, no matter who's in government, holding ourselves accountable to fixing our public health care system and doing better.

You know, firing the AHS board of directors, putting someone in there as a temporary head who's been in there before for short periods of time in very temporary roles, and then saying, "Oh, he's been there three weeks, and he tells us, now that he's been there, that actually everything is working well": well, that's just so frustrating, and in fact it worries Albertans because it sounds like they're really not holding themselves accountable or taking real action or preparing to open up the doors to Albertans so that they

can see what's happening and what's not happening and keep the government accountable.

We know that this government, outside of COVID funding, has essentially taken well over a billion dollars out of our health care system at a time when it's facing more pressure than it ever, ever has before, so it's not surprising that there are systemic problems. The fact that there's been such a hostile relationship with front-line health care providers of every type: it's not surprising that there are difficulties with respect to delivering health care. The fact that COVID was the most poorly managed in Alberta relative to the rest of the country: it's not surprising that we're experiencing systemic problems in our health care system.

For those reasons, all of us have an obligation to be open with Albertans about what the problems are and what we're going to do to fix them, and that's what passing this bill would do. Because it is the most important issue for Albertans, that's what folks should agree to vote in favour of.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Irwin	Sabir
Feehan	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Goehring	Notley	Sweet
Gray		

6:00

Against the motion:

Aheer	Madu	Schulz
Fir	McIver	Singh
Getson	Milliken	Smith, Mark
Glubish	Nally	Stephan
Hanson	Neudorf	Toews
Horner	Nicolaides	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Issik	Panda	van Dijken
Jean	Pitt	Williams
Long	Rutherford	Yao
Lovely	Schow	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 32
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[Motion for second reading of Bill 201 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, the time is now 6 o'clock. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:02 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 13, 2022

Day 9

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 2 Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. This is my first opportunity to speak to the bill, so I'm happy to address a couple of different things that have come up. I think – yeah. Let's see.

Maybe I'll start by talking about the changes with respect to AISH, because I think that that is a fairly major concern to a number of Albertans. I, in fact, have a personal friend who is on AISH and has experienced a lot of struggle the last few years as her ability to pay relative to inflation has eroded over time.

I think it's worth setting out again the history of this matter on the record. When we were in government, we brought in a bill to index AISH to inflation, which seems only fair; otherwise, people are getting sort of further and further behind. We indexed a number of other things. We indexed the seniors' benefit and the child tax benefit as well.

I'm probably on the record saying this more than I've ever said anything on the record, but I'm going to say it again anyway, that the moves we made with respect to the child tax benefit when we first came in, in terms of increasing it, admittedly combined with some policy from the federal government: those measures cut child poverty in half. And I think that if there is one thing that we should be concerned about here in this place, it's ensuring that children don't go hungry in a province as rich as Alberta.

That is something that I am very proud of, I continue to be very proud of, and of course this government's members, who were members of the UCP caucus when we were in government, voted in favour of that indexation and claimed to be in favour of it, and then as soon as they got the position to do anything about it, immediately revoked it, which is disingenuous at best and quite harmful to a number of people throughout the province.

I do appreciate that this is a step in the right direction, but I think we all know that inflation has been at record highs in the last several years, this year in particular. I mean, it's outstripping wage growth as well. Like, inflation is a problem for everyone, but particularly for individuals who rely on benefits that have not been indexed for these last three and a half years, it's been a real struggle. So I appreciate that the government is doing this, but I think it is definitely worth noting that an Albertan living on AISH is \$3,000 a year behind right now on where they would have been, and for someone who is living on AISH, it's a real struggle.

Yeah. Like I said, a friend of mine is on AISH. For anyone who has loved ones or friends who are in that situation, I'm sure – and I

expect that there are members on both sides of this House that have this experience – that you are aware of just how much of a challenge, particularly this year, it has been for people to keep up with basic costs like healthy food. I do think it's a step in the right direction, but I think it could definitely go a lot further.

I actually think that this bill could go a lot further in a number of ways. People are experiencing significant challenges right now. Inflation is at an all-time high. Government policy, provincial government policy, has had an impact on that. I'm not going to say that it's the primary driver – I don't think that that's accurate – but it's definitely a driver forcing up things like car insurance and tuition and taxes, both municipal taxes and income taxes. I mean, income taxes was the inflation thing, which is, again, being reversed, but, you know, people are not getting back what they have lost over the last three and a half years in terms of purchasing power.

Again, it's a thing where this government expects to be congratulated on reversing its own bad decisions but not even reversing them all the way, so I think that that is problematic. I think that if there's anything that a government should be concerned about – and maybe I think this because it's where I came from.

One of the things that drove me into politics was the erosion of the middle class, the fact that the cost of things relative to average salaries has been growing disproportionately. We've seen massive growth in the incomes of those at the very wealthy end, but the sort of median income hasn't been increasing as fast as the costs of basics like housing and food and school and the very basics that people need to live. That, in my view, is a problem. It's a challenge that government should concern itself with because government policy has an impact. It has a big impact. It has an impact not only on inflation, but it also has an impact on wages.

Some of the changes that this government made in terms of employment standards in the Labour Relations Code have absolutely had a downward pressure on wages. Real, verifiable studies have been done about this. That is a huge impact. It's complicated and it's difficult to describe, but I think that it is one of the things we should be most concerned about. If we – and I say we in the larger sense – are creating a province in which a person on a median salary is constantly under stress, is unable to afford a comfortable life, is unable to afford the things that we all expected, is unable to afford food and shelter and clothing and education for their kids, that is a problem.

We are getting to that point, and government policy absolutely has an impact. Things like, for instance, the massive cuts that have been made to MSI, the downloading, massive downloading, of police costs on to municipalities. Municipalities can't run a deficit. They can't act as a shock absorber. Their only option in those instances is to raise property taxes, and they have done so. They have done so, and that is absolutely a direct result of government policy. This government, this UCP government's policy has forced those property taxes up, and that is problematic. It hits people right where they live.

Again, like I said, the changes in terms of minimum wage, in terms of overtime pay, in terms of the ability of workers to bargain collectively have all had a downward pressure on wages, and that is why we are seeing, even in a place of record inflation, wages just not keeping pace, and we should care about that because the majority of our population being able to afford a decent life is what we should imagine.

I would like my daughter to have at least as good if not better than what I had. I would like her to live in a world where she can afford to, you know, have a house and to pay for postsecondary for her kids, like I hope to soon – well, not soon; she's only five – at some point in the future. I hope that she's able to live a reasonable lifestyle on a reasonable wage and able to pursue whatever career she wants, and I

would like her to be able to do it here in Alberta if that's at all possible. I think that those things are very reasonable things.

Yes, this bill does some things. Some of those things are good. I think it could do a lot more. I feel like I've said this about almost every bill in this session, but this should be a: yes, and. It should be: yes, and. There should be more: more in terms of indexing of AISH and giving people back that \$3,000, more in terms of the erosion of taxes that this government has foisted onto people and the increases in taxes, and more in terms of utilities as well. So I think it's worth discussing.

**7:40**

This bill has in it – they call it a rate cap. I feel like that's not an accurate enough description that I want to use it, because it's not a rate cap. It's a loan. Essentially, what the government is doing is they're saying that for everything over 13 and a half cents we will loan you the money, but we'll loan it to you collectively as a pool. So if people move out of province or jump off the RRO, get on a contract, any number of things, then the people who are left on it are paying not only their loan but other people's loans as well. People remain on the RRO for all sorts of reasons, often because they don't feel empowered with sufficient information to sort of assess a contract and make that decision. Most of the contracts are very short term, but, I mean, people are busy. They have kids and lives and jobs, and they're under a lot of financial stress, as previously discussed, and I think the result of that is they don't always have the time to make these assessments.

The idea that everything should be buyer beware, that the government has no place in worrying about this – well, obviously, they don't think the government has no place, because they've done something about it. So they can't claim that position. But the idea that, you know, the government ought not to intervene in any way I think is just wrong.

What you have is a situation where people are going to start paying this rider. Essentially, you have three months where the government loans you money for electricity costs over 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour – so that's January, February, March – and then starting in April you start paying it back with this rider. Now, people might not notice it right away in April because prices tend to be low in April. They might not notice it right away in May, but in June or July as prices start to increase again, people are really going to notice this. Coincidentally, that happens to be after the next election. Interesting little policy quirk there.

People will notice this at some point, and the people who have the ability may start getting off the RRO so they're not in a position to pay that back, and what that means is that, increasingly, the people who are left – and those will be those who are probably most vulnerable to this. They'll be people who don't have, you know, sufficient English necessarily to be able to get on a contract or to understand what's occurring. They'll be people who don't have, for whatever reason, the ability to sort of understand what's happening with their bill, and they'll be people who don't have the credit rating to get onto a fixed-term contract. So as people jump off, fewer and fewer people will be left to repay this loan that the government has saddled them with. I think that's problematic for a number of reasons. I believe it was described in a tweet, I think, by Blake Schaffer as a “death spiral,” which is a fairly accurate rendition of the policy issues with this. I mean, I think that's really problematic.

I don't think there's anyone out there – and, I mean, it's kind of hilarious, because this is a government who, when bringing in a highly politicized curriculum, sort of tried to defend it by saying that there's financial literacy in it. Incidentally, there was financial literacy in the expert-developed curriculum that they decided to highly politicize – just, you know, for everyone's awareness – but

that's how they tried to defend it. I think if there's one thing that financial literacy teaches you, it's probably that payday loans are not usually the solution to your problem.

In fact, you know, when we were in government, we actually acted to get some products into the market that weren't payday loans, because people were stuck in this horrible cycle – this horrible cycle – where they had one thing go wrong, and they could only get this loan at this high interest rate and just sort of spiralled and spiralled and spiralled. That's what I feel like this policy is doing. It's putting people in exactly that position. It's saying: well, we'll protect you now because we're worried about the next election, but you'll have to pay it back, and maybe you'll have to pay someone else's loan back, too, with it. It's – I feel like “deeply flawed” is an understatement. I'm not really sure what else to say. It's deeply flawed. It's deeply flawed from its inception all the way through. I think it's highly problematic, and I really do find the timing with respect to the repayment just a little too coincidental and extremely, extremely troubling.

I mean, what we're looking at, Mr. Chair, is a government that has contributed to an inflationary cycle, that has contributed to the fact that wages are not growing to keep pace with inflation, that has raised taxes, that has raised tuition, that has raised interest on student loans, that has raised any number of costs in a way that is really harmful to Albertans. And now, for the last year, because that's how long we've been hearing about this for – people have been concerned, they've been worried, they've been wanting action, they've been needing something from the government, and they've been needing the government to listen for a year – the government has done nothing.

Coincidentally enough, six months before an election they're offering people a loan that they'll have to repay mostly after the election. I think that that's extremely problematic behaviour. Extremely problematic behaviour.

**Ms Hoffman:** Is that how you speak to Wren?

**Ms Ganley:** It is. That is my mom face.

I think, to sum up, I would say – oh, before I sum up, that's the other thing I should probably point out: the \$100 a month leaves a lot of people out. A lot of people are struggling. Right now young people without kids who are trying to pay off their extra high tuition from this government with their extra high interest payments from this government, who are not able to get jobs that sort of pay a salary commensurate with people coming out of university 20 years ago, who are not able to get housing that's nearly as affordable as for people, say, 20 years ago are some of the most stressed, some of the most challenged by the current state of affairs. They are completely left out.

As I mentioned, folks on AISH, the seniors' benefit, the child tax benefit: they're not getting back, for the people on AISH, that \$3,000 a year that was eroded. People whose taxes have gone up: they're not getting that money back either. I would be remiss if I didn't point out that the government's payments, \$50 a month for utilities, also leaves out a bunch of people who live in condos because of the way that the condos are metered. They don't really seem at all interested in addressing that with a policy fix.

Overall, I would say that this bill is far too little and far too late. I think that is the best way to sum it up. It's too little too late, and I think that Albertans will see through it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to add comments, questions, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Happy to rise this evening and provide some of my initial thoughts on Bill 2. I haven't had the chance to speak to that in second reading, but that's okay. We're in Committee of the Whole here now, which is always the best place to be able to possibly even do some back and forth should I have questions, which I do, around Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

First off, I think it would be important to talk a little bit about the history of how we kind of got here and the reasoning behind, I think, bringing this bill forward. This is the government's attempt to try to reduce the impact that, you know, the past couple of years has had literally on their pocketbooks. We were talking about reindexing personal income tax, reindexing the child benefit, reindexing AISH. I think it's very, very important to remember that the government was very, very adamant earlier in the 30th Legislature that they weren't doing that, that we weren't deindexing. Well, if you weren't deindexing, why are you reindexing now if you didn't deindex to begin with?

7:50

Again I find myself at odds, Mr. Chair, and I've found myself at odds throughout the entire 30th Legislature. I've done my best. I haven't always been successful at it, but it's, you know: what does the legislation say, what doesn't it say, and what have you been saying about it? I've noticed a persistent and consistent effort from the government to conflict with all of those things. When I was trying to explain to them that they were deindexing and they were telling me they're not, of course – I can't even remember some of the things: I was lighting my hair on fire; I was fearmongering. Go ahead and insert whatever word you'd like in there; I'm sure it's fitting. But, then, here I am seeing that we're reindexing. Was I wrong, or were we not entirely accurate with some of the information that was being put forward? I'm picking those words very, very carefully because I wouldn't want to run afoul of some of the standing orders.

So here we are now trying to make up for some of that. You know, again, maybe I'd better layer the sandwich here a little bit. I don't want the minister to think that I'm against this, because I'm not. It's kind of like when you're bargaining contract language. I certainly have what I would like to see as all the language being put into a contract. Sometimes I just don't quite get that, but at least I can get something. In this case some of the relief that I'm seeing here for Albertans in Bill 2 is something. Is it all that I want? Well, no, because I think you have a lot of ground to make up, but at least it's something. But it is my duty to remind you how far you're falling short and maybe some of the things you could do, because we still have the chance to look at things differently in certain parts of the bill at least.

We've seen things around help for electricity in terms of rebates. I'm trying to be nice here to some degree, but I feel that getting, you know, \$200 towards that feels a little cheap. I've shown that just one of my constituents one month saw an electricity bill of \$600. Yes, \$200 would help going towards that, but what about the next \$600 bill? What about the next one after that, that maybe is \$500 or maybe is \$700? We ran out there.

**Mr. Nally:** Tell them about a fixed-rate contract.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I look forward to the minister responsible for red tape to participate when he gets his opportunity. I will take notes vigorously, and I'm sure there'll be some red tape in there I'll get a chance to criticize, because I haven't been able to criticize any red tape so far since he's taken over.

You know, we see some relief coming in terms of the fuel tax. Again, I'll take what I can get, but here's the problem. I've got constituents who have parked their vehicles because they can't afford their insurance. If they're not operating their vehicle, how do they benefit from the fuel rate being suspended, the tax on that? There's no benefit to that. The thing is, Mr. Chair, that we've seen significant increases in insurance rates. Just one constituent alone showed me that their condo insurance went up by 46 per cent; their vehicle insurance went up 52 per cent. All it takes is one example. When you have one example, you can't ignore it. You shouldn't ignore that. I think the government is doing that a little bit. Again, I appreciate the attempt here, but it's falling short.

We saw some of the rebates here earlier around, you know, for instance, heating your home, getting \$50 a month for three months, which is \$150. Again, thank you, but you're being cheap with Albertans. There could be more done. I always hear about: we have to be fiscally responsible. Is it fiscally responsible to spend \$30 million a year to chase a cartoon character? So far nobody has told me it is. They were actually kind of surprised when I said: these two logos and a cartoon character later, and it doesn't seem like we're any further ahead.

Is it fiscally responsible to bet over a billion dollars on an election south of the border? I would suggest that maybe it's not. It's not fiscally responsible. You know, we're spending a couple of million dollars to write reports about organizations that did nothing wrong. They were just doing what they were doing. Yet all we've got for Albertans is \$150.

**Mr. Nally:** Two point eight billion.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, feel free to explain that to my constituent that asked me to bring their question forward, which I did, and they got a really bad answer. I look forward to him jumping up to explain that to my constituent.

Now, when we look at this little – I guess it is a bit of a scheme around putting off the payments, spreading them out over 19 months. Here's the thing. People can't afford their bills now, so over the next 19 months they're going to have to try to catch up on them. They can't pay now. How are they going to pay later on? You're, as they say, kicking the can down the road, giving people false hope. I know. I have a personal friend that's in this boat who decided to take advantage of that little deferral payment that went on and now is looking back and going: wow, that was a really bad decision. But it seemed like a really good thing at the time. It got sold as a really good idea.

**Mr. Nally:** You voted in favour of it. Zero per cent.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Yeah. The company got to pay zero per cent on their loan, but Albertans had to pay interest on it.

That's what I'm saying. They're getting into this cycle, this financial rabbit hole that people are getting directed to go down, and it's not beneficial to them.

As my friend from Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, the way this is being set up, you have individuals that will probably temporarily be on the regulated rate option right until the point they realize that it's not to their advantage and they have the ability to get off, making the remaining pool individuals that actually don't have the option.

As we know, there are criteria when you start to go on some of these fixed rates, things like a good credit score. The reality is that some Albertans don't have that, not through any fault of their own. They've been sitting here maxing out their credit cards because – oh, I don't know – their kids decided to go to postsecondary to

increase their education. Their student loans went up. The student interest rate on those loans went up. Their insurance went up in trying to go there every day with their vehicle. So they've run into problems, or they just simply don't have the deposit to be able to put towards that.

It's very, very difficult when you're trying to raise a family on minimum wage. We already know that that's a very, very difficult thing to try to do. You just don't have a whole lot of extra money to spend. While, you know, it'd be great if they had that money to put the deposits so they could maybe get there – but then, of course, that problem starts to expand where we have fewer and fewer people that are going to take on that burden that's left over, as my friend from Calgary-Mountain View had pointed out. There's a very, very big flaw in that.

8:00

Now, because we're in the Committee of the Whole, I'm hoping that maybe someone from the government will be able to rise in the discussion and maybe talk a little bit about: should that scenario start to play out where that pool of people start to leave the RRO, shrinking the pool that's left over, making it a larger burden on those that are left, what's the plan to help them should that occur? I haven't heard anything yet. That doesn't mean there isn't, and I'd be happy to hear more about that should that opportunity arise, and I would definitely take notes on that.

Again, I'm not necessarily opposed to Bill 2. I kind of feel like I'm in that corner where I at least have to accept something on behalf of my constituents, on behalf of Albertans so they're getting at least something, but I think that there is more that could have been done. I think there was a larger opportunity here to be able to help people. So it's my hope that maybe some of the folks that were providing some interesting commentary during my commentary might be able to pop up, might be able to answer some questions. I have a feeling probably not. I might just get a whole bunch of rhetoric, but really, at the end of the day, you can feed me all the rhetoric you want, because Albertans are the ones that are paying the price, and really the rhetoric that you're directing at me you're directing at them, which I don't think is very fair. Hopefully, we get a chance maybe to look at this.

Like I said, Albertans are struggling right now to do things. Kicking the can down the road is not going to help. You know, introducing a rate cap here which is a lot higher than what people are facing right now – people are struggling right now at the rate that it is, and we're not even at this proposed cap. What happens when it gets to there? They're already in trouble here. Hopefully, there's a plan.

I look forward to hearing that more, and perhaps I'll even jump up again as I furiously write notes from members that did decide to jump up.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to add comments or questions to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022? The chair sees the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Perhaps during what I hope is a riveting 10 minutes, my colleagues across the aisle will feel inspired to speak to what is supposed to be one of their flagship pieces of legislation this session. Bill 1 was supposed to be the big bill, which, of course, we know the government tried to ram through in the middle of the night because they were wildly unsuccessful in their attempts to communicate how their job-killing sovereignty act would be beneficial to the people of Alberta. Albertans aren't convinced; that's for sure.

Number two, I know they keep heckling about how much money they're investing through this bill, but certainly the many, many Albertans who have weighed in on this are saying that, across the board, Alberta families are feeling a real pinch. And when I say "families," I don't just mean your nuclear family; I mean ordinary, everyday Albertans: retired, working, students. Nobody has gotten a break under the UCP or found life got better in the last four years. We're hearing regularly from people that they're really having a hard time making ends meet.

Bill 2 was brought forward to this place. It's titled the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, but just to start, Mr. Chair, it leaves out about half of Albertans. It leaves out about half of the people of this province, many of whom are young and working or are in school and have seen huge budgetary pressures. I was really happy to have met last week with SU representatives from the University of Calgary, who made very clear how disappointed they were by this legislation and the fact that we have seen record food bank usage, including the food bank at the University of Calgary itself. We've seen tuition continue to escalate just in the last two years.

This government likes to say that they care about health care workers and that they want to make sure we have enough. At the University of Calgary, because of government cuts and because of a board appointed by the UCP, we've seen the tuition in the Faculty of Nursing this upcoming year and this past year: a cumulative increase of 20 per cent, a 20 per cent increase in tuition for nursing students who want to study in the province of Alberta at the University of Calgary, who would like to probably spend their careers serving the people of Alberta, or at least that's what they were planning on doing.

We know how difficult it can already be to get into these programs, and now the government, for those who are able to get in, is jacking up their tuition by 20 per cent approximately – it was 10 per cent last year and 8 per cent this year, so a cumulative of approximately 20 over two years because it compounds, of course, things that the government certainly should understand – making life incredibly expensive. Those university students, who are seeing their tuition go up, their inflationary pressures, about 6 per cent, go up: many are reporting on the significant increases to rent. We know how difficult it is to buy groceries right now in this province, and there is nothing in this bill to help a single university student who doesn't have dependants, unless they're over 65.

The University of Calgary students' association, rightfully so, was really disappointed when this bill came forward and there was no relief for university students. The government has refused to cap tuition at inflation. That's another thing that they're lobbying for. They would have really liked to have seen a bill that would have capped tuition increases to inflation. They'd like to see some requirements for authentic consultation, and they would like to see some relief for students in terms of their costs but also their income. One said: how is it fair that others will be able to get this money, but those of us who are doing our best to contribute to our postsecondary education and, in turn, to the success of our province aren't eligible? I think that's a very good and fair question.

There are approximately 2 million, almost half of Albertans, who are left out of this. It was mentioned that there are a lot of people working minimum wage, and there absolutely are. Let's look at the income for somebody who is working full-time, 37 and a half hours a week; minimum wage, 15 bucks an hour; 52 weeks in a year. They're taking no time off. They're making 29,250 bucks in a year, and unless they have children or unless they're a senior, they don't qualify for this relief in this bill either. That is ridiculous, to have somebody make less than \$30,000 a year working full-time and for

the government to not even pause for a moment and think that that person might be in need of some relief right now, as we're seeing such significant increases to the cost of everything, including the cost of food, the cost of rent, the cost of transportation.

I am disappointed that there was – it's a big cabinet. It's a big cabinet. There were a lot of people who sat around the table. I'm disappointed that either the people sitting around that table didn't even stop to think about the minimum wage workers of this province or the low-income people in this province or the university students in this province or that they were so incapable of convincing their colleagues to actually put something in this bill to help address them and their needs. The people sitting around that cabinet table should be embarrassed that they've left out almost half of Albertans through this bill.

I guess something is better than nothing. I typically try to come to this place and think: as long as we're not moving backwards, I can probably support it, and we can move forwards. I guess it is a step forward. But at a time when we're seeing significant, record-breaking revenues, due in no way to the decision-making of the current government – we're seeing significant revenues, revenues that belong to the people of Alberta, mostly off nonrenewable resource revenues, including royalties through the royalty framework that was negotiated under the last NDP government. The government of today, though, has decided that they're going to give a very small fraction of that back to the people of Alberta and instead boast about how fortunate they were to stumble into those backwards.

At the same time, we have people making minimum wage working full-time and people going to university having to rely on the food bank, record food bank usage. I know that there were members previously who spoke about how great it is that the UCP is giving money to food banks, and obviously it is desperately needed right now. We've never seen food bank usage as high as it has been. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore scoffed at that and said: well, of course, it was higher when the NDP was in government. It was not. That is well documented, factual, that food bank usage has never been higher than it is right now.

8:10

Getting back to those University of Calgary students, they talked about how international students in particular are having to rely on the food bank in much larger proportions than ever before in the past. And why? Well, one of the reasons is because the current government has decided to jack up tuition, particularly for students who are international students, to use them as an opportunity to make more money to support programs. Or to make more money to support the current government, I guess, would be the other side of that.

The other piece I want to touch on in my brief opportunity here tonight is around the regulated rate option, and I know that the current Member for Morinville-St. Albert yelled out: tell them about the regulated rate option. I will tell them about the regulated rate option, because under the regulated rate option what the government is doing through this utility payday lending scheme is that they're creating a bigger burden for those who are on the regulated rate option to pay off the loan for those who are still stuck in the current RRO when the loan comes due.

You've heard some of my colleagues talk about how – what it is is a short-term payday loan for the period right before the election. Surprise. The government right now is wanting to find a way to earn some votes, so they're telling people: your bills are going to go down. The other part of that is that your bills are going to go way, way up pretty much right after the election, because this isn't actually forgiveness. This isn't actually easing of the pressures. This is deferral. This is a loan, a loan that will see those who are

still stuck in the RRO when this period is up having to shoulder the significant burden that will be left upon them because the current government decided to bring in this toxic loan program. It definitely is not about making life more affordable in the long term at all.

It is simply trying to put a very small Band-Aid in the lead-up to the election, hoping that people will forget about all the harm that's been caused, all the escalation that's been experienced, the vast majority of that through direct decisions that the UCP has made to prioritize friends and insiders over everyday Albertans, friends and insiders like lobbyists for large insurance corporations, automobile insurance corporations, who fought to have the cap lifted from automobile insurance. We saw published across the nation yesterday just what an impact that has had on the people of Alberta, that here in the province of Alberta we have the highest, in every single category, automobile insurance costs, according to EY. We used to call them Ernst & Young, but I think now they've rebranded as EY. They have very clearly documented that in every single category people in Alberta are paying more for insurance than they are in other parts of the country, driving up the costs for ordinary families, making it more and more difficult for people to afford to have a vehicle, to keep it on the road, to buy groceries.

The government wants us to come into this place and do a big song and dance for them. Or maybe they don't, because they can't even be bothered to speak to their own bill. This is, again, Bill 2 under the new Premier, supposed to be the top two priorities. We're going to talk about affordability, and they won't even talk about it because I think that they know, rightfully, that they are leaving half of Albertans out through the formula they created. They are causing an even greater gap between many haves and have-nots in our province, and they are making it harder for ordinary folks to be able to make their ends meet.

I also can't help but reflect on about four years ago, when we brought in indexing of AISH, and the government of the day, the NDP, was really proud to bring in indexing. We put it in legislation. This was going to happen in perpetuity. And the UCP at the time, under the leadership of Jason Kenney, actually voted for it. They said, "Well, of course, the NDP is going to tell you that we're going to get rid of indexing, but we wouldn't do that." "Don't be mean, and don't spread lies to people who are low-income," they said, "to people who are severely handicapped; don't tell them we would do that; of course, we wouldn't do that." "We voted for the bill," the Premier said, then Premier Jason Kenney. Jason Kenney said: "We voted for the bill. We're absolutely going to stand by indexing, and we're going to increase everybody's salaries when the cost of living goes up."

It was the eve of an election, and what happened almost immediately after that election? The summer of repeal. They repealed their promises. That is what they did. They jacked up the cost of living, and they got rid of those inflationary protections for people who were living on AISH. But here they are on the eve of another election, and they want everyone to say: "Oh, don't worry. Trust us. We're going to increase your cost of living. We're going to give you an increase to your AISH. Don't worry; it's all going to be good. Don't tell people who are severely handicapped that we won't do that. Don't tell them to look at our record. Don't tell them to look at what we've actually done and what impacts we've had on their lives. Don't worry. Trust us this time. It's going to be different this time." Are you kidding me?

**An Hon. Member:** It's never different.

**Ms Hoffman:** It is never different with the UCP.

I have to say, Mr. Chair, that I don't think this bill moves us backwards, so I guess I will vote for it, but the government sure



could've done a lot better. They sure could've done a lot more in this bill and over the last four years to actually address the pressures that everyone has been telling us have been significant on them and their families. Instead, the government wants to throw about a sixth of what the surplus is anticipated to be at half of the population, probably the half they think they need to vote for them, and say: good enough.

Well, it's not good enough, Mr. Chair. It's not something that I think the people who are sitting around the cabinet table drafting there should be proud of. I think they should be ashamed of how many people they've left out and the huge gaps that they're going to only further through their failure to actually protect every Albertan who is struggling right now.

With that, I guess I'll support the bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to add questions or comments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I paused there for a moment just to see if any of the government members would want to speak to what should be one of their flagship bills. We also know they were pretty cautious about speaking to their actual flagship bill, which was Bill 1, the sovereignty act.

It turns out that they don't really want to speak to this, which is shocking, because I know – I know my caucus colleagues will share this feeling. I mean, speaking about affordability is probably one of the top issues that Albertans are talking about. I know that we have been committed to speaking to these issues for almost a year now, when we first started to see inflation start to rise significantly in the fall of 2021. It has been something that on this side of the House we have been talking about nonstop. Why, Mr. Chair? Because that's what Albertans were talking about. That's what they cared about deeply. Their ability to pay for the things they needed to live, their utilities for heat and electricity, their groceries – they need to drive their car – their car insurance: they were seeing all those go up while at the same time not seeing their income or their wages go up.

One of the things that I think is really important to keep in context, Mr. Chair, as we think about Bill 2 and inflation relief is that while we have heard great enthusiasm from the government caucus to talk about certain aspects of economic recovery, what they failed to talk about is that wage growth, actually, in Alberta is the second slowest in the country right now. We know that Albertans, while they're seeing their costs go up, are not seeing their income go up. We've seen that reflected in the challenges that all households are facing, including those of my constituents.

I, like my colleagues, have been door-knocking relentlessly for, honestly, almost two years. Even between waves of the pandemic I've never stopped, because that's our number one job, listening to our constituents and hearing what they have to say. I've also been privileged and honoured to knock on doors not just in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud but across the province. I've lost track of how many constituencies in Calgary I've door-knocked in and in Fort McMurray as well as other constituencies in Edmonton such as Edmonton-South West as well as in Medicine Hat.

Edmonton-South West is also – I mean, if you're allowed to have a second-favourite Edmonton constituency, there's no doubt that, for me, Edmonton-South West is it. So many of those great people live very close to me, go to the same rec centres. They attend the same schools as my constituents, and they know that they always have a voice in the Legislature for them even if it's not their current MLA. They know that the Alberta NDP caucus as well as myself will take to heart their issues, especially as they raise concerns about

affordability. I'm very proud to represent so many people right now.

In any event, Mr. Chair, affordability is one of the number one issues that we're hearing from constituents, and it's one of the number one issues that I've been talking about and I know my colleagues have been talking about for months. So I'm glad that the government is finally bringing in some inflation relief measures.

Unfortunately, as many of my colleagues have shared – and I want to give a shout-out to my colleagues who've already talked. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora just did a fantastic job articulating some of those challenges as well as the members for Edmonton-Decore and St. Albert the other day and Calgary-Mountain View.

**8:20**

You know, there is a lot of concern that this could be done a whole lot better. I think what we're seeing is a pattern of behaviour, Mr. Chair, from sort of the rushed way. I guess we've got a Premier who is very enthusiastic about some issues although even her flagship issues she didn't give much thought and attention to because somehow she accidentally gave herself and her cabinet unbelievably undemocratic powers to change legislation. That was, oops, a little mistake.

We know that's the level of attention that she'll pay to her flagship bills. It's not surprising, then, with this one, which has not been a priority for the UCP to talk about or for this current Premier when she was running for leadership – rarely ever heard her talk about affordability – so maybe it's not a surprise that this bill came forward and it was not well thought out. Now, certainly, I think we've been very clear: we will support measures that will address some of the affordability issues Albertans are facing.

It is critically important that we take some action, and I will support a bill that does take some action. But our job in this Assembly, Mr. Chair, is to give some critical thinking and thought to the legislation that's put before us and to suggest changes and point out where things could have been done better, because at the end of the day we are stewards not only in terms of the laws that we pass in this place, but we are stewards of Alberta's taxpayers' dollars as well. We have an interest in making sure that those dollars are being spent effectively.

This is why I think there is significant concern around the parameters that have been laid out in Bill 2 and the eligibility for some of these affordability measures. You know, first of all, I will say that the threshold that was chosen here of the \$180,000 to have a minimum income is, I think – I've heard from some of my constituents questioning how that amount was determined and why that was determined to be the threshold for providing some support.

Should it be higher? Should it be lower? You know, I think there needs to be some clarity around that. I understand that the current Minister of Affordability and Utilities will indicate that it was based on the household income used for the child care subsidy, but of course this is excluding a huge number of Albertans. When we're talking about a child care subsidy – and often in situations we're talking about double income, of course – what about the single-income individuals who don't have children who now don't qualify? I have to tell you, Mr. Chair, I know many of them.

I know many individuals who have been struggling with affordability issues. In fact, many of them who work with us and our colleagues – when I say “colleagues,” I mean work as staff. I'm sure many of the MLAs in this Chamber have constituency staff, for example, who do not qualify because they don't have children or they're not seniors, and that is really difficult for me even as an employer and somebody who works, my staff, to hear that they don't qualify for these measures because they don't have children.

I wish I could pay them a whole lot more, Mr. Chair, because they sure are worth it. I want to give a shout-out to them right now because they're fantastic. A shout-out to Rick and to Melissa in my office; they are fantastic human beings who work so much. I would love to be able to pay them what they're truly worth.

But they don't qualify because they don't have children. Yet I know, in the circumstances that they live in, that they're struggling with utility bills. They are struggling with groceries. They're struggling with a lot of other challenges, and they don't qualify. At the same time, Mr. Chair, I have to tell you I have heard from constituents in my riding who say that they are shocked to find out that they do qualify because they don't believe that they need it. They say that they would rather have those dollars going to people who need it more than they do.

Particularly, I know a number of seniors who qualify because their income is at a fixed-income level and it's lower, but they have a significant amount of, you know, savings and various investments that they're doing just fine. Their income falls below that \$180,000, and they're saying: why do they qualify? When we talk about ways to be stewards of taxpayer dollars, we needed more specificity and, I think, more targeting in these affordability measures to make sure that we're being really clear that those who truly need it get it. That is, I think, the problem that we're seeing.

To me, it's about making sure that we are not drawing arbitrary lines, that we are not making assumptions about people based on having children or being seniors and saying that they can or cannot. We need to actually look at need. I do believe truly, Mr. Chair, that had some more thought been given, more attention – if this had been at all a priority for this government up until two weeks or three weeks ago, then we would have seen a more thoughtful bill that was presented and a more thoughtful program that would have been clear about targeting those individuals who need it the most. That is one of my critiques. It is a significant amount of money that's being spent as a result of these affordability measures. We should make sure they're being spent where they can do the most good. That is my concern.

You know, I actually have had a number of constituents and individuals who haven't typically been Alberta NDP supporters, although they've indicated they will be this time around, saying that they're also concerned that not only hasn't it been targeted properly, but they want to know that this is actually going to go to support the people who need it the most. It feels like, to them, this is just an attempt to buy their support going into the next election.

**Ms Hoffman:** There's a poll for that.

**Ms Pancholi:** It sounds like many Albertans actually believe that.

Again, I don't want to help this government with, you know, the very cynicism that they have created and incubated and encouraged in Albertans, but if they don't want this to be seen like a vote-buying measure, then I think they should've been more thoughtful about making sure that it would go to the people who need it rather than the people who they think will support them. I think that's a very important issue that would've given them more credibility. But, by all means, I don't think it's my job to try to encourage this government or try to give them pointers on how to be more credible, because we know they won't take them. Certainly, I think that's one of the concerns. It's a way to make it seem like this is actually about helping Albertans, and I'm not sure that the thought and attention has gone into this bill and this program to ensure that.

I also want to mention, of course, of the many issues that my colleagues have already raised, you know, the reindexing of AISH and indexing of a number of other measures. It's really difficult, Mr. Chair, to sit here and listen. We've heard a parade of various

now ministers, former ministers, backbencher MLAs talking about: oh, they never really liked deindexing AISH. I mean, they all voted in support of it. They never wanted it. They always spoke behind closed doors, conveniently, where there's no record of it, against the deindexing of AISH – that also belies their credibility – but they all voted in favour of it, enthusiastically, in fact, and heckled and critiqued and yelled. We said: you're breaking your word to vulnerable Albertans by deindexing those individuals from those benefits, and it will be a cut. Oh, goodness. I can't even – who can forget?

**Ms Renaud:** It's not a cut.

**Ms Pancholi:** It's not a cut. It's not a cut. When individuals on AISH were seeing their costs go up and their benefits stay the same, it was a cut. The semantics that were played by members of the government caucus on that issue – now they're saying: oh, behind closed doors they never supported it. But they did.

What it showed, Mr. Chair, as well as what it shows now, that they're agreeing to reindex AISH just before an election, is that they have always been willing to play games, balance budgets on the backs of the most vulnerable. When it suited their purpose to, you know, try to seem like they were being austere and they were going to rein in spending, they were more than happy to all support deindexing individuals who are on AISH. Now, when it's time for an election, they're more than happy to talk about, "Oh, it was really a terrible idea," and they're going to reindex AISH. I think that makes it very clear that they will do this again. That's really what we have to know.

We will run into tough economic times again. That is likely going to happen. That's the way, you know – we've seen that happen in this province too many times. And when that happens again, Albertans can rest assured that every single member of this government caucus will vote once again to deindex benefits that the most vulnerable Albertans rely upon. Why, Mr. Chair? Because they've done it already. They've made it very clear: they're happy to balance the budget on the backs of those people who are most vulnerable in our society and to do it with a straight face. That's why it's hard to cheer and clap when they're now saying that they're going to index what they never should have deindexed in the first place.

Let's also be clear that they're not talking about reindexing to the point of time where they deindexed. Three years ago, during a pandemic, we saw those individuals on AISH absolutely see their benefit cut. They're not talking about going back in time and even atoning for the mistake they made. And we know that those individuals have lost the equivalent of \$3,000, which is, by the way, quite a significant amount of money for somebody on AISH.

I also want to mention, for example, the indexing of the child and family benefit. Now, again, those are things that we absolutely have been calling on for some time as well as the seniors' benefit. We've been saying that those absolutely should be indexed.

**8:30**

But I want to go back to 2019 again to actually point out what, again, this government won't talk about, which is that in 2019 they actually combined the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit into one, into what we have now. What they were not transparent about was that when they did that, they actually cut off a number of vulnerable families. Now, we have to remember, the families that are eligible for this benefit are very low-income families. At the time that they made the changes in 2019, they actually decreased the benefit for a number of very vulnerable families.

In fact, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy did an analysis of the changes that they made, and they found, for example, that a two-child, two-parent family in 2019, under the new benefit as put forward by the government, who lived right at the poverty line – we're talking about, you know, under \$40,000 per year, two children, two adults – actually lost \$500 in a benefit as a result of the changes that the UCP made. So, again, I'm really happy to hear that they're going to index the Alberta child and family benefit to inflation, but let's not forget that they actually decreased the amount of support to vulnerable families back in 2019.

Once again we're seeing a pattern, Mr. Chair, of trying to – well, they can't even say that they're repairing their mistakes because they're not backdating. It's not retroactively available, but they want some credit for doing the decent thing that they should have done in the first place. Certainly, going forward, we know how they will act. We know what they will do. They will absolutely go after the most vulnerable once again to balance their books.

Lastly, I want to speak really quickly, Mr. Chair, to the regulated rate option and the changes made to the electricity and the benefit that – well, it's not really a benefit that's being provided. I had to, you know, go through this to truly understand what was happening here. So for those who may not be aware, the regulated rate option, which is sort of the default option for Albertans – if you don't get on to a contract yourself, that is what most Albertans are on. They're on a regulated rate option until they choose and seek out to be on a contract on their own.

The current scheme – and it's pretty clear in Bill 2 – is that, essentially, what they're saying is that, yes, for three months they are going to cap that rate for the regulated rate option, the RRO – at a much higher rate than we had the electricity cap on when we were in government – at 13.5 cents. They're going to cap it at that point, but they're not going to cover the cost of the difference between the cap and what the actual price is. They're not actually saying: "We're going to help you as the Alberta government. We're going to cover that cost because we know it's a big challenge, and it's a burden, and it's costing a lot of money at a time when your wages and income aren't going up." They're not saying that they're going to cover it. They're actually saying: "We're actually just going to loan that difference. That money that it costs us as the government: we're going to loan that to the electricity companies, and then we're going to let the electricity companies charge you back for that after that three-month period is over."

So that means those individuals on the regulated rate option are going to be repaying the loan that essentially the government of Alberta has given to utility companies. That means they are going to be paying it back over 19 months, and if that increases – because we don't know what those prices are going to look like; we don't know how much that's going to cost; they won't know that – they're going to see their costs go up significantly afterwards. And, as pointed out by many of my colleagues, the individuals who are on regulated rate options sometimes are on that option because they don't even know that they can go and seek out a contract. I mean, we have to talk a little bit about what we're doing to actually educate Albertans on their options. But also it means that they're individuals who may not qualify to go on a contract because they may not have great credit scores. So those are the individuals who may be struggling already financially, and now this government is asking them to pay back a loan that the government has taken out on their behalf.

That is not relief, Mr. Chair. That is not actually providing a benefit to Albertans. It's actually saddling them with more costs. It is again reflective, I think, of poorly thought out affordability measures. That's actually a generous interpretation of this, that they

did this because they didn't think it out carefully. The more cynical interpretation would be that they are pretending like they're giving relief to Albertans and hoping that they won't notice that they're actually paying more afterwards. Seeing as we saw that from a number of their COVID relief measures, I wouldn't be surprised.

I'd like to err on the side of thinking that it was just an oversight, because we've seen many, many oversights already from this new Premier and her government, but unfortunately, I believe, they're not actually looking out for Albertans, because they're only just starting to talk about the affordability measures that Albertans have been talking about for over a year, that the Official Opposition has been talking about for over a year; instead, what they've brought forward is untargeted relief that is not going to support most Albertans, and it's going to cost some of them even more because of the way they've decided to deliver this program.

Albertans need real support, Mr. Chair. They need authentic support that's really going to make a difference for them, for all of them who are struggling. They deserve a better-thought-out bill and a better-thought-out program from this government.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to add comments or questions? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I rise to move an amendment, so I will just wait for that to get to you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hang on for a moment while we get a copy.

Hon. members, this will be amendment A1.

If I could get the hon. member to read it into the record for us, please.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 3(4) in the proposed section 2 by striking out "the rate of 13.5 cents per kWh" wherever it occurs and substituting "the rate of 6.8 cents per kWh."

I guess what this amendment does is fairly obvious. Unfortunately, it was difficult to solve some of the more substantive problems, shall we say, with the way that this program has been structured by the UCP, but one thing we could offer Albertans was an attempt to set the rate cap to what it would have been had the UCP not repealed the rate cap originally.

Now, there were a couple of things that we couldn't do in this bill. One of them was that we couldn't amend the bill to back index AISH. There were some difficulties with sort of solving the substantive problems with the way the UCP has structured this loan, but one thing we were able to do was suggest that perhaps Albertans deserve a little more relief than this government is providing them. Here what we have suggested is just a return to the rate cap that could have still been in place had the UCP not gone and repealed this.

I think that at this point it's maybe worth talking a little about the sort of I guess I would say tendency of this government to do one thing and then, you know, three, three and a half years later reverse the thing they did and try to do a victory lap on that. There was a cap in place. The government chose to remove it. There was a cap that was an actual cap and not a loan, and the government chose not to structure it that way. Now they want to do a victory lap on this.

AISH was indexed; the seniors' benefit was indexed; the child tax benefit was indexed; the government reversed all that. Income taxes were indexed so that people didn't lose money with inflation; the government reversed that. We had a contract with doctors that was negotiated with them; the government tore that up.

This government just has a history of, shall we say, reversing itself and not apologizing when they reverse themselves, which is very strange. They can't seem to admit: okay; we made an error. They just reverse themselves, they don't apologize, they try to move on, but it doesn't always work. We saw it, incidentally, with Bill 10, too. That was the health statutes act, where the government had to walk back a massive power grab, actually much like the sovereignty act. First, it wasn't a massive overreach. "There's no way it could be a massive overreach. It's fear mongering. The NDP is making things up. It's definitely not that." Then suddenly it was that, but they're reversing it. I don't know. They seem to have a dubious relationship with the facts, shall we say, a dubious at best relationship with the facts.

This is an attempt to at least provide Albertans with what they would otherwise have had. It doesn't do all the things that I think we ought to do, it doesn't do all the things that I think this government ought to do, but it does give them the opportunity to maybe reconsider and give Albertans just a little bit more.

8:40

I think it's an incredibly important amendment. I think that Albertans are struggling, and I think – I mean, we've been hearing from folks on their power prices, their natural gas prices for at least a year. Again, it's additive, right? It's not just one thing that does it. It's increases to taxes and tuition and a whole bunch of other things that this government has allowed to happen, but people really are struggling, because electricity is a basic need. You can't live these days without electricity, and people are really, really struggling, and it's usually those who are least able to afford it who are on the regulated rate option.

I think there are some reasons to think that the regulated rate option itself is maybe not a great product. I would encourage people to get on a fixed rate. I think that's probably a better way to go. That wouldn't be the advice in every instance. I would say in this instance, certainly. Yeah. I would say that's probably actually good advice for several years now. But, you know, the product itself tends to be a bit volatile, and those who are left on it are usually people who don't necessarily feel empowered to understand enough about a fixed-term contract to get on one or who don't have the credit to get on one, which is also a problem that occurs, or who just don't understand the system, whether that's because they're new to the country or they don't have the sort of language facility to understand – I mean, these are pretty complex things – or because they just haven't done it. In any event, I think this is an opportunity for the government to show that they're serious, to go back to what would have been otherwise.

So I hope that all members will vote in favour.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the members opposite for supporting the bill. I anticipate that they will support the bill. Just to highlight that the bill we're talking about includes substantial affordability and inflation relief for Albertans at a time when they need it most, including \$900 in estimated benefit to families who are not receiving targeted relief payments, including \$500 in electricity rebates, natural gas price protection, and, of course, savings on fuel tax.

The amendment here proposes that the rate be changed to 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour. Just comparing the previous government's rate cap, which in this case would cost taxpayers – all taxpayers – \$375 million to subsidize 39 per cent of a ratepayer's bills for three months. This ceiling and deferral will cost taxpayers a net \$12 million but still provides ratepayers on the RRO, who are facing

extreme volatility and high prices over the coming winter months, with stability, the same way that fixed-rate contracts provide stability; you pay less in high months, and you pay a little bit more in lower cost months in return for that stability. That's what the ceiling and deferral mechanism does.

Unfortunately, the members opposite have proposed a rate so low that if it were in place, virtually all electricity consumers would likely switch to the RRO, away from fixed-rate protection, causing instability and future volatility for our most vulnerable. I don't think that was their intent, but we certainly don't want to destabilize our entire electricity market.

So I would recommend that we don't support this amendment, but I look forward to the members supporting the broad bill. It's great news, great help for Albertans when they need it. The faster we get it through here, the faster Albertans are going to see it in their hands and for their kids.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Back on the main bill, Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Edmonton-McClung, did you say?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. I think you said, "Edmonton-McClung," Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. I didn't hear it clearly.

**Mr. Nielsen:** There are so many people standing, you couldn't see.

**Mr. Dach:** There you go.

I am pleased to say that I'm going to be supporting this bill, but I do have severe reservations about it, Mr. Chair. We did just go through an exercise where we brought through an amendment that would have seen the rate of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour in replacing the 13.5 cent rate in the legislation that was defeated, too, by the government with claims that are dubious at best.

But let me focus on the main bill and what I hear at the doors from my constituents about what they're saying about the bucks that are being passed into their hands by this government right now. It is reminiscent, Mr. Chair, of a time a few years ago when there was another Premier in this province named Ralph Klein, and he left a legacy of Ralph bucks. I think that we may be headed towards the same type of legacy when it comes to the bucks that are being flowed through this government's hands via when we're looking at rebates and we're looking at affordability comforts or affordability efforts to cushion Albertans at a time when they're struggling to make ends meet.

We have a situation where perhaps the government was kind of gleeful about the opportunity to pass money to people in the province so close to an election without it seeming as blatant as Ralph Klein's, former Premier Ralph Klein, \$400 cheques that he gave to every Albertan over 18 years old in the province in 2006. Now, that announcement – they were called then prosperity payments. The election was being lost, and the Premier at the time, Mr. Klein, had this great idea that it would boost popularity, and he could perhaps win the election by handing out these \$400 cheques. It did actually turn the election, but the smile on their faces was short lived in the Klein camp, Mr. Chair.

The Ralph bucks legacy is talked about in a CTV news article, and I'll quote some of it, and I'll table it later. It says that even with oil prices down [they'd] be nowhere near [the] deficit if they'd taken corrective action.

That was Scott Hennig with the Canadian taxpayers' association.

Two months after the cheques were mailed out he announced his intention to resign . . .

This is Mr. Klein, the Premier.

. . . after his fourth term on Oct. 21, 2007, some 19 months later.

"He was beginning to lose his edge,"

as Mr. Mensah says.

"The Ralph edge, the common touch."

But by the end of March, the Progressive Conservatives had had enough with delegates giving Klein an underwhelming 55 per cent . . .

An underwhelming 55 per cent.

. . . show of support at a party leadership review.

That number seems to ring true to the type of numbers and level of support that Conservative leaders seemed to garner from more recent leadership contests as well.

"He was done in by the party establishment,"

the article goes on to say.

Klein eventually resigned near the end of September of 2005.

Oil prices crashed in 2008 and the province has posted deficits in every year since . . . "I don't think any . . . government is going to follow that path [again]," said Mensah. "That path was a unique period in Alberta's history where the government was simply flush with all the money coming in."

"In hindsight, we see that was not an appropriate approach given what we are now facing as a province."

Now, we have political commentary looking backwards on the Ralph bucks saying that it probably wasn't a very good thing to do and in hindsight probably won't be done again, yet here we are in 2022, Mr. Chair, looking at another version of Ralph bucks. I'll leave it to others to give a prefix as to what kind of bucks we're seeing right now, handed out within five months of an election in the hopes that the public will once again reward the Conservatives with a victory as a result of having their pockets filled with Conservative bucks.

**8:50**

What I'm hearing at the doors, as I began to say, Mr. Chair, when I began my comments, is not a thank you for the upcoming potential money should this bill pass; what I'm hearing is that the public is seeing this as a very, very cynical attempt to buy them with their own money. That indeed is something that has gone on before in this province, as I've alluded to in the CTV news article, and it's something that Albertans are saying very clearly at the doors that I've been knocking on in my constituency, in Calgary, in Brooks-Medicine Hat, in Leduc, in Morinville, and other places upcoming very soon. I hear at the doors that that happened once, but they're not going to be falling for the same stunt. They figure it's a cynical attempt by the UCP to buy support with their own tax dollars at a time when they're using it as a cover for putting a cushion underneath Albertans who are suffering economically.

It's a happy coincidence for the Conservative Party. I think they feel that they're able to cloak these so-called new Ralph bucks in the clothing of support for Albertans during a time of need. They're splashing around the dough to help with the affordability crisis without having to be as blatant as Ralph Klein was when he handed out the Ralph bucks. This is the Conservatives' vision of a social contract, Mr. Chair: we pay you; you vote for us. It's a simple contract, but I'm really hearing at the doors that people aren't falling for it.

I was at a meeting, a Christmas dinner, actually, of former Conservative individuals who invited me to come and join them at

a local seniors' residence in my constituency. I was happily surprised to learn that I couldn't find any one of them amongst the 30 attendees who were going to be supporting the Conservatives; they were going to be coming over to the New Democrats.

That age group typically will be having a few more Conservative supporters in it, but it's very clear, given that anecdotal response amongst a group of former Conservative supporters who voiced actual cynicism about specifically what we're talking about tonight, Mr. Chair, that they felt that all of these dollars that were flowing to so-called cushion Albertans against the cost of utilities and so forth were very, very cynical dollars that were being used to curry their vote, to buy their vote. People were turned off by it. They see this so-called Conservative social contract, this pay-for-play Conservative contract, this new prosperity bonus to help them over this period of economic difficulty, something that in 2005 worked for Ralph Klein – they see it for what it is, once again as a cynical attempt to buy their votes.

That interpretation is not my imagination, Mr. Chair. That's exactly the way it was being told to me at that dinner last week in my constituency by seniors, who were in their 70s and 80s, who have now switched their allegiance. They're not going to be voting for somebody who looks to buy their vote.

This bill was supposed to be a flagship, Mr. Chair. The flag is drooping. The flag is drooping, because people have seen through it. It's a limp rag. This is what folks are saying in my constituency: thanks for the dough, but we're not selling you our vote this time; we see right through what you're doing.

So history seems to be repeating itself in one respect, Mr. Chair, in that the Conservatives are trying to use what was a tried-and-true tactic: spill a bunch of cash into the pockets of Albertans prior to an election in an implicit contract that they would then, in turn, be rewarded with their votes. It's not something that is going over very well in my constituency and, dare I say, in many others that I've campaigned in and canvassed in very recently.

The Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act certainly is something that will put money in the pockets of Albertans, but indeed the motivation behind it is something that I seriously question. I can tell this House, Mr. Chair, that the reward that the Conservatives hope to garner from this money is not going to be there. The voting pot at the end of the rainbow is not going to be the same that was rewarded to Mr. Klein in 2005. People are fed up, and they are tired of being treated as though their vote could be bought. They see other things that are motivating them to choose to put their vote elsewhere, other than the Conservatives.

I think this is a concern probably to Conservative members across the way, yet they don't seem to have quite gotten the picture yet. That will become very clear when repeated attempts such as Bill 2 to try to use the royalty surplus that's filling the Alberta coffers right now – when Conservatives try to use that cash to make other attempts to buy the votes of Albertans with their own tax dollars. That's something that I think the Conservatives will probably fail to comprehend over time, and I hope that is something that Albertans remember over the next five, six months because you will see it very clearly, Mr. Chair, in my estimation, in a number of ways.

The current government will be incessant in its attempt to throw money at Albertans in hopes of currying their votes in the next election. Sorry. I'm not focusing on the amount in specific dollar amounts, but that's not what I was hearing at the doors. Basically, the constituents are saying to me that whether it's the electricity rebates or whether it's the elements that will help them in other ways, reindexing the income tax system, the government is not going to end up with the benefit they hoped to receive, and that, of

course, would be a political payoff by getting re-elected in the spring if indeed the government decides to hold the election in the spring.

That's something that I was asked about at that meeting as well, Mr. Chair. What are the rules? Of course, the rules are that a government, under Canada's Constitution, is enabled to hold an election every five years. That is something that people are speculating about – will this Premier decide to go longer should it benefit her politically? – of course, which is what Bill 2 is all about: political benefit.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to the main bill tonight? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak again, actually for the second time, to Bill 2. I was really hoping that some of the ministers or some of the government members would have some answers for the questions that were posed last week, actually. Just to maybe refresh their memory, I just got a copy of one of the press releases that was sent out talking about the huge difference for vulnerable Albertans that this particular piece of legislation will make. Huge remains to be seen, but let's talk about this.

The one bullet under the part where it says if Bill 2 passes talks about

Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act... will enable key affordability support measures through legislation.

If you go down, the second bullet says:

Upcoming targeted relief payments to vulnerable Albertans collecting Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) and Income Support.

Those are three programs.

**9:00**

Now, two of these things are income replacement programs – we know this, right? – assured income for the severely handicapped and income support. Both of those programs are income replacement. PDD, persons with developmental disabilities, actually pays for staff. The question was asked for clarification. Now, this release says that it's going to be indexed, so I'm assuming that's about 6 per cent, the way that you're talking about the other products. But what does that mean? Is it 6 per cent overall for the total budget? That's about a billion dollars. Is it going to the service providers, or is it going to the staff? Do you know who the staff are? How are you going to do this? If anybody over there has any answers – if this was an error, a mistake, that's cool – maybe you could just explain that, because people don't understand.

And if you think it's just me, let me just draw your attention to a statement that was made from a validator that I'm sure the government has used before, and that's Inclusion Alberta. On November 24 they put out a release, and they asked the very same question that I'm asking: what on earth does this mean? You've indexed PDD, but you know that PDD is a collection of contracts that either go to families – so there are the financial administrators – or they go to service providers, both nonprofit and for-profit, who then pay staff. So what does this mean? What are you indexing? Where is this money going? Who's getting it? I would suggest that most if not all people that are on PDD, that use PDD as a staff support, are already on AISH or income support. So I'm a little bit confused.

Now, what Inclusion Alberta further said, and I started to talk about this last week when I spoke to this bill, was that what this bill

doesn't do – I mean, you all can give yourselves a pat on the back if you like for undoing the extraordinary damage that you did. Let me just remind everybody in this place what we've heard from this government for the last few years. We've heard: "It's not a cut. It's not a cut. It's not a cut." We heard that for years. It most definitely is a cut. We also heard: it's the most generous benefit in Canada. It is not. Even if it was the most generous benefit in Canada, it is still below the poverty line. That is nothing to be proud of.

Anyway, going back to the statement that was put out by Inclusion Alberta about Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, they said that what this government failed to do was address the wait-list. Sure, you may have indexed benefits, but what you failed to do was to address the wait-list. If the 6 per cent to PDD is actually meant to provide more support to people, that would be good. That would be a good start. But you have to clarify, because this isn't clear in the bill, it is not clear in the release that you put out, and nobody has really answered any questions, so nobody knows. So perhaps someone could stand up and answer the question.

But you could also address the wait-list. Now, here's what magically happened under the last minister. There used to be a wait-list that was recorded for family support for children with disabilities. Now, that program was left out of this bill. You included PDD, which is for people over 18 with disabilities, but you neglected to include FSCD, which is family support for children with disabilities. I'm not entirely sure why you're indexing one program that pays for staff but you're not indexing the other program that pays for staff. Is this a mistake? Do you have something to clarify? Would you like to explain this to us? It's not just us on this side that are confused; it is service providers that would like some answers.

The wait-list is massive, only what the UCP has done is called it something else. What they call it now is "in planning." That means that you've applied for the benefit or the program that you're eligible for, you've met all of the eligibility requirements, but now you're waiting for a referral to a service provider. You're waiting for a contract. You're waiting for a contract to be signed. You're waiting for it to be mailed to you. This can go on for two, three, four, six, nine, 12 months. This can go on for a long time. To me, that means you're waiting for service. That's a wait-list. But this government, this UCP government, has seen fit to mess around with how they label people as waiting for something else so it looks like they have nobody on a wait-list when, in fact, they have a massive wait-list.

If I look at PDD, the open data – now, unfortunately, this government doesn't update very often, so all I have is December '21. If you add up all the categories where they messed around with the titles and the definition – you can even look at the data descriptions – they have a total of 2,608 people waiting for service, or a service planning caseload. That's PDD. I'm sorry; if you made a mistake with PDD and that 6 per cent was supposed to increase the services that you're providing to people, that's not going to cut it.

FSCD is even worse. That wait-list has completely vanished. It's called something altogether different. It's called in planning, or it's called in planning waiting for a service provider. All that means is that the children are eligible, the families are eligible, they have applied, and they have gone through the steps that they need. They know they need support. They need support now. Early intervention – the key is early – they're waiting for support. They're not getting support. That's a wait-list. There are over 4,000 families that are on those wait-lists. Now, you don't call them wait-lists, but those families are still waiting. You've got 2,000 adults waiting, and you've got 4,000 children and families waiting. That's about 6,000 people.

Now, if your 6 per cent about PDD is in error and you accidentally left out FSCD, just explain that. Just amend this bill. Fix it, or change your release. Put something out. You have clearly made a mistake. We've tried to identify it. We've asked questions, hoping for answers. Now is the time. I hope there's somebody here that has some information or has some understanding. You're spending over \$2 billion. I would hope that you know what you're spending it on.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to take my seat and really hope that someone – oh, actually, I'm going to adjourn debate. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, having heard the motion to adjourn debate, I'm just wondering if the hon. member may have wanted to mention that they would like to move that we report progress as well.

**Ms Renaud:** I'm sorry?

**The Deputy Chair:** In addition to adjourning debate, do you also want to report progress?

**Ms Renaud:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** All right.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody wishing to add comments or questions to the main bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm thrilled to get another chance to speak to Bill 4. It's just really thematic of this government, Bill 4. This bill is a bill which reverses a previous – this is funny; I feel like déjà vu all over again. This bill is a bill that reverses a previous decision of this government. The UCP chose to give themselves the power to tear up a contract with doctors.

Now, I happen to think contracts are important. I think the world turns on people making promises and then living up to the promises that they made. In this case, I think that people includes governments. I think it includes corporations. I think it includes a lot of things. So I think it's incredibly problematic that the UCP government chose to tear up that contract with doctors. I think it was disrespectful to doctors. I think it was disrespectful to Albertans. I think it was a violation of the sacred trust that is placed in us by the people of this province. Yeah, I'm not sure that there are enough words to suggest how bad a decision it was.

What we have to add to that is the context. It's bad to break your word at any time, in my opinion. In this case, it was particularly bad because we were headed into a pandemic. The moment at which this government chose to attack physicians was as we headed into a pandemic. And everybody knew what was happening. It wasn't like we were surprised by what was going on.

In addition to tearing up the contract, the government was incredibly disingenuous in its communications with the public in the way it used language. You know, the government chose to attack, in particular, practitioners of family medicine, so primary care.

**An Hon. Member:** Did she say “disingenuous”?

9:10

**Ms Ganley:** Yes, I did in fact say “disingenuous.” That was the word I used. Thank you very much to the member for that. It was a

word I chose very carefully. I think it's a word that accurately reflects the situation.

I think that what was disingenuous about it was that this government tried to make it out like doctors were abusing the public purse in some way. They tried to make it out not like they were in the wrong, not like they were choosing to break their word, to go back on their contract, but they chose to make it out like somehow doctors were doing something wrong and that they deserved what the government was doing to them. I think that that is extremely problematic.

I mean, it's bad enough to make a decision like that; it's worse to try to essentially blame the victim for what is happening. I think, you know, those physicians felt the weight of that at the moment when they were being asked to stand on the front lines to deal with a disease that we didn't yet understand, that was killing a lot of people, that was sweeping through the population. We didn't know what to do yet. We didn't have protocols in place yet. We didn't really understand how to make ourselves safe. There were no vaccines yet. To attack the very people that were essentially standing on the front lines for us in that moment: I mean, I think it's a choice that history will always remember. It's a choice that history will always remember.

And it didn't stop there. This government threatened to lay off nurses as soon as the pandemic was over. We're in a massive shortage right now, just to be clear. They threatened to lay off nurses when the pandemic was over. They tried to roll back the wages of respiratory therapists and other health professionals. I mean, the lives of Albertans were at stake, and people were on the front lines, and this government attacked the people that were standing on the front lines. I think that that is a decision that the public will remember, and I don't think the public's memory of this will be undone by the government's reversal of this bill. Certainly, the damage that has been done to the public will not be undone by the government's reversal of this decision.

So the government tore up the contracts. They attacked doctors, in particular family physicians, suggesting that somehow the doctors deserved what they got, and people left. Of course they did. Nobody wants to be in a place where your government talks about you like that. Nobody wants to be in a place where your government treats you like that. And doctors are difficult to train. It is very expensive. There are four years of undergrad and four years of medical school, and there are internships and residencies. It is difficult to create a doctor, and they are people we need. I think that right now we are seeing more than ever how much we need them. The number of Albertans who lack a primary care physician, the number of people who can't get treatment: it's incredibly problematic. We need them very much, and this government chased them away.

Now, I'm sure they're going to get up and they're going to tell us how that didn't happen, but the problem with facts on the ground is that people know them, right? Doctors wrote to us. They told us they were leaving. They told us the reasons why they were leaving. We heard from doctors. I heard from doctors talking about how the family residency program didn't fill on the first attempt for the first time in Alberta. The family residency program in Alberta didn't fill. I heard from doctors who speak to medical students who were looking at going out of province. It was incredibly problematic, the actions of this government, and this doesn't reverse that. It doesn't reverse the breach of trust. It doesn't reverse the fact that physicians left, the fact that nurses left when this government attacked them, the fact that I have no doubt that other health professionals left as a result of the actions of this government. None of that is reversed, and it leaves Alberta in a dire situation.

I know the government is going to get up again and say: “Oh, it’s not so bad. You know, you had to wait two and a half hours outside of the Children’s hospital in the snow and the cold with your child who’s struggling to breathe, but it’s not so bad because it’s like that in other places.” That is not an adequate response. It’s difficult to describe the level on which that is not an adequate response.

This government was handed the best health care system in the country, possibly in the world, and now it’s like it is in other places. Well, Mr. Chair, I don’t know. I’m a pretty proud Albertan myself. I like it to be better than it is in other places. I’d like to think it’s better. I liked a health care system that was better.

I think that, you know, this thing that the government is suggesting, that the public’s concern is somehow misplaced because it’s like that in other places: I just don’t think that that’s good enough. I think that Albertans deserve a government that recognizes the damage that they did and that apologizes. I really think that if there is one thing that is missing from this bill, which I will say I support because it reverses a bad decision, again – I feel like I say this over and over with this government – it can be a yes, and. Maybe this bill could come with an apology. At least that would be a start. It wouldn’t undo the damage that was done, but maybe it could come with an apology.

**Ms Hoffman:** One of the most Canadian things you can do.

**Ms Ganley:** One of the most Canadian things you could do.

Maybe this government could stand up and while reversing their decision, tell the people of this province that they’re sorry, tell the doctors that they’re sorry for the way that they talked about them, for tearing up the contract, tell the people of the province that they’re sorry for the damage that was done to our health care system that will take probably a decade to reverse because of the length of time it takes to train health care professionals.

I think that’s what I have to say about Bill 4. Yes, it is a step in the right direction, but writing a bill to let yourself tear up a contract, tearing up a contract, attacking doctors, attacking nurses, leaving every person in this province with worse health care than when they came in is something for which an apology ought to be offered, and I think that this government should do that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other hon. members wishing to speak to the main bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that you were able to pick me out of so many members that are standing up in the House this evening to speak to Bill 4, but I luckily got the call here. Thank you very much for that opportunity.

Of course, the last time I got to chat about Bill 4, we were running out of a little bit of time that afternoon. In the minute and a half that I did have, I did manage to cover a lot of ground, but I think there are still a few more thoughts that I have to try to bring across. I believe I left off at the point where I was thanking the Minister of Health for bringing the bill forward to reverse, again, what I characterized, quite honestly, as a bit of a childish tirade by the former Minister of Health by tearing up the contracts with Alberta doctors. Certainly, Bill 4 is the right move to try to restore that relationship with doctors. But, you know, as I’ve always said, I try to layer out the sandwich a little bit here, and I know that at the time our current Minister of Health was minister of labour, and I think a decision to tear up that contract would’ve probably maybe thrown up some red flags for the minister of labour at that time because, as we know, that kind of course of action in any kind of negotiations usually never would solve anything.

9:20

So I’m wondering: you know, was there at some point in time maybe some advice to the former Minister of Health, “Hang on; this might not be a really good idea; it might not be productive; you might want to hold up on that decision”? If not, I have to ask. There must have been somebody either within the government bench, within the government caucus that thought perhaps tearing up the contract with doctors was a little bit too extreme, or even one of the many amazing bureaucrats that the government has access to. Somebody must have said: this is not a good idea. But it is what it is. Here we are, and we’re reversing the ability to be able to do that in the future, so definitely the right decision.

Again, some of the comments that I’ve heard, you know, even before Bill 4 but as well during here – I would like to challenge the Health minister just a little bit with some of those thoughts that have been expressed. I think the first one I’m going to bring forward is around some of the comments we’ve heard about the amount of money that Alberta is spending on health care. We’ve heard remarks that have said: well, we are spending the most money we’ve ever spent in the history of Alberta on health care. I’m happy that you’re spending all of that money. I’m not prepared to quite say that it’s because of the goodness of your heart. I’m wondering if perhaps maybe one of the reasons we’ve seen an increase in health spending is because of population growth within Alberta.

I did a little bit of research here, and looking back in, you know, 1998 – Mr. Chair, you’re probably wondering, well, why 1998? That was because that was the year that the Calgary General hospital was blown up, as it probably should have been. A very, very old building. It was at end of life. Way too much money to probably try to fix it; it was easier probably just to demolish it. At that time there were 2.8 million Albertans in the province. As we know, it was previous to 1998 that the last hospital was built in Alberta. Fast-forwarding now to – and I’m picking 2019 because, of course, we had an election at that point, a change in government. There were 4.3 million Albertans, which looks to me just about, you know, double, and in 2022 we have 4.4 million Albertans in the province.

So I’m wondering if population growth has had anything to do with this need to increase spending in health care not just simply because there’s a desire to want to look like we’re spending, you know, all this money; it’s because we have to in order to be able to provide services to Albertans. Again, while I’m grateful that the money is being spent, to sit here and say, “Well, look at us; we’re doing such a great job” – it’s probably because you have to a little bit. That was one of the thoughts I wanted to challenge there.

One of the other things. Obviously, thinking back to when we tore up the contract with doctors, created that strife, created that very confrontational atmosphere: it’s what I like to call a disruptive decision. These disruptive decisions didn’t just stop there. Now, one of the ones that we’ve just recently seen – and we can certainly get into a debate about it at another time around this – is the firing of the entire AHS Board. The reason I’m referencing that – you know, part of my past days, when I was a little bit younger, a little bit fitter, and playing basketball, one of the things that I always noticed: coaches, when they were substituting players, never ever substituted the entire line at once. The reason they did that was because it was too disruptive. You lost that flow. All of a sudden you have five players coming onto the court. They may have been sitting there for a little while; their bodies are cold. They’re not quite as up to speed as the guys that are coming off. What would happen is that you would have a couple of players come into the game, and then after 30 seconds, 45 seconds or so, another stoppage of play, the coach would put in maybe another player and then finally the other two, rotating all five off at that point.



I'm wondering if the Health minister has considered that by the entire board being fired, we might not have created yet another type of disruptive situation here. We know that a couple of the medical health officers have recently resigned. I must admit I am very curious as to what all of a sudden brought that up, that the two of them would resign in the same period of time. I don't know if there's any kind of relation to the firing of the board, but clearly they felt the need, that their place there was no longer viable for them.

When you make these disruptive decisions, it's usually Albertans that end up having to kind of literally pay the price for that. I'm always happy, of course, to hear from the Minister of Health around that. You know, again, I'm genuinely looking for answers here. This is Committee of the Whole, and we get the chance to explore those kinds of things.

I know that throughout trying to be fiscally responsible, one of the things, a decision that was made earlier which the current Health minister decided to reverse – I'm very grateful for that – and I've brought this up on many occasions prior, was around reducing costs for diagnostic imaging. What happened was that there was a call to do that: it's going to save us a bunch of money. It was very, very clear and proven from the physiotherapists and the chiropractic professions that that indeed was not the case; it was costing the province more. It was also costing Albertans not only in money, because if they needed that diagnostic imaging, they either had to go pay for it themselves or they would have to go to their own doctor to get that diagnostic imaging. Then, hopefully, that paperwork was sent back to the chiropractor or the physiotherapist, for instance, and then they'll hopefully get treatment after that. Quite frankly, that was a bunch of red tape, which – again, I'm glad that that has been reversed and Albertans are now getting care much more promptly than what was happening under that.

Again, you know, a bit of a disruptive decision, all trying to find some financial constraints rather than actually consulting with those professions. While I'm definitely going to vote in favour of Bill 4 proceeding, as I said, there were some thoughts that I did want to share with the minister and challenge some things that were said before. My hope is that should cabinet be looking at more kinds of disruptive decisions, perhaps maybe we'll hear the opportunity from folks that actually realize that might be a problem and, hopefully, stop it before it happens, because, as we know, this whole contract tearing-up didn't work out.

I thank the minister for changing that and trying to repair that relationship because we're going to need it going forward. I know you like to mention, you know, that we have more doctors than ever on the list, but there's a difference between having them registered to practise and actually practising. If we actually have more doctors than we've ever had, why are we still experiencing challenges within the system? I can only surmise that we don't have as many actually practising as we have on the list. That's certainly the feedback that I have received.

Appreciate the chance to expand on a couple of the other items that I missed in that first minute and a half that I had at second reading, and I look forward to any further debate here on Bill 4. Perhaps I might even jump up with some more ideas and thoughts.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to add questions or comments to Bill 4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I'm honoured to take my place in this House and speak to a health care bill because, certainly, it's among the list of major issues that Albertans are raising with me and, I'm sure, with all of us. It's certainly reflected in the polling, the current public health care system and how it's

been managed by the current government. So as we consider Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022, I have to say, I do want to say that every Albertan deserves to have the right care in the right place at the right time. While that was consistently our goal while we were in government just a few years ago, although it feels like a lot longer some days, it doesn't seem that that has been the goal of the current government.

9:30

We know how headstrong they were – I was trying to think of something parliamentary to say; I think “headstrong” is parliamentary – in trying to attack and erode public health care, and the way that they dealt with physicians was one key piece among that. And, of course, the relationship with the patient's medical home, with the primary care provider, with the family physician, was incredibly problematic. It included specific incidents, including yelling at doctors in their driveway as well as more general incidents of the type of disrespect that was seen at the bargaining table and through this House, through legislation that was brought in. So it is a significant concern for many Albertans.

I think that the current government could have taken this opportunity through a government bill to bring forward something that would have resulted in improved outcomes for patients, maybe something like what was proposed by a private member, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition, around having specific benchmarks and metrics and guarantees for the people of Alberta in terms of making sure that we are actually making improvements to the health care system. Instead, what we have here is a quite thin bill to undo some of the harm that they brought in in the first place just a couple of years ago. It definitely isn't the kind of sweeping improvement that I think most Albertans would expect, but it is a small bill that does undo a very small piece of the harm that the current government already caused, so I guess with that, I can speak in support and will vote accordingly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to speak to the main bill?

I am prepared to call the question.

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

I see the hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 2 and report Bill 4.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 4. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. 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 Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and to move third reading of Bill 3.

I, first, just want to thank the Member for Highwood, the now Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, and all those who served on the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights and for their recommendations, their various recommendations. This is one of the recommendations, that government proceed with the great work that was done by that committee but as well by the Alberta Law Reform Institute, that recommended in April 2020 that adverse possession be abolished, and as well, Mr. Speaker, some of the work that was done by the Alberta Law Reform Institute and others who had engaged Albertans for many years.

And a shout-out as well to Ken Allred, who previously had proposed abolishing adverse possession in his private member's bill in 2012. It's taken this long, though, for this to get to this point, but thank you to Ken for starting the conversation. He had been a passionate advocate for abolishing adverse possession in his career as land surveyor for, he says, 50 years.

Some of the feedback that was received by Albertans, the concerns that people had with adverse possession: they wanted to abolish it. I'll advise the House through you, Mr. Speaker, that whoever holds title to the land should be entitled to keep it. No one should be able to take land from the person who paid for it. From one respondent who sent in to one survey: adverse possession is theft, and the law should not reward bad behaviour.

We're very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to have now a piece of legislation to amend the Land Titles Act, the Law of Property Act, and the Limitations Act for the practice of adverse possession to be abolished in the province of Alberta.

Thank you to our friends opposite for their broad support of this bill.

With that, I move third reading of Bill 3, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 3 on third reading this evening. Of course, I have always enjoyed the debate whenever it was around the topic of land and property rights in this province, having been a member of the Alberta Real Estate Association for over 30 years in an active real estate career.

Of course, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this issue colloquially called squatter's rights, or adverse possession, has been something that has been discussed in real estate circles since I was a realtor for the first time in 1980, and before then it's been a debated topic. Finally, we're getting around to getting rid of it as a right in Alberta.

It's something we support here on this side of the House, finally abolishing squatter's rights. It was something that was actually a correction to Bill 206, that the UCP brought forward in 2020, which really failed to address many of the concerns that Albertans had been calling for.

We will be watching, Mr. Speaker, for some matters that may not be fully enveloped and encompassed by this legislation, Bill 3. Of course, I'm speaking right now about the effect upon treaty rights that this legislation may have, whether or not the consultation really revolved closely with Indigenous populations to arrive at a spot where they felt that their treaty rights were properly protected under this legislation. We will continue our conversations with the Indigenous leaders to ensure that they see no conflicts in the operation of this bill should it pass this evening or in future sittings of this House.

I also have a concern about the provisions that revolve around compensation for improvements made to the land in question, whereby an individual who had made a claim under adverse possession rules while they were still in force would perhaps be entitled to compensation for improvements on that land and the subject would be coming up between the two parties, the actual owner and the adverse possession claimant, as to what amount of compensation would take place, and there may be a resolution through the courts. But, indeed, if you have a sort of malicious claimant on the one hand versus an owner who supposedly is going to be the beneficiary of the property rights amendment act and not have to suffer losing his land to a claimant, the problem is that we may see individuals who are malicious in their intent taking it upon themselves to drag out this negotiation process in every way, shape, and form.

**9:40**

That, Mr. Speaker, is something that I think we are very, very much going to be paying close attention to because we don't want to have individuals who would still, for all intents and purposes, be making claims or acting as if they still owned the land by exercising court actions and not seeking to resolve the compensation disputes they may have under a former adverse possession claim for improvements they made to land that was not theirs.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We want to avoid any situations like that. So if we see circumstances, Mr. Speaker, where individuals are dragging their feet in finalizing claims with landowners on former adverse possession claims, certainly that is something we'll pay close attention to and seek to find some resolution. After all these many years we do want to be finally done with all the historical claims as soon as possible to provide resolution to the landowners who seek to have nothing but their title to the land, which they should expect to have, having paid for the property.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the underlying concern that I always have with respect to property rights is, of course, the Alberta land titles registration system that we hold so dear in this province, especially those that are practitioners in the industry, whether it be realtors, whether it be property managers, whether it be real estate lawyers, mortgage companies, banks, appraisers, you name it. Anybody in the province relies upon a fully functioning and up-to-date land titles registration system, which, of course, we do not have at this point in time.

We're looking at months rather than weeks for registration time in this province, and that is a very, very large cost to the economy of the province. The fundamental backbone of an economy is the ability to transact in land, and if indeed there is a holdup, a time lag on a registration, it costs money for everybody. There's potentially

interest on the unpaid balance until registration is achieved, if indeed there is a system of insuring the land title. There are costs of insurance that companies and individuals have to undergo. There's anxiety and stress and uncertainty created when a title doesn't transfer in a timely fashion, whether it's a homeowner buying their home for themselves or a condominium for themselves or whether it's a multinational corporation or a large corporate individual, client buying a property to invest in and expand their business.

That uncertainty created by the lack of investment over a long period of time in the land titles infrastructure, computer infrastructure, as well as the recent firing of many of the individuals who worked at land titles and now the rehiring by this government to try to catch up because they created a backlog as a result of that, combine to create an unhealthy delay in the land titles system.

It shakes the confidence of business communities in what has been historically a very, very proud system of land registration. Mr. Speaker, when I began my real estate career in 1985, we were still dealing then with a paper system. You'd go to the Brownlee Building on 97th Street and fill out a three-piece carbon form to order a land title. I think it cost a buck or two then. Now they're up to \$10 or \$12. We did transform into a computer system, but it's still very, very archaic. I think most Albertans would be shocked to know that it's a system that actually shuts down over the weekends and after a certain time at night. Can you imagine, you know, Staples or Costco shutting down their store, their online purchases overnight? It doesn't happen, and it shouldn't happen with the land titles registration system, but it does because the system is archaic. The hardware is in need of updating, we need a revamping of our computer system, and the SPIN 2 system, which is the means by which people search for land titles, is something that is underrated and undervalued and is certainly undermaintained and undermodernized. I would hope to see that rectified in the very near future.

We have, particularly, real estate lawyers and corporate lawyers tearing their hair out because it's taking months for a land title transaction or a registration to happen at land titles. Even though there have been some instruments of title insurance made available, including the western protocol, that lawyers use to close transactions, they're reaching the end of their rope, the end of their capacity to do that. There are some title insurance companies, Mr. Speaker, which are saying: no more; we're not taking on any more because it's become just too much of a burden, too much of a risk.

We're reaching an acute point in the history of our land titles office, and I'm hoping the government is not going to use this critical delay that we're suffering right now – it is largely caused by themselves by getting rid of a lot of the land titles staff and now hiring back, Mr. Speaker – to try to privatize the land titles registration system.

As part of the comment that I have on the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, I suggest that while abolishing squatter's rights is certainly something that has been a long-standing desire of practitioners in the real estate industry and, I think, pretty much everybody because it's an antiquated instrument, there have been other things that we look forward to seeing in the real estate world in Alberta. Of course, one of them is the land titles registration system modernization, that can't come soon enough, along with the Bill 3 changes that will abolish adverse possession.

One of the things that we've seen, whether it be corporate registrations or in residential real estate contracts, is that most of the adverse possession claims or disputes which took place were not necessarily malicious disputes, Mr. Speaker. They happened as a result of an innocent mistake, an unintentional mistake, where somebody built a structure, either a fence or a well or some other building, inadvertently across their own property line onto somebody

else's and then, sometimes years later, discovered that they didn't build it on their own land. It's pretty problematic when that happens. I think anybody who's had personal experience with that would know how much of a quagmire that can be and how much of a stigma it attaches to both pieces of land.

One recent example near the end of my real estate career happened at an acreage property, Mr. Speaker, where a water well appeared on the real property report of a property I had listed for sale. It was in an odd location, quite near the property line of the neighbouring property and far away from the house that I was about to list for sale. I asked the landowner whose listing I was about to take. I said, "Why is that well over there?" And he said, "Well, that's the neighbour's." I said, "That's the neighbour's well, but this is your property line, and that well isn't on your property." He said: "I know. It's just been there for a long time. We just left it there." I said: "Well, you're going to have to deal with that now because you're selling the property, and if indeed you want to sell it, you're going to have to get some kind of agreement entered into with the person who put that well on the property. They're relying on that well for their water for their acreage property, and the prospective buyer and their lawyer are going to have some real issues about liability with respect to that well. You may have some real trouble selling this property." Those are the types of inadvertent errors that had to be dealt with and were sort of lumped in with the more malicious and sort of newsworthy stories of adverse possession.

#### 9:50

These are the lingering compensation matters that I referred to earlier in my remarks. It's very concerning as to how indeed the two parties – the landowner who wishes to sell the property to somebody and the individual who in this case built that well – will come to terms that are mutually agreeable to compensate either the person for the well or perhaps have the individual give up rights to the well. There are a number of ways things like that can be dealt with. You may have a willing party who's co-operative, or you may have somebody who just wants to drag their feet. It could cost that landowner, who is fighting the adverse possession claim or the compensation claim from that individual who had a historic adverse possession claim on that land, a sale and thousands and thousands of dollars as a result.

This is a lingering concern that I have about the bill and the compensation elements of it, and I hope that the government has its eye on that ball as well. We certainly on this side of the House will be watching very closely as to what transpires with respect to these negotiations. If we are seeing a number of claims and disputes that seem to be going unresolved, with incessant malicious behaviour on the part of some claimants trying to extend their compensation to avoid having to do anything at all, then we would like to see that issue addressed in this Legislature.

I think there may be others, Mr. Speaker, who wish to address their concerns and/or make comments with respect to this bill, so I'll take my seat. I'll look forward to those comments.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again, after Committee of the Whole from yesterday, to address Bill 3, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, or what I like to think of as the abolition of adverse possession, which has been something under discussion in this Chamber for a number of years.

I wanted to take an opportunity, actually – there's been a lot of work done on this through the years on both sides of the House, and I wanted to thank everyone who has done so. I think it would be

remiss of us not to mention the Alberta Law Reform Institute, Sandra Petersson and Stella Varvis, who have done some great work on this and made many recommendations through the years for the abolition of adverse possession, that took us a little while to get around to in this House. The Property Rights Advocate has done considerable work on it and has made many recommendations as well, and those recommendations, of course, were brought through the Resource Stewardship Committee, who also made numerous recommendations for us to abolish adverse possession. Finally, I'll end with my colleague from Highwood, who chaired the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights, again with a recommendation for us to finally abolish adverse possession. Surprise that we're getting there.

I mentioned the other night that I was brought into the idea and the whole issue of adverse possession through one of my constituents. I said in my previous speech that it is time now, but it's too late for Jim McIndoe, who is my constituent who brought this to my attention in 2016. He lost about \$140,000 of his suburban property because of a fence in the wrong place next to a neighbour who, as I said before, maybe did not exercise the best good-neighbour policy. When he said that we should rebuild the fence and put it on the right property line, he was served with a claim of adverse possession on that property, which can happen to any of us, because I bet you that there are not a lot of fences in an urban environment that are actually in exactly the right spot. You pull a fence post out and you put a new fence in, and the surveyor is not called in: maybe a reminder to us to check those real property reports, to possibly occasionally get a land surveyor in if you're not sure where those are. Drop those pins back in that maybe have been buried for 30, 40 years, and make sure that you know where your fenceline is.

Also, watch out – and I think it was mentioned by the hon. member opposite – when you're making improvements. Make sure it's on your land. I think we can solve this problem. If you're going to do improvements, make sure it's on your land. Make sure that you've got the real property report and the surveys to prove it before you do those improvements. Yes, there can be some extenuating and some unusual circumstances, but quite frankly, when I see what happened to my constituent Jim McIndoe in that particular circumstance, I'm willing to take the risk that they can sort that out with the improvements done on those lands in an equitable manner.

But the seizure of somebody's land without compensation has got to stop in this province. It's past time to do that, Mr. Speaker. It is time for us to respect the fact that when somebody pays for that land, it is their land, that we should have the property rights that go along with that, and that they cannot have that legally seized without compensation, which is exactly what has been happening with adverse possession for a number of years in this province. We can go through the law books and find some examples of that and some egregious ones, as could be represented in Moore versus McIndoe, in my case, for my constituent.

I know he's going to be happy to hear it, and I hope we can pass this bill tonight here and get this moving forward. Again, too late for him, too late for many others, but let's make sure that this egregious piece of legislation can no longer harm hard-working, law-abiding, landowning citizens in this province.

I'll just say that this is not inadvertent. Some of these are very, very deliberate moves to take somebody else's land, and it's very sad that that happens. We'd like to think that we're pretty good neighbours in this province, but that is not always the case, and unfortunately when there are legal remedies and ramifications of that, that's a problem.

Lastly, as was mentioned by the minister, former MLA Ken Allred, the former MLA for St. Albert, brought a motion forward in 2011, which actually passed in the Legislature but was not enacted. He had private member's Bill 204 in 2012, that died after second reading due to proroguing. I recognize Pat Stier from Livingstone-Macleod, who brought forward also another Bill 204 in 2017. In 2018 I was able to bring forward another Bill 204, and that was sort of punted down the road and pushed back to more research and more study.

Mr. Speaker, it's time. It's past time for some, unfortunately a little late for others, but it's time for us to pass this bill. I would like to thank members on this side, and hopefully we'll have unanimous support for this bill once and for all in this House to protect the property rights of Albertans. I hope we can get to that right away.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in third reading of Bill 3, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. I simply wanted to add my voice to the colleagues across the aisle and here on our side as well. A shout-out to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for his very thoughtful comments. He has a lot of experience with respect to these issues, and I appreciate it very much.

Certainly, I'd also like to share the accolades that many in this House have already given to former MLA Ken Allred. I was actually quite honoured. After I spoke at second reading on this bill last week, Mr. Allred reached out to me and thanked me for my comments, and I had the great opportunity to actually meet Ken Allred in person today at the reception for former and current MLAs. It was a pleasure to meet him, and I want to thank him for his persistence on these issues and for bringing forward his thoughtful submissions to the committee as well.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Alberta Law Reform Institute. As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Justice and Solicitor General under the NDP government had reached out to the Alberta Law Reform Institute for their thoughts and recommendations as to how to implement legislatively changes to remove adverse possession and what the recommendations were on how to do that thoughtfully across pieces of legislation.

Of course, they brought forward a very thoughtful, long – 137 pages, I believe – report as to how to properly, you know, amend legislation in Alberta to really bring us up to speed with where other provinces across Canada have been and ensuring that we have a very clear process for dealing with disputes related to improvements that are made by somebody on land that is not their registered land but, of course, more importantly, to ensure that Albertans can be assured that their rights to their property are undisputed and are not affected by somebody who may have been making use of the land without having the proper right to do so for years at a time.

Removing the limitation period, clarifying the process under section 69 of the Law of Property Act, and, really, just making it very clear, after thoughtful consultation as well with Albertans who have raised this issue for some time, it is a pleasure for us to speak in favour and support the good work that's been done and to thank all those who contributed to making sure that this bill was finally ready.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that I will be supporting Bill 3 in third reading, and I encourage my colleagues to do so as well. Thank you very much.

10:00

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 7

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be here with you this evening and an honour to be with all of the members as well. I rise to move second reading of Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

Just a couple of details for members about Bill 7. It proposes amendments needed as a result of the government reorganization. The good bill amends 97 acts. Ninety-seven, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments fall into three categories. The first category: direct updates to minister or department titles; for example, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General is now updated to Minister of Justice. Second, adding and updating definitions to eliminate the need to refer to specific titles; for example, adding the definition of "Minister" that refers to the minister responsible as per the Government Organization Act. And lastly, and certainly not least, other ad hoc changes directly related to changes in titles and responsibilities; for example, updating wording to eliminate an outdated reference to a minister or department but not substituting an updated title.

We have consulted with the Official Opposition as per custom and therefore recommend that all MLAs in this Chamber swiftly pass second reading of Bill 7.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly is second reading of Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** All right. What an absolute honour to rise and speak to Bill 7, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

**Mr. Schow:** Have you read it?

**Member Irwin:** You know what? Through the chair, I was just asked by the Member for Cardston-Siksika if I had read it. I actually do have it open on my laptop, and I have to say that, yes, this is absolutely a miscellaneous statutes amendment act. That's for sure.

You know, it's hard to follow that commentary on second reading, but what's interesting is that the main reason for Bill 7 is due to the fact that under this new Premier this cabinet is the largest in recent history, with 27 ministers, two Deputy Premiers – wait for it – 11 parliamentary secretaries.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Parliamentary secretaries for everyone.

**Member Irwin:** Exactly.

You know what? This is truly a dramatic expansion of cabinet, you know, and because of that, it's not just a change in title, which you see multiple times throughout Bill 7; it comes with pay increases, budgetary adjustments, staffing changes, cars, legislative assignments. To paraphrase a journalist from the *Calgary Sun*,

Ricky Leong, he said that everyone is a VIP in Smith's government. Unfortunately, there are few that aren't.

**Some Hon. Members:** Name.

**The Speaker:** Oh, that is a name.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, my apologies. Sorry. I was just getting so passionate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would not want to say a name.

The point is that, in all seriousness here, most of this bill, Bill 7, would not be necessary if it weren't for this Premier's bloated cabinet. This government in its reallocation of duties and collective back-patting forgot to assign certain key pieces of legislation to a minister. In fact, we've tried – there were a few times that we were trying to figure out who was responsible for what, and it was awfully, awfully confusing. I'm not sure – I could be wrong – actually, if they're totally certain who's in charge of what, but, again, when you have the largest cabinet in recent history, I can understand that there would be some confusion. Again, not only do they have the largest cabinet in recent history; they failed to do the one key step in assigning all pieces of legislation to a relevant minister. But, you know, a rookie government, a one-time government, I'm sure.

You know what? One of the things that was actually really interesting, because I'm thinking about my colleague for Edmonton-Mill Woods, is the fact that for weeks, which is just one example, there was no minister responsible for the labour code – wow; that's big, right? – or the Occupational Health and Safety Act. [interjections] That's exactly right. Again, you know, that is a bit troubling. It shows a lot about the incompetence of this government, the lack of trust that Albertans have in this government, the same government that we've seen has failed to consult with Albertans multiple times; the sovereignty act, as an example. [interjections] Exactly. I feel like we should all be joining in debate here because we've got a lot of really key points. I'll try to bring them all onto the record here tonight.

But, again, you know, the point of this very thick piece of legislation is, for the most part, just to clean up the mess that this government has made with government organization and to account for the fact that, once again, this is the largest cabinet in history. [interjections] You're right. I mean, along with – what was it again? – 11 parliamentary secretaries . . .

**Ms Renaud:** No francophone one?

**Member Irwin:** You're right, to the Member for St. Albert: 11 parliamentary secretaries but not one for francophone Albertans, who, we know, are key stakeholders in this province and should be acknowledged, two Deputy Premiers – I know I mentioned that earlier but thought I'd get it on the record again – and, of course, 27 ministers.

I could go on at length here, but I think I've made my point quite clear. I can repeat my points again if the House would like that, but I've made my point quite clear that with Bill 7, while we will agree to pass it, much of this bill would not be necessary if it weren't for the incompetence and the fiscal irresponsibility of a government that insisted on having the largest cabinet in recent history.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 7?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate. The hon. the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief in closing debate. Based on the remarks from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, this must be the most controversial miscellaneous statutes amendment act I have ever heard introduced in this Chamber. The reality is that the Premier has done a wonderful job managing this government since she was elected as leader and has chosen a cabinet she feels will take us forward to continue serving Albertans in the best manner possible. [interjections] I'm not sure why the members opposite are heckling, but in any event I will simply close by saying that I reject almost in whole what the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said about this bill. I encourage all members to support it. I suspect, without trying to presuppose the outcome, that they will. I'm not sure how all those comments were necessary, but I appreciate the participation.

With that, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Toor moved, seconded by Ms Lovely, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Dach]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

10:10

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity for me to rise and be able to speak, with a new Speech from the Throne. I was inspired to be able to rise, with the passing of Her late Majesty the Queen recently. Look, even before her passing, for years before her passing, folks throughout the Commonwealth had speculated that perhaps with her passing, if it ever did happen, there might be a growing interest or appetite in republicanism in the Commonwealth. Indeed, we have seen those conversations.

As well, we have seen protests in this province that I saw as alarming, with flags saying, "Republic of Alberta." I think that our friends opposite, I hope, wouldn't consider me to be uncharitable by perhaps describing their interest in the monarchy as one of disinterest. Is that unfair of me to say? I'm looking at my . . .

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah, it is.

**Mr. Shandro:** It is unfair? Okay.

Well, on one side of the political spectrum we're seeing protests and flags saying, "Republic of Alberta." On the other side of the political spectrum we often see folks on the left side of the political spectrum, I would say. Our friends opposite: they're obviously loyal to His Majesty but perhaps not always having the same type of interest in the monarchy that – well, anyways, Mr. Speaker, I thought it was important for us in this Chamber to have a case for constitutional monarchy to continue in this country. I wanted to be able to stand and to make a point that it is important for a system of government to separate the chief of the executive from the head of

state, to separate what Churchill described as "what is permanent from what is temporary."

We're all politicians in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. There are matters which must necessarily be in dispute between parties and factions of politicians. But in the unwritten aspects of our Constitution, which we inherited from the United Kingdom, the wisdom is in placing the supreme position in the state beyond the reach of private ambition. Again, quoting Churchill, perhaps not quoting him but paraphrasing him, he made the case that a constitutional monarchy is the most practical and effective means through which the democracies in the Commonwealth, including a democracy like ours in Canada, can preserve against dictatorship. And why is that? It's because in a constitutional monarchy like ours – this is going to be a quote from Churchill – "no one can presume to set [themselves] up as a national representative against the hereditary rights of the King."

Mr. Speaker, we dwell in our constitutional monarchy more happily, more safely, more prosperously, and more progressively than those who do so in either an oligarchy or a republic. It's because of that that we need to continue to preserve the constitutional monarchy. It's a tradition that we have in Canada. I hope that with the accession of His Majesty we will continue to see support for the monarchy, continue with this tradition.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity for me to speak.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Phil, do we need a motion to adjourn on this matter?

**Mr. Shandro:** You know, Kowalski would never have the table come up to him.

**The Speaker:** Ain't that the truth. He was twice the Speaker I'll ever be.

[Motion carried]

### Government Motions

#### Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

10. Mr. Schow moved on behalf of Ms Smith:  
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any wishing to speak to Government Motion 10?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think a whole lot of work has been done tonight, and I want to thank all members of the Assembly for their diligent participation. At this time I would like to move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, December 14, 2022.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:17 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 14, 2022

Day 10

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture has a visitor today.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a special guest, hon. Laura Ross, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Office for the government of Saskatchewan, who sits in your gallery. I had the privilege of working with the hon. Minister Ross and other ministers across the whole country recently, endorsing the national action plan to end gender-based violence. Earlier today we discussed further actions that Saskatchewan and Alberta can jointly take to advance women's success in our respective provinces. Please extend our warm welcome to our special guest, Minister Ross.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, some of you have expressed some concern around the timing of introduction of visitors or guests. Those are two separate categories inside our Routine. As such, the rules are different.

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, it is my incredible pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two incredible grade 6 classes from Baturyn. There are over 70 guests here joining us today with their teachers and some grown-ups that are here to support them. I please ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the chief government whip has guests.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very excited to introduce East elementary school from Leduc and the classes here today from grades 4 to 6 and their teachers as well. Welcome to the Assembly. Will you all rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you my colleagues from the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We have council chair Dominic Shaw, vice-chair Shino Nakane, and members Earl Thiessen and Katie Suvanto. Please identify yourselves in the gallery and accept the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Are there other guests? The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has risen.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of my constituents from the great riding of Airdrie-East, Mr. Lucas Daley and Mr. Jason Schuler. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has a statement to make.

#### Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the strong economic policies implemented by Alberta's government, our economy is rapidly evolving and diversifying beyond our core industries of agriculture, energy, and forestry. New industries and opportunities are emerging, and rural Alberta deserves a strong plan for economic development that reflects the needs of the people who live and work there.

Over the past year the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation hosted 23 engagement sessions with over 370 rural stakeholders. Using the feedback we received from these engagements, the minister built the economic development in rural Alberta plan. Several themes were brought up that will guide the plan's strategic actions, including critical infrastructure, red tape reduction, workforce strategies, rural investment attraction, tourism, and business supports. Rural Alberta represents 18 per cent of our population while accounting for 41 per cent of Alberta's private and public investment. The significant impact of rural communities in our province means that getting it right is essential, and that is only possible by recognizing the importance of grassroots inclusion in the policy-making process.

Telecommunication networks are vital to attracting rural investment, and strategic direction 1 in the plan will ensure all of Alberta has broadband service availability by 2026, ending the digital divide and enabling rural businesses to compete in an interconnected global economy. The plan will establish new targets for the Alberta agrifood investment and growth strategy, and the plan also encourages continued collaboration with our partners in the nine regional economic development alliances. Each REDA will receive an investment of \$125,000 from the Alberta government in the new year.

Our United Conservative government represents nearly every rural community in Alberta, and we will continue ensuring they have the tools and resources to compete and succeed.

#### Economic Development

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, just the last hour the Leader of the Official Opposition and soon-to-be Premier of Alberta unveiled our new competitiveness jobs and investment strategy. It's a broad-ranging plan that'll create 47,000 new jobs and attract \$20 billion in new investment.

It includes the introduction of a new Alberta's Future tax credit, which will position our great province as a destination of choice for new and emerging sectors, like critical minerals and advanced manufacturing, and strengthen existing sectors, like agriculture, forestry, life sciences, and tourism. We're also introducing a regulatory fast pass, a Nexus-type pass for business that will ensure our upstanding Alberta companies can get their projects approved faster.

We're also supercharging the Alberta petrochemical incentive program, which our government launched and the current government

kept because it's working so well. We'll expand to new areas with this program, including eligible feedstock, new end products, and we'll bring back partial upgrading.

We'll also consult broadly with our Indigenous partners on expanding the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, something we think this government actually got right, but the key is consultation with First Nations, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Oh, and for the record there will absolutely be an Alberta investor tax credit, a digital media tax credit with an NDP government in place. Additionally, we'll introduce an Alberta venture fund, which gives Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard, giving Alberta start-ups and scale-ups a shot in the arm.

Mr. Speaker, these measures are just part of the economic plan we're building at [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca). We're putting rural broadband in every community, expanding affordable child care, supporting postsecondary, and putting a new campus in downtown Calgary. Our postsecondary institutions are major economic drivers that will grow the talent pipeline to help address labour shortages. We're unlocking our potential in hydrogen, geothermal, bitumen beyond combustion, and supercharging Alberta's rural economies. Alberta's NDP opposition is excited for 2023, when we'll implement this plan. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore has the call.

#### Chestermere-Strathmore Constituency Update

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been an honour to serve you in this House as a minister, a private member, and as an opposition member. I'd like to share some of the many accomplishments in the riding of Chestermere-Strathmore and Rocky View and to thank the partners, colleagues, and friends who have worked so hard to see these projects through.

In March the Wheatland County Food Bank was awarded \$300,000, and in May the Carseland fire hall celebrated their grand opening. Changes were made to improve local EMS services, adding paramedic staff and expanding 24-hour service in Chestermere and adding core-flex shifts in Wheatland county to avoid burnout; and multiple playground grants plus stabilization grants during COVID-19 for nonprofits and community organizations. We modernized Indus school, originally built in 1952. Carseland expanded their school and developed Speargrass park. Chestermere recreation fixed their roof, and Springbank recreation upgraded their facility. Bears paw Lions Club enhanced their facility and a new emergency services building, school, and baseball diamonds all in the hamlet of Langdon.

We attracted new businesses, creating thousands of jobs, with state-of-the-art facilities such as Phyto Organix in Strathmore and Canadian Gypsum and De Havilland in Wheatland county. We expanded broadband, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank made a historical \$850 million joint investment with us by increasing irrigation lands to southern Alberta by more than 200,000 acres. This is small by comparison to the thousands of hours spent by folks building our communities, a direct result of the tenacious advocacy and passion in the ridings that I represented.

It has truly been the greatest honour of my life to represent you and work on behalf of the people of Alberta. A huge thank you to our constituency staff, who are on the front lines, and thank you to all of the ministers and the ministries and colleagues of the past eight years. Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, said: I really rebel against the idea that politics has to be a place full of ego where we are constantly focused on scoring points against

each other. Yes, we need a robust democracy, but you can be strong and you can be kind.

Thank you to all of you.

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

#### 1:40 Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville Constituency Update

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Things are really looking up in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Over the past couple of years my constituency has seen billions of dollars' worth of investment, creating good-paying jobs and sustaining our communities. We have some of Alberta's largest and highest profile investments over the past few years, investments like Dow Chemical's \$10 billion net-zero polyethylene and ethylene derivatives facility. Dow also plans a \$298 million expansion to its existing ethylene plant.

My constituency is home to projects like Suncor and ATCO's joint venture to build a hydrogen production facility. There is also Shell Canada's Quest carbon capture and storage facility, which has already captured and stored 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, as well as the Enel Green Power Grizzly Bear Creek wind farm, which will be able to power over 73,000 households, and the ATCO Future Fuel renewable natural gas facility that will produce gas to heat the county of Two Hills. And, of course, Air Products' \$1.6 billion blue hydrogen complex will make Alberta a world leader in hydrogen. Inca is investing \$72 million in a hemp processing facility in Vegreville, making good use of a \$400,000 grant from the government of Alberta. We also partnered to invest in Vegreville's agrifood industrial park project. I'm pleased that Rocky Mountain Hemp has also made my constituency their home.

Alberta's economy is on a roll. We lead the country in job creation, and our economy is rapidly diversifying into new and emerging sectors. We also continue to lead the world in Alberta's traditional sectors of energy and agriculture. This year we have led the country in Q2 interprovincial migration. I know that my constituents are recognizing the low-tax, pro-growth policies of our government. They can see clearly the record investment in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and we have just begun.

#### Chinese Community

**Ms Pancholi:** Alberta is fortunate to have a large and vibrant Chinese community, especially in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Chinese immigrants came to Canada over a century ago to help build the Canadian Pacific railway, which was critical to the development of western Canada. However, these Chinese immigrants were exploited. They were not paid fairly, and they suffered under terrible working conditions. These workers and their families deserve our immense gratitude and our apologies for their treatment.

Today Chinese Albertans are many things, including engineers, physicians, entrepreneurs, front-line health care workers, service industry workers, and so much more. Chinese Canadians have helped build the Alberta we know today and play a key role in shaping Alberta's social, economic, and cultural landscape.

In my conversations with members of the Chinese community they shared with me their vision for a strong, prosperous, and inclusive Alberta. They're worried about the fragile state of our health care system. Students are feeling burdened with increasing tuition costs all while worrying about cuts to seniors' benefits for their grandparents.

Anti-Asian hate, unfortunately, has been on the rise since the pandemic. Surveys indicate that we each have Chinese neighbours, friends, and colleagues who do not feel safe and like they belong.



As leaders this is a problem that we must address. It's why the Alberta NDP's antiracism proposal on [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca) includes strengthening hate crime legislation, developing an antiracism curriculum that teaches about Chinese Albertans, collecting race-based data, and reducing barriers to access support programs.

Pandemic-related increases in business closures, community disorder, and anti-Asian racism have also harmed the historic communities of Chinatown in Edmonton and Calgary. Government must provide funding and support for Chinatown revitalization.

Chinese Albertans want to feel safe. They care about their families, they care about quality health care, they worry about having a strong education and postsecondary system, and, of course, they want a stable economy. I'm looking forward to our continued engagement with Chinese Albertans as we work together to build a better future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With my history of working in residential construction, it is perhaps no surprise that I consider housing as a vital pillar of the Alberta advantage. Housing ranks as the second-largest expense off the paycheques of most Albertans, with 30 per cent of the income being a benchmark for affordability.

We speak often of the importance of affordable housing and the protection of the most vulnerable, and I am grateful for the recent allocation of \$55 million by our government in support of this sector. However, we must put a renewed focus on housing affordability writ large with particular attention to workforce housing for low- to middle-income households, who, quite frankly, rarely get the hand up that they need to achieve housing stability at various stages of their lives. The challenges we face in a growing economy range from ensuring a steady, predictable, and balanced land supply to the ever-escalating burden on renters and buyers of a multitude of municipal and other jurisdictional fees, taxes, and levies which always – and I repeat: always – get passed on to the tenant or owner.

Mr. Speaker, through a deeper understanding of the housing continuum it is now time for us to focus not only on housing affordability but choice and suitability and meeting the needs of Albertans but also to consider we can move towards empowering all Albertans to aspire to a dream home at each stage of life, whether that be the comfort of a safe, warm, and welcoming roof over their heads, their first studio or one-bedroom apartment, urban or suburban condo or townhome, or that single-family home with a swing set in the backyard, not to mention the perfect downsizer for the retiring Albertan looking to free up equity to live a better active ager life.

The choices of housing tenure range from social or subsidized rental, near or near market rental, rent to own or shared equity through to attainable, assisted, or market ownership or even the demographic shift from many retirees moving back through the continuum. It is now time for a deliberate drive towards more innovative housing models with nimble and comprehensive plans to protect our people, our economy, and to nurture the dreams and ambitions of Albertans for generations to come.

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

### NDP Government Record

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The UCP have been cleaning up the mess the NDP made during their time in government. I'm not sure the NDP leader even likes Albertans as she has called us: embarrassing cousins. Those her party disagrees with, they call

sewer rats. Her solution to high energy costs, which she herself caused with the carbon tax, is to, quote, take the bus. I'm sure that goes over big where no bus service exists. The NDP showed a lack of support for parental choice in education and want extremist groups like Extinction Rebellion in the classroom. Their disastrous health policies drove up wait times and created backlogs for surgeries, putting our system in a constant state of disarray even before a pandemic.

Rather than supporting treatment for people afflicted with addiction, they choose supervised injection sites as the main course of action. They even defended the misuse of funds at one location. Under the NDP these sites were clustered together in areas where a particular group of people had to deal with all of the crime and disorder, unfairly.

The NDP leader constantly sided with the Trudeau government with his hostility towards Alberta. She helped Trudeau cancel the Northern Gateway and Energy East pipelines and did not support the Keystone XL. Now they expect Albertans to believe they are for the economy after driving out 180,000 jobs and over \$100 billion in investment. A former NDP minister once told Albertans to go to B.C. and find work.

Mr. Speaker, our UCP government has attracted the largest investments Alberta has ever seen. We're putting more money into both health care and education than at any other time in Alberta history. Our recovery program for addiction is becoming famous for its success in helping those suffering from addiction.

We are seeing massive levels of economic diversification, including in financial services, high tech, film and television, hydrogen, agriculture, irrigation, and more. The contrast is stark, Mr. Speaker. In May Albertans can choose to go back to the dark days of the NDP or choose to support our UCP government building a better economy, health care, and quality of life.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 206, Insurance (Private Essential Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022. The bill will be sponsored by yours truly, the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

### Health Care System

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans need the right health care in the right place at the right time, but today Albertans are waiting longer than ever. They're waiting in overwhelmed emergency rooms, sitting next to their sick children. They're waiting for an ambulance to arrive, unsure if one is even on the way. They're waiting for a family doctor to move back to Alberta because they already watched them move away once.

Bill 201 would have set standards in health care. It would have included standards for shorter wait times. Instead of passing it, why did the Premier choose to leave Albertans waiting yet again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

1:50

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the members opposite are forgetting that there are multiple parts of their bill, and they put one part of their bill that would have shut down publicly

funded chartered surgical centres, which are now performing 20 per cent of all publicly funded surgeries in our province. If we had voted to endorse that, we actually would have reduced the capacity for our ability to cut surgical wait times rather than increased it. I have no problem supporting measures on EMS, on surgical wait times, and on operating rooms, and we're going to continue to work on that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Under this Premier sick children are waiting for health care in a trailer outside of their hospital. Mr. Speaker, the health care system is in chaos, and front-line health care workers are exhausted. Since the UCP formed government, the number of health care workers quitting has gone up. Workers are now more than twice as likely to quit within their first year. More staff are working overtime. More staff are getting sick, and staff vacancies are through the roof. The representatives of more than 120,000 front-line health care workers asked for a meeting with the Minister of Health months ago to address this crisis. To the Premier: since your minister refuses to meet, will you?

**Ms Smith:** Yes, I'd be happy to. In fact, before we announced that Dr. John Cowell was taking over as the official administrator, we made sure to have one-on-one calls with the head of the HSAA, with the head of AUPE, and with the nurses' union so that they understood that as we're making decisions, we would need their help and support in making sure that we got it right and that if there were any issues along the way, we could troubleshoot them so that we could make course corrections as we go along. That relationship is working very well. We're going to continue to work together to make sure that we're addressing the front-line issues, and I have asked as well, as part of our measures, to make sure that we're measuring measures of workplace satisfaction.

**Ms Hoffman:** Calling Heather Smith to tell her you're firing the board is not working with her in a meeting, like she's requested, to address the health care worker crisis, Premier.

The Premier claims that the front-line staff crisis is manufactured and that health care staffing is their creation, the issue that they're facing. But the truth is much more simple, Mr. Speaker. The UCP's bad decisions and their repeated attacks on health care workers have caused chaos. Alberta needs more health care workers, including nurses, at the front lines, and that includes Alberta trainers. To the Premier: instead of jacking up tuition on University of Calgary nursing students 8 per cent this year and 10 per cent last year, will you reverse it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS had made a decision to bar unvaccinated workers from being able to work in the system, which was a decision we reversed – which is a decision we reversed. When I mentioned that that was creating unnecessary shortages, that's what I was referring to. I'm pleased to see that everybody has been invited back in to the system. That allows for us to increase capacity on the front line. That's the important part, that we've got to create a welcoming environment for workers from around the country and around the world to come to this province, and that's what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the second set of questions.

**Ms Hoffman:** And the Premier is hiking up tuition for nursing students at the University of Calgary.

## Affordability Plan

**Ms Hoffman:** Speaking of affordability, let's talk about the UCP's plan for inflation. The package put forward by the UCP government deliberately excludes more than 2 million Albertans. That's 2 million people who are stressed, who could use some relief, but they'll not be getting a single bit of help from the UCP. Mr. Speaker, those same nursing students who are seeing their tuition go up, unless they have children, won't get a dime from the UCP. Why isn't the UCP giving a penny to postsecondary students in need?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as we have seen issues identified where we have additional pressure points like postsecondary, like student loan costs, like tuition, I've asked our Affordability and Utilities minister to take a closer look at it. We have only come forward with an initial package on affordability, and we intend to develop more initiatives, so we will certainly have a look at that one. But this is just the beginning. We also have support for all Albertans through gasoline and diesel tax rebates, through electricity rebates, and through price protection on natural gas. That's going to help everybody.

**Ms Hoffman:** Among those 2 million, how about Rick, Mr. Speaker? Rick is in his forties. He doesn't have kids. He doesn't drive. He works hard just to pay his rent, buy a bus pass, and put groceries on the table. He's feeling the impact of a 40-year-high inflation hike, just like everyone else. To the Premier: why isn't Rick getting a dime in Bill 2? Why did the UCP leave half of Albertans empty handed?

**Ms Smith:** You know, if the members opposite were so concerned about the cost of everything going up, I don't know why they didn't call out their federal leader, Jagmeet Singh, when he signed on to a 300 per cent increase in the carbon tax, which increases the cost of everything; in particular, groceries, the price that we're paying at the pump. If you increase the cost of the fuel tax, it's going to be built into everything that we're paying for. I would think that they would have more credibility on this issue if they advocated at the federal level, as we have, for suspension of that carbon tax rather than asking for it to be increased threefold. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, it'd be one thing if these cheques were actually arriving with some urgency, but instead the UCP government is making families jump through hoops to apply. This means hundreds of thousands of Albertans logging on to a government website, hoping it doesn't crash, and in the past that hasn't worked out so well. Why do corporations get a no-jobs corporate handout of \$4.7 billion, no strings attached, while families have to deal with red tape just to maybe, hopefully, a few months before the election, get a little bit of relief?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I think we saw from the federal program for CERB that the portal access actually works very well, and we have the expertise that we're developing at the provincial level to use our provincial portals for the same thing. I'm looking forward to working with the Minister of Technology and Innovation and watching what he develops with the Minister of Affordability and Utilities. That's the approach we're going to take, and as we start developing this expertise, we'll be able to apply it to more things. This is the important part of us being able to do these programs, being able to have the flexibility to provide the support when it's needed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has a question.

### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, in 2017 the NDP government responded to the needs of Edmontonians by announcing the creation of a new south Edmonton hospital to meet the needs of a growing city. It's also clear that, with our health care under so much stress, this hospital would be critical. However, despite the clear need, the UCP government has delayed this project time and time again. Even yesterday the Infrastructure minister couldn't answer simple questions about the hospital, questions like: when will the project start? How long will it take? And what will it cost? Since the Infrastructure minister doesn't know, maybe the Premier can answer. What year will the south Edmonton hospital open?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to answer this question. Of course, the NDP, as is their wont – and now it's a huge spending with no plan. We have gone back to do a functional development so we know what we're building. We have to know what we want to solve. We have to know what we want to treat before we can build that. Unlike the NDP, we're doing the work first to create a functional plan so we know what to build. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member Loyola:** Every day in this House the Premier and the Health minister talk about how focused they are on building capacity in health care, capacity that a south Edmonton hospital would provide. Our government would have opened it by 2026. The Kenney government delayed it to 2030. And now this government has taken the start date off the website, leaving many Albertans worried that this project is about to be cancelled. Can the Premier confirm, with a yes or a no, whether the south Edmonton hospital is still going to be built, and on what date will construction formally start?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2022-2025 capital plan is providing \$370 million over three years for this project. We continue to build a plan so we know what service we are providing. Without that plan we can build a huge building, but to serve what? We need a plan first. Once we have that, we'll move ahead. We will start the building. We are committing to all Albertans and all Edmontonians to do this right by planning first. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Member Loyola:** In addition to the long delays the UCP have subjected to this project, they also plan to return to the failed model of P3s to build it. We know that the P3 model doesn't make sense. In fact, that was a direct quote from former Conservative Infrastructure minister Wayne Drysdale when he shut down the approach for building schools in 2014 since it increased costs and caused huge delays. Can the Premier tell us why her government continues to use this broken model to build schools and hospitals? Is she really going to make the same mistakes of the past and harm the health care and education provided to Albertans in the process?  
2:00

**Mr. Neudorf:** In fact, I would ask the member opposite to do his homework. The last bundle of schools I actually took apart, I took them out of a P3. We're going to a direct design/bid/build process.

We will however continue to use P3s, public-private partnerships, where they're warranted, where they make business sense, where they save Albertans money, and where they will serve the needs of that project on a case-by-case basis best. Again, we are doing the work behind the scenes that the former government failed to do. They didn't do their homework. They didn't build a plan. They don't understand contracts. We're doing all that work for Albertans to save them money. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is next.

### Alberta Sovereignty Act and Indigenous Rights

**Mr. Feehan:** Yesterday in question period, while defending her complete failure to consult with Indigenous people regarding the sovereignty act, the Premier ignorantly compared First Nations' struggles against oppression and their fight for their rights to her government's bloated feud with Ottawa: "They have fought a battle over the last number of years to get sovereignty respected and to extract themselves from the paternalistic Indian Act. We get treated the exact same way by Ottawa." Does the Premier understand the harm her comments create when she minimizes the abuse of First Nations that they have faced throughout Canada's history and that they're still fighting now?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, that was certainly not the intention of my comments, and if it was taken that way, I absolutely apologize for that . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** My intention was to demonstrate that the process that our First Nations have gone through to develop sovereignty over their own affairs and extract themselves from the Indian Act is the process that we are following in going through and asserting our rights under the Constitution. I take inspiration from what the First Nations have done, and I'm looking forward to continue engaging and consulting with them.

**Mr. Feehan:** Indigenous people within Alberta and across the province have faced genocide through abuse in residential schools, the pass system, the '60s scoop, and countless community members who are murdered and missing. Indigenous people are still tirelessly fighting so that their culture, language, and existence remain. To compare her fights with Ottawa over issues like fertilizer policy is a complete failure of understanding of the atrocities Indigenous people have suffered. A simple question: will the Premier apologize for this comment?

**Ms Smith:** As I said, if my comments were misconstrued, I absolutely apologize for it. My intention was to demonstrate that we have a common problem with Ottawa. Ottawa, I think, unfortunately, treats First Nations with disrespect, and they also treat provinces with disrespect. What we need to do is to go back to the original intention of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and make sure that Ottawa is respecting both First Nations sovereignty rights as well as our rights under the Constitution.

**Mr. Feehan:** Just hours ago Treaty 6 chiefs stated:

It was clear from our discussions that Premier Smith does not understand Treaty or our inherent rights nor does she respect them . . . The Premier will not dictate how we will be consulted – we point her once again to the duty to consult to learn more about how to engage and work with us appropriately.

To the Premier. The sovereignty act is another bill forced on First Nations without consultation that is attacking their sovereignty and their inherent and treaty rights. What will it take for her to listen, apologize, and withdraw Bill 1?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we won't be withdrawing Bill 1. I am speaking regularly with the chiefs to point them to section 2(c) of the act that we've put forward, that expressly states that nothing in the act is going to impact their treaty or Aboriginal rights. That is what section 35 is all about. I respect the Charter. I respect the Constitution. I respect that we have a nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations, and I'm looking forward to identifying those areas that we can work with in partnership. Every time I speak with a new nation, I identify areas that we can work with together. I'm looking forward to doing that more. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Record levels of interprovincial migration, a balanced budget, skyrocketing levels of venture capital investment: it's all great news for Alberta. It means our province is a magnet for ambitious Canadians. It has an optimistic future and more minds and money to drive innovation. Every Albertan and member of our Legislature should take pride in the last few years of economic reinvigoration. However, some regions of our province have yet to reach their full economic potential. To the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation: how is Alberta's government ensuring our province's economic prosperity benefits rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I was happy and pleased today to be joined by the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development, representation from one of Alberta's regional economic development alliances, and the presidents of both RMA and Alberta Municipalities to announce a new five-year economic development in rural Alberta plan. The plan provides a co-ordinated and strategic approach to support economic growth and create jobs in rural Alberta. The plan outlines clear priorities to achieve maximum benefit for rural communities as Alberta's economy grows. I think this is important to everyone in this House, because when rural Alberta thrives, all of Alberta thrives.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that centralized planning is the worst approach to governance and fails the needs of rural businesses, Indigenous communities, and small towns and given that the new two solitudes in Canada is the rural-urban divide, which means that city bureaucrats are necessarily urban biased and unconscious of those outside of their immediate circle, and given the importance of including the input of people impacted by government policies, to the same minister: how were rural businesses and communities included in the drafting of the economic development in rural Alberta plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it was very important to us to make sure that this consultation was very thorough. We all saw what's happened when you don't consult rural Alberta, like in the Bill 6 circumstance. I'd say that over the last 18 months we had

23 virtual engagement sessions with over 370 rural Alberta businesses and communities, collected over 3,500 individual comments and thoughts, had an online survey with over a thousand responses. This included ag producers, municipalities, economic development agencies, the Indigenous community, postsecs, not-for-profits. We tried to make it as thorough as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that good work. Given the extensive level of consultation that went into ensuring that the economic development in rural Alberta plan addresses the concerns of small rural businesses and not urban bureaucrats and given that Alberta's government includes a caucus, cabinet, and Premier with deep personal understandings of life in rural communities and given that Alberta's low taxes, budget surpluses, and educated workforce mean that our province is once again open for business, again to the minister: what initiatives does the economic development in rural Alberta plan support to drive investment and diversification in rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The plan supports these ongoing initiatives, these important initiatives: the investment and growth fund's rural stream, Alberta's broadband strategy, Travel Alberta's rural tourism initiatives, the forest jobs action plan, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, just to name a few. Also, to make it clear, there are five strategic directions: economic development enabling infrastructure, rural business supports and entrepreneurship, skills development, promotion and marketing of rural tourism, and rural economic development capacity building.

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

### Edmonton Downtown Revitalization

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton's downtown needs help as businesses and communities struggle to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, which saw thousands of workers leave their offices here while the number of our friends and neighbours living houseless doubled and social disorder increased. Business and community leaders have stepped up to advocate. The city of Edmonton has been taking action, but for too long they've lacked provincial support. To begin in March of this year, the government committed \$5 million to help with downtown revitalization, but 10 months later, despite a \$13 billion surplus, it is yet to be paid. To the Minister of Finance: when will you release the \$5 million you promised?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we're working with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, we're working with all Alberta municipalities on revitalizing our economies, both locally and right across the province. The best thing we can do as a government is ensure that we have the most competitive business environment possible, that will attract investment, create opportunities. Our plan is working.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that business and community leaders in our downtown have spent years struggling to get the attention of this government – but that's been a challenge as they've been mired in their own internal drama and multiple cabinet shuffles, leaving conversations and consultations on hold or forced to restart – and given, indeed, that this government has yet to even release the report from the Edmonton Metro Region Economic Recovery Working Group and given that the UCP has now simply struck yet

another task force, one with no representation from our businesses or communities or any consultation with council, why doesn't this government simply step up and act now on recommendations already out from their own working group, city council, the Downtown Recovery Coalition, so many others?

**2:10**

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is on fire. We created almost 25 per cent of the jobs for the entire country over the last year. But let's talk about downtowns. Let's talk about plans. This is an NDP plan. Like all their plans, it's a plan to ask other people to come forward with a plan. That's not a plan. We have a plan to create jobs and to create wealth for Albertans, and that plan is working.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government continues to rail against Ottawa, complaining of heavy-handed paternalism, a lack of consultation, a failure to understand the unique culture of their province but given that their new task force doesn't include anyone who lives or operates a business in our downtown or anyone with lived experience – instead, we have a collection of newly minted Calgary ministers, two suburban councillors who don't actually represent council, and a handful of bureaucrats – and given that the Municipal Affairs minister claimed she wants to work with all stakeholders on this, will this government recognize its own hypocrisy and add someone who actually lives in and loves this community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have brought together key cabinet ministers, emergency responders, first responders, city officials, Indigenous leaders, and health system experts to quickly implement over \$63 million worth of initiatives in Edmonton. Our task force does include two Edmonton city councillors. We have also invited . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The hon. the minister has the call.

**Mr. Milliken:** We have also invited the city manager as well as the Edmonton fire chief, and we hope that they will be allowed to come. I would ask that Mayor Sohi and the rest of the individuals on that side of the House stop playing politics and get to work with the rest of us. [interjections]

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

### Mental Health and Addiction Services

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, a recent Canadian Mental Health Association report, from October, found that Albertans, more than those in any other province, are feeling stressed, angry, lonely, and depressed. We know that the pandemic has had a massive impact on the health of Albertans, which is why our caucus has proposed giving Albertans five free counselling sessions to ensure that they're able to better care for their mental health. Why hasn't the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction supported our simple policy, that could help so many?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we have been actively working with regard to the general mental health of individuals in Alberta. Our government was elected to increase access for Albertans and ensure that every Albertan has the opportunity to pursue recovery from their mental health challenges. That's why we've

invested over \$58 million for mental health and addiction in response to the pandemic, including \$25 million for community-based organizations. This is on top of the more than a billion dollars that we spend every year on mental health and addiction care and services. We are committed to supporting Albertans in their active recovery and moving forward with treatment.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that despite the claims of the UCP that they are supporting recovery, they continue to put up barriers to people struggling with addictions, given that this government made it impossible for those seeking pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs to access these from their primary care providers and instead forces them to go to AHS facilities, which for many is time-consuming or even impossible for those living in rural areas, and given that this could force people back to the streets and result in more overdoses, why won't the minister reverse this decision and ensure that there are no barriers to those seeking to overcome their addictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The evidence is clear. When high-risk opioid narcotics are widely available, many are traded or illegally sold, and addiction and overdose rates increase. That's why we have taken steps to protect Albertans and their communities from high-risk opioid narcotics while still providing care to those who need it. We will continue to support Albertans in their pursuit of recovery. When it comes to reducing barriers, it's us who got rid of user fees. Under them, even if they were accessing publicly funded recovery services, often individuals had to pay \$40 a day, something addicts likely will not have. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the recovery system only works if vulnerable Albertans awaiting treatment services don't die while waiting and given that while this government brags about the treatment beds they've created, I hear from front-line workers that they are unable to access beds to support their clients, why is the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction putting up barriers for those seeking treatment? How many lives will these decisions negatively impact? How many lives will be lost?

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are proud of the work that we are doing on this file. We have gone from looking to increase funding for spaces for 4,000 – we actually did 8,000, so it's 19,000 now to 27,000. In fact, it was the NDP who left beds unfunded. What happened from that? By leaving treatment beds unfunded, the NDP forced a backup into detox, into shelters, thereby onto the streets and into tents. Essentially, the policies of the NDP with regard to this file leave communities in crisis. We've seen it in L.A., we see it in the downtown east side of Vancouver, we've seen it across the west coast. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Calgary Ring Road Completion

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest Calgary ring road project is a huge win for Calgary and Alberta. The truth is that we can no longer run our north-south trade route through the middle of our city. It has benefits for those in my constituency, who no longer are limited to one way in or out of our neighbourhoods. Today a trip to West Hills

takes seven minutes compared to the previous 25 minutes. We're now looking forward to the west leg being completed, which will allow us to get to WinSport in 15 minutes. To the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: when can we see the entirety of the southwest Calgary ring road, including the west leg, open for traffic?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The construction of the final three phases of the west Calgary ring road will be completed in 2024. That's totalling five new kilometres of road, five kilometres of upgrade to the Trans-Canada highway, and six new interchanges. But under NDP social procurement policies that give control to big union bosses, provincial construction projects like the west Calgary ring road would have seen huge delays and cost overruns, but the NDP already did a pilot in Alberta, so they know this. It failed. But Gil McGowan must be pretty persistent when he's not accosting accredited members of the legislative press gallery.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that traffic on the ring road is growing every day as we see the project near the finish line and given that more traffic often means more noise from the roadway and given that my constituency borders the ever-growing traffic on the southwest Calgary ring road, what is the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors doing to ensure that the noise from the ring road does not spill over into the communities that I represent?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has been a champion for neighbourhoods in her constituency like Cedarbrae and Woodbine, but we are planning to build a sound wall in Budget 2023. Hopefully, the NDP will support it, but I wouldn't be too optimistic about the NDP voting in favour of the budget, especially when it supports Calgary, because everybody knows that the NDP cares more about their big union bosses and Gil McGowan than Alberta families and Alberta workers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that noise attenuation would be a significant relief for the communities that I represent and given that my constituents and I are advocating for the noise from the southwest ring road to be addressed before it further impacts our quality of life and given that this has been an issue for quite some time now, to the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: when can we expect to see shovels in the ground and the overdue noise attenuation built?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, hopefully, we'll see shovels in the ground this spring in Calgary-Glenmore to mitigate this traffic noise.

But there's been a lot of noise from what the NDP just did in B.C. The NDP kicked out Indigenous workers who were building the Cowichan district hospital just because they didn't hold the right NDP-approved union membership. NDP union wars are shameful. They do not belong in Alberta, and I wonder if the NDP MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford mentions to chiefs in Alberta how the NDP puts union politics over Indigenous rights.

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

### Municipal Property Taxes in Mountain Communities

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The town of Banff is looking at a potential 10.2 per cent increase in taxes. The town of Canmore is looking at a 12.3 per cent jump. These increases can be tracked back to the actions and decisions of this UCP government and the Finance minister. Canmore Mayor Sean Krausert stated publicly, and I quote: Canmore, like all municipalities, has suffered from provincial downloading in one form or another. End quote. What will it take the Finance minister to stop hammering Alberta mountain communities with higher costs and higher taxes?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're working with all municipalities to ensure that Alberta is not only prosperous today but prosperous tomorrow. We inherited a fiscal train wreck from the members opposite: spending completely out of control, \$10 billion higher than comparator provinces on a per capita basis. We brought responsible fiscal management, at the same time positioned Alberta's economy for competitiveness, investment attraction, and growth. We're leading the nation in investment attraction.

**Ms Sweet:** Given the fact that passing the expectation on to municipalities and saying that they're overspending when their budgets have been cut by the provincial government is just another example of this minister bucking all of his actions and expecting Albertans to just accept it and given that Banff and Canmore are discussing adding a specific line about the cost of provincial downloading on to their provincial tax bills and given that on top of piling on taxes to residents, the UCP has also repeatedly moved to silence the voices of local leaders and strip away their powers, is the minister trying to suffocate municipalities in order to cover up their hiking costs on every Albertan?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, that's a ridiculous question. We're making key strategic infrastructure investments right across the province. During the difficult days of COVID and the energy price crash we increased our capital spending envelope to municipalities so they could build critical infrastructure and, more importantly, put tens of thousands of Albertans to work. We're bringing responsible fiscal management, management that ensures sustainable programming – sustainable programming – for Albertans in the future.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the councillor for Canmore said what we're all thinking – the province has a \$15 billion surplus, yet they're forced to increase their taxes – and given that Albertans are facing an affordability crisis not seen in a lifetime and given that our mountain communities already face additional costs that aren't funded due to an influx of tourists using municipal infrastructure, can the minister explain to the UCP MLA for Banff-Kananaskis why this government clearly doesn't care about her constituents?

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, that's a ridiculous question. It's due to our responsible fiscal management that Alberta was able to deliver the largest affordability package of any province in the country, \$2.8 billion over three years. We made key investments in the Nordic ski area in the Banff-Kananaskis region. We will continue to bring responsible fiscal management so we can build key infrastructure for Albertans in the future.

### Nonprofit Organization Funding

**Ms Goehring:** While no industry emerged unscathed, nonprofits were particularly underresourced throughout the pandemic. Now, as the sector begins to recover, nonprofits continue to struggle. Nonprofits fill critical needs, employ nearly 300,000 Albertans, contribute \$5.5 billion to the economy and another \$5 billion in volunteer labour. Analysis by the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations shows instability. Many Alberta nonprofits are in crisis. They are calling for an urgent, one-time injection of \$30 million, only .2 per cent of the government surplus, in immediate aid. Will the minister rise in this House and commit to the more than reasonable request?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to that member for the question and her concern for the not-for-profit sector. I do share that concern, and it's why I was so happy to see our Premier put that into my mandate letter, to make sure that we're looking at addressing wage challenges for our social sector, make sure that we are helping our social sector to be able to get through this. We rely on our not-for-profits, especially during hard times. I will continue to work with our not-for-profit leaders, with my colleague the Minister of Culture to make sure that we're supporting not-for-profits and working with them.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that many organizations are facing higher demand, 74 per cent reporting an increase in need and lack of supports for programs with complex needs, and given that 41 per cent identified significant reduction of capacity to provide services and given that the current affordability crisis has major impacts for this sector, with 88 per cent citing inflation as a massive concern, forcing downsizing and layoffs, while funding agreements are not keeping pace with population growth and inflation, with a \$13 billion surplus and not-for-profits crying out for help before they cease to exist altogether, is providing some emergency funding really too much to ask?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the hon. member continuing to raise this question. I echo with my colleague the minister of housing and social services: we are on top of this, not only his ministry but mine. With the Ministry of Culture last year we increased \$20 million for the community facility enhancement program. We're on top of this, helping Albertans recover.

**Ms Goehring:** Unfortunately, it seems that this government doesn't actually listen to the experts in this sector, who serve important roles in their very own backyards. Given that government private member's Bill 202 is only beneficial to charitable organizations and given that the majority of nonprofits do not have charitable status to accept donations and issue tax receipts and given that this is a poor measure to compensate for grant funding not keeping up with inflation, will the minister take the experts seriously, listen to their concerns, and move forward with their incredibly reasonable asks?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for her question, her advocacy. I'm actually glad that she brought up the hon. Member for Peace River's bill, Bill 202, because I know that that will have a significant impact for not-for-profits. It'll give our community, it'll give Albertans a meaningful way to be able to engage in the solutions. At the end of the day,

that's a big part of what we need here. We need to make sure that all Albertans are involved with it, so I thank that hon. member for bringing that forward. We are taking real action, though, and one of the most recent things we've done is that we actually put \$20 million into food banks to help address some of these issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

### Provincial Debt and Fiscal Policies

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be part of this government that has held the line on spending, in line with other provinces. This has allowed our government to fully benefit from the recent surge in energy prices, which has given us the largest surplus in Alberta's history, a projected \$12.3 billion for the 2022-23 fiscal year. To the Minister of Finance: how does our spending record compare to the NDP on sustainable recovery spending increases?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. I've mentioned more than once in this House that our government inherited a fiscal train wreck from the NDP. We were spending over \$10 billion more than comparator provinces on a per capita basis. I'm pleased to say that we've brought our spending under control. We're now comparable on a per capita basis with other provinces. More than that, our revenues are going up because of higher energy prices and higher tax revenues due to a booming economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer from the minister. Given the fiscal restraint that has allowed government to fully benefit from the recent boom in energy prices and to attain the largest surplus in the province's history, the government has been able to use the surplus to make the largest debt repayment in Alberta history, a startling \$13.4 billion. Again to the minister: how much of the annual interest payments has this debt repayment allowed Alberta to save by not having to raise tax and pass on additional debt to our children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Our government continues to build a prosperous economic future for all Albertans, and paying down debt is a key priority. We are paying down \$13.4 billion in debt this year, debt that is maturing this year. If we had to go to capital markets today, with increased cost of capital, increased interest rates we would be paying about \$600 million more per year in debt-service costs if we had not paid off the \$13.4 billion. Fiscal responsibility matters.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** That's impressive. Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thank you again to the minister. Given that the fiscal restraint shown by this UCP government over the lack of restraint of the previous NDP government is crystal clear with their figures, can the Minister of Finance share with this House how important this saving is for the Alberta government to be able to provide significant financial relief to Albertans during this inflationary crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are in an inflationary time, and that's putting pressure on all Alberta households. Responsible fiscal management and a growing economy have allowed, again, this government to respond to this crisis, this challenge with the most programming of any province across the country: \$2.8 billion of relief both in tax reductions and direct support. Again, we will continue to bring responsible fiscal management to the province so that governments in the future can respond appropriately to challenges.

### 2:30 Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Yesterday the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and I sent a letter to the presidents of postsecondary institutions inviting proposals for a new downtown Calgary campus. Calgary's downtown vacancy rate is still at about 30 per cent. Mr. Speaker, downtown campuses are awesome. They spur, on the average, the creation of more start-ups, more licensing deals, more inventions, and more investment in the downtown. This is a plan that would support downtown Calgary, postsecondary institutions, and Calgary in general. Will the Advanced Education minister rise and endorse this vital project that we're proposing?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to chat with the member and get a better understanding. You know, I watched the press conference, and I left scratching my head. I didn't hear details about a budget. I didn't hear any details about timelines. I think my colleague mentioned it earlier: it seemed as though it was a plan to develop a plan. I'm not sure I can stand and get behind it without any real details, but I'd love to find out more as to what they have in store, because from the press conference it was clear that this was just scribbled together on the back of a cocktail napkin on their way down to Edmonton. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly lend the Advanced Education minister a hand if that's what he wants.

Given that the UCP is still imposing additional, unnecessary billions of dollars of debt on Albertans pursuing postsecondary through unprecedented funding cuts and skyrocketing tuition and given that this means that students are requiring loans and have to take on a significantly larger burden and given as well that the government hasn't even included the majority of students in their inflation relief legislation, why is the Minister of Advanced Education doing nothing to help students with the cost of living? Please answer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per the mandate letter from the Premier, of course, the Premier has asked for us to take a look as it relates to affordability, and I know that that's a consistent theme across all ministries. My team and I are speaking very closely with student leaders to get a better understanding of some of their challenges and get a better understanding as to whether the government may be able to provide assistance to work with students. So we're looking at those options, and we'll bring forward some thoughtful plans in the future.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government's inflation act missed more than 2 million Albertans, including almost all of the postsecondary students in this province, and given as well that the Alberta New Democrats do have a plan for capping

postsecondary tuition increases, ending the UCP surcharge on student loans, bringing students and research into the downtown core, ensuring stable, predictable funding for institutions, making postsecondary career training more accessible, and so, so much more, my last question is simple. Does the minister want my help so that we can put together what's best for students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans are struggling under high inflation and the related escalated cost of living, and that includes our students. We've been meeting together and discussing options to support them as we move forward, and that's exactly what we'll do. Right now they're benefiting from cheaper fuel to get to and from school. They're benefiting from lower electricity prices and natural gas price protection, and students will benefit from the targeted relief that our government is releasing early next year.

### Racism Prevention

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a rich province, rich in diversity and multiculturalism, but racism continues to find a home on our streets, in our schools, workplaces, in our media, and in this very building. It is the duty of every Albertan, especially those in positions of power, to stamp out racism in all its forms. To do otherwise is morally bankrupt. Can the minister of multiculturalism explain what tangible action this government is taking to address racism in Alberta? Please be specific. Albertans are looking to us to lead.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the hon. member for that question. First of all, I'd like to thank the former associate minister of multiculturalism, the hon. Member for Calgary-North, for his groundbreaking work on the antiracism action plan. In fact, this plan is on our website, and it outlines a number of recommendations in a forward plan that is designed to tackle racism.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that racism has been on the rise in Alberta and given that the Calgary and Edmonton gurdwaras were the target of hate crimes last year and given that only a few months ago a racist representation of Sikh culture was included in a rural Alberta rodeo parade and given that a 24-year-old Sikh man was murdered last week in Edmonton, newcomers are scared, racism is on the rise, and minorities are facing daily instances of racism in their lives, will the Premier stand in this Chamber today and condemn racism in all its forms?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are tragic and unacceptable acts. Obviously, I do condemn all acts of racism all across the province and in our nation. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen increases in anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian hate, which was addressed earlier here today. I am very personally invested as a minister, as an MLA, as an individual to ensure that we tackle racism so that every single Albertan feels included, welcomed, and is able to actualize their potential in every realm of life.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that a third-party advertiser that calls itself Alberta first recently released a television ad that is undeniably racist and given that the ad is black and white but colours only the turban of a federal political leader and given that this is a clearly visual dog whistle on racism and given that fighting racism is the duty of every person in this House, including the Premier, will someone on that



side stand and for the record condemn this racist ad and tell the people behind it to pull it off the air?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned before, I categorically condemn all acts of racism everywhere in the province and in the country as well. I have had the benefit of talking to the antiracism council members as a council and as members individually, and again we are going to be bringing forward further initiatives on this matter to make sure that, again, everybody feels safe and included and welcomed in this province.

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

### Rural Health Care

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an MLA who represents rural Albertans, my constituents are pleading for more stable health care. Currently emergency rooms in rural communities are being left inaccessible due to doctor shortages and closures. Because of these closures, rural Albertans are being left without critical emergency care. To the Minister of Health: what is this government doing to improve and stabilize emergency room accessibility in our rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question and advocacy on this file. We've had numerous conversations in this regard. You know, bringing down emergency room wait times across the province is one of our top priorities and, in fact, one of the main reasons why we appointed an AHS administrator. We have tasked Dr. Cowell to reduce ER delays by bringing in additional staff to improve on-site patient care and management and by transferring an increased number of patients from hospital beds into more appropriate care settings. In order to measure the success of these initiatives, we will track the time it takes from the moment a patient enters the ER to when they receive the appropriate level of care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the incredible strain that the pandemic has had on our doctors, our nurses, and support staff over the past two years and given that, with the lack of staff in rural regions, many Alberta families are struggling to access the health care services that they require, can the minister explain to Albertans and this House what the government is doing to bring more doctors and health care workers to our rural hospitals, thus improving access to health care for these communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this very important question. We fully understand that there is a challenge across the entire country in health human resources and here in Alberta, and it's particularly acute in rural Alberta, which actually is impacting our level of service. We are moving forward with a number of initiatives, including training more nurses and allied health professionals across the entire province. We are leveraging our immigration system, welcoming more doctors. We have more doctors and more nurses than ever in the province, and we're going to continue to do this work until we can get all the

staffing we need to be able to provide the services, particularly in rural areas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has announced \$3.5 billion in health-related capital funding over the next three years and given that a significant portion of this amount is dedicated to upgrading facilities in Red Deer, Calgary, and Edmonton and given that those upgrades will improve the quality of service and life for residents in those regions, again to the Minister of Health. These urban centres are receiving significant support for health care upgrades, but what is this government doing to help improve health care services and facilities for rural Albertans?

2:40

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks once again to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, we are investing significantly in health care infrastructure, \$3.5 billion in Budget 2022, and that is across the entire province. One component of that is focusing on renovations in rural hospitals. This year's budget provides \$45 million over three years to modernize and improve our rural health facilities across the province. Now, the rural health facilities revitalization program supports upgrades and renovations in hospitals, emergency departments, pharmacies, EMS stations, ambulance garages, medical laboratories, and other facilities, and we'll continue to invest.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a tabling.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings that I'll quickly make, tabling documents I referenced earlier this week in debate, one being a CTV News article titled Ralph Bucks 14 Years Later, which I referenced in arguing that the population of Alberta will not be bought with their own money again as they seemed to be back in the Ralph bucks era.

Secondly, a tabling with respect to an article that I cited from CBC, Need for Speed: UCP MLA Wants to See 120 km/h Speed Limit, where I argued that it was difficult to determine whether or not the UCP members were in favour of higher speed limits because there seems to be some debate in their caucus about whether they are injurious.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, a statement from the Treaty 6 chiefs regarding their meeting with Premier Danielle Smith, in which they indicate, "It was clear from our discussions that Premier Smith does not understand Treaty or our inherent rights nor does she respect them."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate that the hon. member may have been quoting from a letter, but it would still be inappropriate to use the proper name in the Assembly.

Ordres du jour.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**

**Bill 4**

**Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the support of the Assembly on Bill 4, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022. As members know, it is a straightforward bill that proposes repealing section 40.2 of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. This section allows the government to terminate compensation-related agreements such as the one we have with the Alberta Medical Association.

Repealing this legislation is part of our commitment in the new agreement with the AMA. Mr. Speaker, this commitment is not only to the Alberta Medical Association but to physicians throughout our province. I want physicians to know that we are moving forward together. With this agreement, we are partners, and they have my commitment that I will work collaboratively with the association and its members to continue building an environment of partnership and of innovation.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

To physicians I say that you have faced a tremendous amount of responsibility and strain throughout the past few challenging years. It's affected many personally and professionally as you have given all your support to patients. Your hard work and dedication to Albertans is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, our partnership with physicians is reflected in the concrete actions we're taking to address the challenges facing our health care system, because those actions reflect the very issues that have been brought forward by physicians in our conversations. These actions will result in improvements to the health system overall and improvements for individual physicians as we work together as partners to implement the new agreement.

This agreement adds an estimated \$750 million to stabilize the health care system, including \$260 million in targeted funding to address current pressures. This includes recruitment and retention programs so more Albertans can access family doctors, and it provides more stability for practice viability. It is an agreement that focuses on partnership, stability, and innovation. It targets areas of concern and provides the necessary supports to help ensure Albertans get the health care that they need. To quote from former president of the AMA Dr. Vesta Michelle Warren, with whom I sat at the bargaining table and then proudly shared a podium with in September, when we announced the ratification of the agreement:

This agreement is good for physicians, patients and the health-care system. It will allow physicians to contribute to decision-making and provide expertise on what matters for patients. It provides increases in line with other settlements, valuable programs, business cost support, fair processes for working together on compensation or other matters and ways to resolve disputes. The agreement will help stabilize physician practices that are struggling with rising costs. Stability is critical to retain and attract physicians. There is hard work ahead, but we look forward to rebuilding the relationship with government and seeking solutions through collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, there is indeed hard work ahead, but I'm looking forward to continued collaboration with the current president of the AMA, Dr. Rinaldi, and the rest of her team to tackle this work together with physicians as our partners in the weeks and months ahead. This bill is about working with physicians to improve

Alberta's health care system. It's about stability, which is absolutely critical during these challenging times, and it's about keeping our promises and our commitments.

I once again thank all members of the Assembly for supporting Bill 4. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on third reading of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

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

**Bill 5**

**Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 5, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), that makes changes to six pieces of legislation. However, I do find this session that this government has for the most part prioritized legislation that will not help this government address issues facing our communities, our province.

Frankly, when I talk to individuals and groups in my riding, I think the top-of-mind issue for them is affordability, cost of living. UCP policies certainly have contributed to that as well. The other thing that we'll talk about is health care. That is top of mind for many of my constituents. We are now seeing an increase and surge in respiratory illnesses, and now our hospitals are again really stretched. Here we have another bill that is not focused on what Albertans want this government to focus on. Earlier they also introduced a piece of legislation, the sovereignty act, that will drive away investment, will drive away jobs, and has created huge chaos and uncertainty in our economy.

2:50

This bill makes a number of changes. For the most part, it will be helpful if the minister would clarify some of these issues. For instance, this bill makes amendments to the Referendum Act and what it does. In the technical briefing they said that they're clarifying that constitutional referendums will only be brought before the Legislature and that all other referendums cabinet can decide behind closed doors. They're creating a two-tier process. If a referendum relates to constitutional issues, only then will it be brought before this Assembly, and on all other issues, on all other matters of public importance, the cabinet is giving themselves the right to decide that without any input from this Legislature.

As much as I'm not a big fan of governing through referendums, this Legislature should be the governing body. This elected government should be the governing body. We have seen fallout from referendums like Brexit and in other places as well. I do believe that whenever a question is put before the public to weigh in, this Legislature should have a right to weigh in on that matter. Generally speaking, referendums are done on matters of public importance, where we want to know where the public stands on a certain issue, so I think as public representatives we do have a right to weigh in on those matters. I think we will be bringing forward an

amendment later on to change that. I don't think that cabinet should be the only body that decides a referendum.

This is the kind of pattern we are seeing from this government. That's exactly what they did with their sovereignty act, and they didn't consult anyone. They tried to consolidate powers within the cabinet, and as a result earlier we saw a call from Treaty 6 chiefs about that piece of legislation as well, that they were not consulted so that bill should be withdrawn. And the same thing here. There is nothing to suggest that the government consulted on these changes that they're making to the Referendum Act.

This bill will also make some changes to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, and that's a pretty straightforward change. That change will bring Alberta legislation in line with other provinces and will allow for the expedited enforcement of child and spousal support orders from other provinces and vice versa. That's a good change, and we can certainly support that change.

Another change is to the Provincial Court Act, which will change the financial limit that the Provincial Court can deal with. Currently it stands at \$50,000, but now through this change cabinet is giving itself flexibility that they could raise it to, I believe, \$200,000. I think a question that we have is: if Alberta is already in line with other jurisdictions, other provinces, in fact if Alberta is at the higher end of the bracket, why does cabinet feel that this was necessary, and was there any consultation done with courts, the Provincial Court, the Court of King's Bench? Was there any work done on how it will impact their caseloads, how it will impact the Provincial Court work? Do we have enough judges there? Are we just trying to push more and more Albertans towards Provincial Court because the King's Bench would need involvement of legal representation and Provincial Court has relatively simpler processes? I think we need to understand why cabinet thinks that they need this power to raise that civil court limit to \$200,000. Again, who is asking for it, and are there any plans that they will be using it fairly soon?

We do know that because of the pandemic and because of this government's policies our courts are struggling. Because of Jordan's principle there are now time limits that cases have to be dealt with in a certain time frame, in 18 months for summary offences and 30 months for indictable offences. So that has also put pressure on the court system. At the same time, this government has cut the Justice department budget every single year. Every single year they have cut the Justice department budget. When they became government, they started promising that they will hire 50 prosecutors. That didn't happen up until now. If they have hired some, now there are so many more vacancies that have not been filled. So adding more casework, more caseload on Provincial Courts: if that's their plan to address delays, they should say so.

Another thing that has really caused delays, caused concern for many Albertans is that this government has also cut legal aid funding. They have made deep cuts to legal aid funding. Mr. Chair, when we became government in 2015, the total legal aid funding at that time was \$64 million. In 2018 we entered into a governance agreement with Legal Aid Alberta and promised to increase it in four instalments by \$70 million. We delivered the first instalment, making the legal aid funding \$104 million. In the last three years this government has cut that funding, making it \$82 million.

3:00

As we speak, there are many organizations representing defence lawyers, family lawyers. They have started job action, and they are not accepting legal aid certificates. That means there will be more delays when it comes to bail hearings. There will be more delays in criminal matters, in family law matters, in custody matters, and Albertans will not be fairly represented. Our court system is already under pressure, and just adding this limit, raising this limit to

\$200,000, I don't think will make any difference in our court system. If we want to see our court system improve, we need real action from this government. We need more prosecutors. We need more resources in the justice system. We need more resources for legal aid. Changing that limit won't help us address any of that.

Then there are some other changes to the Trustee Act, which we were briefed that it will just remove the need for a trust to be transferred to the courts when there is no trustee. It clarifies that property can go directly to the new trustee. I think that's a good thing. There was some assurance provided that in that process the trust won't fail.

Then there are some changes made to the Sale of Goods Act. It removes the need to keep a record of the vehicle and registration that deliver the grain to the elevator and changes "track buyer" to "grain dealer". I think we didn't hear any concerns with respect to these changes. My friend and colleague, our critic for agriculture, the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, who has done amazing work on her file, has also reached out to stakeholders, but we didn't hear any concerns. We would like to hear from the government who they have consulted and if they could explain the rationale for that. I think that in general we think that it's a good change.

As I said, these are the changes. They're fairly straightforward, but at the same time I think this government needs to focus on real issues that are facing our economy, that are facing our society. They need to do something tangible to address the cost-of-living crisis, the inflationary crisis, and when they come up with plans, they need to make sure that all Albertans who need those supports, need that help are able to access that help. What we saw from this government is that they left more than 2 million Albertans out of that support.

Similarly, making changes to the Referendum Act further erodes the role of this Legislature. What we have seen from this government is that it's a pattern of behaviour, that they have done many things to curtail the role of this Legislature and to erode our democracy. On many occasions they have brought forward closure motions just to shut down the debate. They brought the sovereignty act, at one point giving themselves the powers called Henry VIII powers so that, again, they could limit the role of the Legislature.

In this legislation as well, with respect to changes to the Referendum Act, what they are doing is that they are again limiting the role of this Legislature by eliminating the need for this government to bring referendums on questions other than constitutional questions to this Legislature. I think as a member of this Legislature and as a representative of the people of this province – we think that whenever this government feels that there is a need, that they need to govern through referendum, they should come to this Legislature. It shouldn't be just the cabinet playing politics with referendums. There should be some accountability through this House.

So those changes certainly are not good. They're not good for our democracy. They're not good for our province. As I indicated, we will consider amending those to make sure that government brings back all questions of importance, whether constitutional or not, to this House.

The other thing, as I raised some questions – it would be helpful if the minister would share with us who they have consulted on all of these changes. We also know that when it comes to consultation, this government's record is very poor. They do not consult. They claim to consult, but they do not. That's what they claim with respect to the sovereignty act. That's what they claim with respect to Bill 6, that we will be debating later today. But when we talk to stakeholders, when we talk to Albertans, then we find out that they did not consult. That's the reason that the Treaty 6 chiefs issued a statement today saying that they were not consulted on the sovereignty act and on many other issues that pertain to their treaty rights, that has the potential to . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to add comments or ask questions? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). Now, I have a few questions pertaining to the bill. I appreciate the fact that it amends, I believe, six pieces of legislation. I'll go through them one at a time just to make it as logical as possible.

You know, I appreciate on the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act that it is, for the most part, from what I can see, bringing Alberta legislation in line with other provinces. I do appreciate that it will allow for expedited enforcement of child and spousal support orders from other provinces through, really, modernizing a piece of legislation by allowing easier use and transmission of documents. I appreciate that sections 5, 24 remove the need for sworn documents, sections 6, 24, and 25 remove the need for certified documents or at least provide some flexibility for that certification, which I think is important, and sections 10, 30, 39, 44 allow for electronic or telephone transmission of documents. I appreciate there that we're modernizing this to allow for electronic transmission of documents in today's day and age. This seems to make the most sense.

3:10

I can't help but think about the fact that most doctors' offices still use fax machines to fax requisitions, et cetera, around. My hope is that we will look at modernizing that system. There is an example of a constituent of mine, that I discovered while door-knocking ahead of the 2015 election, who went to see a specialist to get a diagnosis – oh, no. Sorry. She had a cancer diagnosis, went to see a specialist. The requisition was via fax, and the challenge, Mr. Chair, is that the requisition ended up in a pile of papers for the specialist. The specialist was on holidays for a couple of months and then couldn't get back to the paperwork or didn't realize it was there. The worst possible thing you can think of happened, and that is that she died. She died because she couldn't get treatment because of an antiquated system that we use in our health care system, which is, you know, the use of fax machines. It was very, very tragic. I had met with her while she was waiting for treatment and then was in touch with the family when she passed several weeks later. Of course, I advocated on her behalf. My office tried to do what we could. But the point of this story is that I can support pieces of legislation that make sense to modernize, especially the use of documentation.

We know how busy our court systems are, so that's appreciated. I mean, in section 17 of this piece of legislation – amending, again, the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act – rose the need for statutory certified copies. Again, I think that will help improve as well. So for the first piece of legislation that this bill amends, I can get behind that, Mr. Chair.

The next piece is the Legislative Assembly Act. I appreciate that this will bring Alberta in line with other jurisdictions. That's looking, I believe, at enhancing security for personnel in this building. Again, you know, it makes sense that we bring our legislation in line with other provinces.

This bill does touch on another bill that we'll be debating this afternoon, Mr. Chair. There's clarification in changes to the Police Act, which we'll be debating later this afternoon, for increased civilian oversight of law enforcement personnel. I think that's very important, that we have civilian oversight. When I speak to Bill 6, I will start my comments thanking the men and women that serve our communities around the province, that risk their lives day in and day out to keep us safe. There are incredible people who join

the service, as I said. When I speak to Bill 6, I'll tell a couple of stories about some of the men and women that I've gotten to know in my riding, and I would argue that out of EPS, the finest work is in northeast Edmonton. Of course, I'm quite biased because I've gotten to know many of them. We'll talk more about that when we get there.

The next piece of legislation, the third piece, that this act amends is the Provincial Court Act. I think the rationale behind this change: the government has outlined that it will give cabinet more flexibility, but the concern that the opposition has identified with this change – and, again, when we talk about potential unintended consequences, it could lead to an increase in claims through the lower courts, so that is a bit of a flag.

The other thing that it does, Mr. Chair, is that it increases the maximum decision under civil courts from \$50,000 to \$200,000. Now, I know my colleague our Justice critic has spoken about this already, but I think it's important to highlight this. As I said at the start of my speaking this afternoon, there are a few questions that I have. This increasing the level fourfold, from \$50,000 to \$200,000, again, a 400 per cent increase, is significant. Now, the second highest – so that would put Alberta at the highest level at \$200,000. I think the existing highest level in the country is \$85,000, so Alberta would jump over that by another \$115,000.

You know, a number of things, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure why cabinet feels the need to quadruple the \$50,000 cap on civil court rulings that Alberta currently has today, why it needs to jump to \$200,000. Now, I'm not saying that I'm necessarily opposed to that decision. I just would like a little more rationale behind that decision and that increase. My hope, quite frankly, because we are in Committee of the Whole, is that a member from Executive Council will respond to some of the questions that the opposition has been raising. This is definitely part of our bill debate process, where I very much appreciate going back and forth with ministers. We've seen that openness or willingness to answer questions in the past on other pieces of legislation, and I've seen this especially in my tenure or time in this Chamber. My hope is that we will get some answers.

The other question I have is: if the cap is raised to \$200,000, would that not lead to increased cases being brought through the civil courts? If that's the case, Mr. Chair, what plans does the government have to support the lower courts in increasing their capacity? Again, if this cap being raised to \$200,000 has a snowball effect or a knock-on effect, has the government planned for this? Have they accounted for it? I would imagine that Executive Council would've thought this through, that this is likely one of the consequences that would stem from increasing the cap from \$50,000 to \$200,000. If they haven't thought of that, well, I mean, that's – you know, happy that the opposition has identified that. So the logical question is: well, then, how do we support the lower courts to be able to deal with this increased caseload and workload?

The next question is a simple one: when does cabinet expect that they're going to amend the regulation on the cap? Is this an urgent issue? Is this one of the top priorities for government? I don't want to diminish the importance of this change, but I do know that when I talk to my constituents and when I talk to Albertans in general, you know, on issues that are urgent or pressing, this isn't one of the issues that is raised to me. Again, I'm not trying to diminish the value of this change, but when I think about urgent and pressing issues, I think about our health care system and the strain that it's under. I think about the number of kids who can't get in to see doctors within a reasonable time frame. There are a number of hospitals that have brought in temporary trailers to act as waiting rooms. That's unheard of in my lifetime. I've spent getting close to five decades on this planet and lived in Alberta my whole life and have not heard of that in the past.

3:20

When I think about, you know, urgency and what should be a priority and top of mind for government, I think about affordability. I think about – every Albertan at every door that I’ve knocked on for the last couple of months raises the issue of inflation, rising costs, whether it’s gasoline at the pumps, whether it’s paying for food in the grocery store, and I’ve heard time and time again stories of families that have completely changed their diet because they simply cannot afford to eat the way they did. Mr. Chair, we’re not talking about families going out and buying steak and lobster dinners often or even from time to time. We’re talking about some basic, staple food. Costs have risen so much so that they just simply can’t afford it.

I appreciate that we are debating Bill 2, that deals with the government’s approach to addressing rising costs and inflation. Of course, you know, the opposition has some difference of opinion in how to best address that. I can say that I supported Bill 2 in its second reading because I think that there are some initiatives in there that will help families, but when we look at issues that are most pressing for Albertans, from what I’ve heard on the doorsteps, it’s rising costs and it’s the crisis in health care.

You know, to come back to this bill, Mr. Chair, when does cabinet expect that they’re going to amend the regulation on this cap? I would appreciate getting an answer to that throughout Committee of the Whole.

The next section I’m going to talk about here is the Referendum Act and that within this piece of legislation makes it clear that nonconstitutional referendums do not require a motion by the Assembly prior to them being ordered. Of course, constitutional referendums will require the passage of a motion by the Legislative Assembly prior to being ordered.

I appreciate the comments that my colleague gave just around, you know, the use of referendums and when we use them. I think there definitely is a time and a place for a referendum. I do think, and I’m sure you have as well, Mr. Chair, that when we go and speak to grade 6 classes who study provincial government in the grade 6 curriculum, we talk about the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy. You know, of course, direct democracy many, many years ago was the common style of governance. However, today I can’t even imagine a country like Canada trying to implement direct democracy, where we’re going to the citizens every time we want to make a decision. Naturally, our representative democracy, I think, has served, for the most part, our citizens quite well. Having said that, there are times when governments have chosen to go to a referendum, to its citizens to enable them within a four-year term to have a say on a specific issue.

I appreciate that my colleague the Justice critic had mentioned in his comments that, you know, given the choice, he prefers that decisions are made, for the most part, through this Assembly. We are all elected to represent our constituents. But that’s a smaller change to the Referendum Act.

Two acts to go, Mr. Chair. One is the Sale of Goods Act, and that one, quite frankly, I’m still trying to sink my teeth into, just the changes that it’s made. My initial understanding of this is, really, under the Sale of Goods Act, making changes to the provincial act to align with the federal government and – I shouldn’t say “federal government” – federal legislation.

Section 25 specifically removes the need to keep a record of the vehicle and registration that delivered the grain to the elevator. Now, my interpretation and understanding of that: yes, it’s bringing it in line. You know, if this is going to make it more efficient and reduce an extra burden, then I’m in favour of it. If, again, industry

has said, “Listen, we don’t need this; once upon a time we did; today we don’t,” then I’m completely in support of that. A question I know other colleagues have asked is: who has the government consulted with? My hope is that the agricultural sector and some of the associations have weighed in on this, and if they haven’t, then, I mean, that’s a pretty big flag for me. My hope is that there was consultation and engagement with our agricultural sector on this change.

It also changes “track buyer” to “grain dealer.” Once again, you know, if it’s just cleaning up legislation, then that’s great. If there’s an additional benefit of reducing some red tape for our hard-working farmers, then I’m also in support of that.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the Trustee Act. Now, these changes: my understanding is that they address concerns that were raised under Bill 12 from our spring session. It makes changes to the new Trustee Act that removes the need for a trust to be transferred to the courts if there’s no trustee and clarifies that in these situations the trust remains intact until a new trustee is appointed. Again, if this provides a little bit more continuity and simplicity to a system and ensures that people aren’t being bounced around and having to go through a lengthy and complicated process, then, absolutely, I’m in support of this change.

Again, you know, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that this bill amends six different pieces of legislation, is looking to provide some clarification for some, bringing other pieces in line with federal legislation. I recognize that and the need for that, but I can’t help but think about the other pressing, urgent issues that the government should be working on, whether through legislation or through regulations or just programs and supports. Again, Albertans are struggling.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others with comments or questions? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It’s a privilege to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). I have appreciated the points made by my colleagues so far this afternoon on this legislation and through the entirety of the discussion on this bill, and I, too, have some questions that I’m hopeful we can maybe have addressed as we continue through this debate.

I do think that there are some pieces, as the last speaker did, within this legislation that are removing red tape, that are going to streamline some of the process, and I think that is important. Of course, some changes to the Sale of Goods Act, which were previously described – the previous member, honestly, did quite a good job of going through the entirety of this legislation, so I likely won’t spend as much time on every piece as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but I do appreciate, again, some of the streamlining of pieces specific to the Sale of Goods Act, specific to the Trustee Act.

I do, however, have some questions that likely have been brought up so far. Again, hopefully, we can receive some answers. Just looking at the Provincial Court civil claims limit amendment act, as many speakers have already, I find this change interesting, looking at civil claims and the limit currently being \$50,000 and moving up to a maximum of \$200,000. The government is expressing that this is going to reduce pressures on courts and enable more Albertans to file small claims at the provincial level as per the alberta.ca website and the briefing on this Bill 5.

3:30

But I am a little hesitant surrounding this. You know, I would appreciate it if the government is willing to provide some more detail and some more context to what that might look like at a

higher court, if it's going to reduce some of the strains there, because we, I think, have all heard stories of the strain that is happening in our higher courts. I agree that anything we can do to alleviate some of that pressure is a valuable undertaking, but I don't think that this government has been very clear about how that is actually going to play out.

I mean, the fact is that, again, we've heard stories about the underfunding of legal aid and cuts that this government has previously made to the victims of crime fund. I mean, these are two essential portions of our justice system, and unfortunately this current government has continued to underfund these programs, even to the point of defence lawyers in our justice system going on strike. I think that while some of them have potentially come back to the table and maybe even come to some agreement, Mr. Chair – and maybe somebody would like to correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that as per an article from *CBA National*, the Canadian Bar Association's website, [nationalmagazine.ca](http://nationalmagazine.ca), they have brought forward that these concerns continue now and likely into the future.

We have some major problems within our justice system, so it is somewhat interesting to see the priorities that this government is putting forward, and I would be interested to hear if there's any expectation that some of those challenges are going to be alleviated. But, at the end of the day, when we talk about the importance of supporting justice within our legal system, the idea of the continued underfunding of legal aid is something that needs to be tackled, and it's something that this government has not been able to address up to this point. It's deeply concerning for social justice and just as a representative of my community and a citizen that wants to see everyone have equal representation under the law.

With that being said, just looking again at this idea of moving from \$50,000 to a maximum limit of \$200,000, I am interested, as the critic for Service Alberta, in how this might affect other pieces of legislation. Of course, this government previously made amendments to the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act with Bill 3 in previous times in the Legislature, and in that legislation or that amendment act it talks about the idea of this \$50,000 limit, which at the time was consistent with what is in the legislation right now in terms of being able to take this to civil court.

Now, with these changes, I'm just wondering if we might see changes to legislation like Bill 3 and, further, when we talk about, you know, tribunals within our province, looking at the residential tenancy dispute resolution service and, again, the tribunal opportunities there to keep these types of cases out of the court system, if we are going to be needing to look at adjustments there, if there's any thought from the minister for Service Alberta in regard to the limit of \$50,000 before no longer being able to use the residential tenancy dispute resolution service tribunal process, if that is going to change at all. I would hope to hear an answer on that, if there's any expectation or thought around the process of potentially increasing that as well.

Just looking at the idea of the changes around the Referendum Act – I think members have spoken at length on this piece from the opposition – and just looking at the amendments through Bill 5 regarding the Referendum Act with interest, you know, again, the [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca) website talks about clarifying the requirement to bring a resolution to the Legislature and that it only applies to constitutional questions. It's really, Mr. Chair, giving me flashbacks to Bill 1, which, of course, we weren't debating too, too long ago in this House, and the idea of this Legislature now deciding what is and isn't constitutional. Of course, at the time opposition members made it very clear that we as a provincial Legislature should not be making those decisions, that those should be decided by our higher courts.

But this government has given themselves the power, until it's potentially challenged and loses or wins – I, of course, can't try and foreshadow what might happen there or if it will happen. But this government has tried to give themselves the power to deem what is or isn't constitutional within the provincial Legislature and within our jurisdiction. So it's interesting to see these changes around the idea of, again, not having to bring forward the resolution to the Legislature around the idea of a specific referendum unless it's constitutional.

Further, we have a government that is now saying: we will decide what is and isn't constitutional. So I am interested to see what this government has in mind for the future, if we are going to see this play out and, you know, what pieces of legislation or federal jurisdiction this government might decide to try and, I guess, judge whether it be constitutional or whether it not be and if they try to put forward a referendum under this amendment even if it is clearly within the Constitution or regarding the Constitution, Mr. Chair.

There are definitely questions that I continue to have regarding this legislation. I think that, overall, there are some valuable changes that are happening here in terms of streamlining pieces, but there are questions that I'm left with. Hopefully, we will hear from the government regarding potentially specific changes around the current limit of \$50,000 going up to \$200,000, the idea that this is going to reduce pressure on the courts, if the government is going to be providing any additional supports to our lower courts, among other things.

You know, Mr. Chair, at the end of the day, as previous members have said, this isn't addressing many of the concerns that we have ongoing in Alberta regarding our health care crisis, regarding our inflation crisis and the many Albertans who find themselves struggling to make it day to day, again, faced with a government that is putting forward legislation that in many cases is not going to support them.

With that being said, Mr. Chair, I think I will take my seat and look forward to hearing more debate on Bill 5. I, again, see pieces within this legislation that I'm happy to support, but I do have questions in regard to other pieces.

With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 5, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). You know, I've been listening to debate on this, and I have to agree that, unfortunately, this government has introduced yet again another piece of legislation that really does nothing to address the concerns that Albertans are being impacted by, things like health care in a collapsing system, to be quite honest, and lack of affordability, which is top of mind for so many. I've said it over and over, on behalf of my constituents and Albertans that reach out from across the province, that this isn't what Albertans were expecting when it came to legislation for this session. There's an affordability crisis, a health care crisis, and instead we're debating things that this government has prioritized. It hasn't prioritized Albertans.

I have a background, Mr. Chair, in working in the Provincial Court system, in family courts here in Edmonton. We worked with family and community services for Edmonton and area – St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, Fort Saskatchewan, Wetaskiwin, Leduc – and I represented the director of Children's Services in Provincial Court. So I have first-hand knowledge of what it's like to work in the Provincial Court system, and I'm in regular contact with a lot of my former colleagues, whether they are clerks in the

court, lawyers both on the side of the Crown and on the side of defence, many who have over the years worked with legal aid, and many who are saying that they are no longer able to take new files.

3:40

The court system right now as we know it is really struggling. There are extensive wait times to get a matter before a trial. If you're doing a JDR or if you're doing mediation or any alternative to trial, those tend to be a little bit quicker, but when we look at what this legislation is proposing, we're looking at an increase in civil court, which is right now \$50,000. The government is proposing a quadrupled rate of \$200,000. To put that in context, the highest rate in the province is currently \$85,000. I'm confused why this government is taking its traditional King's court matters over \$50,000 and bringing them into civil court on the provincial side when we haven't seen the government infuse supports into the Provincial Court system. In essence, they're taking away from King's court and putting that burden onto the Provincial Court side without any increase of supports and resources, which simply does not make sense. We have legal aid lawyers pleading for supports and resources so that they can assist those that don't have the financial capacity to qualify for legal aid.

There are many impacts when we're looking at what this piece of legislation is going to do. For those of you that aren't quite familiar with what the Provincial Court currently handles, they handle the majority of criminal matters, regulatory offences, family and youth court, and traffic cases. That's a lot, so when we're looking at adding from \$50,000 to \$200,000, that is a significant jump in the types of matters that are now going to be brought forward to civilian court.

I question where this number came from. Who was consulted to do this? Does the Provincial Court believe that this is something that they can handle, the capacity, that increase? From what I'm hearing from those that are working in the Provincial Court system and those that have been experienced individuals that have had matters before the Provincial Court, it is not a process that is working well right now. They are struggling. We need more Crown prosecutors. We need more supports for victims. We need more supports for people that qualify for a reduced rate through Alberta legal aid.

We're just simply not seeing that. We're not seeing the government put those supports in, so why they're increasing matters being brought forward to the Provincial Court without increasing the amount of supports – it just doesn't make sense. It's going to have an impact. It's going to have a negative impact for those that deserve their right to have their matter brought before the courts in a reasonable amount of time. I question who put this number out there. It's not a number that we see anywhere else in the country. It's significantly higher, and it's going to have a major, major impact.

I know that when I was working in the court system, families relied heavily on duty counsel. There would be wait times of hours sometimes, waiting for an individual to be able to speak with duty counsel. They would come into family court – I was there representing the director of Children's Services; duty counsel was there to support families that didn't have representation yet – and just for a first appearance it was often hours of wait to have their matter simply brought forward to the judge and adjourned because they needed more time, more information, more resources. By the time some of these matters got to the point where both sides were represented by lawyers, trying to plan a court date was really difficult. There wasn't a lot of court time available. I don't know offhand what the current wait times are for court specifically, but I can imagine that it's not a quick turnaround. From when you walk in and you're expecting to have your matter heard in a trial, it is a

significant wait. That's not fair to families. These are matters where children oftentimes are removed from the family home, and they have a right to be put forward in a system that isn't bogged down with so many different matters before the court. So I'm curious how this government came to this decision to put these matters into Provincial Court.

There are pieces of this legislation that I think are good. It looks at, I believe, six different acts. I can say when I look at the part regarding the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act that this is a good thing. When we have the capacity to bring Alberta in line with other provinces and expedite enforcement of child and spousal support orders from other provinces, that is so important to those that rely on that support. To watch families be delayed in receiving those supports because of a court system that isn't flowing properly – this is great news for those families that heavily rely on this support. It's often the only type of financial support they are able to receive. Seeing that is a great step, and I am very excited that the children and spouses that are so reliant on this are going to have an expedited process in place.

When we look at the pieces and the sections that are being changed and allowed, it makes sense to look at how they're updating the capacity to allow for electronic and telephone transmission of documents or testimony. All of those different things are bringing the Alberta court system in line with so many other jurisdictions that already do that. I do caution, however, that when I was with Children's Services in the court system, we did some of that transitioning from original legal documents being commissioned and sworn to electronic versions, and it was quite a task to transition that system. That was just such a small section of the court process. That was only the Edmonton and area courts that were doing it. It was only family and Children's Services that was doing it, and it took quite a long time to transition in a way that all sides felt that it was effective. So I am expecting some bumps along the way, and I would hope that as part of this legislation they are giving those additional supports that are going to be required by the clerks that are filing, by the judges that are reviewing these documents. It's new, it's different, and it's something that requires some patience and some understanding as that process changes.

I know that there were some difficulties while we were doing it with Internet access. Some of the areas in the province didn't have reliable Internet, so it was sometimes quite difficult to get documents alternatively sworn in and presented before the courts because of the delays with capacity, being able to accept a fax or an e-mail. There are definitely some bumps in this process, and I hope that when the courts are coming forward and bringing forward some ideas and suggestions about what could help transition this process, this government is listening and providing the supports necessary to be able to implement these changes. Like I said, it's coming in line with so much of the country when it comes to electronic testimony, alternative ways to accept documents, but it's just simply not that easy. There are definitely some growing pains in that transition, and I hope that this government is listening to the workers that are doing it and providing support and patience necessary when it comes to that transition.

3:50

The other piece of this legislation that I think is somewhat concerning is the Referendum Act that's being impacted and allowing the government to make decisions outside of the Assembly regarding nonconstitutional referendums. I'm curious why this government wouldn't want to have the Assembly weigh in on that.

It doesn't sit well that we have a government that brought in a piece of legislation, Bill 1, their flagship bill, the sovereignty act, that is really going against so many. We've heard Treaty 6, 7, and

8 come out against it, we heard them come out and say they weren't consulted, and we saw it be pushed through. This gave sweeping capacity for the government to make decisions behind closed doors and without consultation.

Here we are with a piece of legislation, this bill, looking at the Referendum Act and saying that it doesn't require Assembly input. Again this government is giving themselves sweeping authority to make decisions for nonconstitutional referendums. I just question what the intention is behind that. Why not have the assembly weigh in? Why not bring it forward so that as a member that was elected to represent my community, I can bring it back to my community and talk to them about what is coming forward and what their concerns are?

That's what I was elected to do, Mr. Chair, to bring forward the voice of my constituents, those that I represent. Again, this government is taking away the voice of Albertans. It's not just the Assembly members' voices. It's not the elected officials. We're here to be the voice of those we represent. This piece of legislation under the Referendum Act is, once again, taking away the voice of Albertans.

I pride myself on my communication and consultation that I have with my community, and I pride myself on being able to share their personal stories and experiences and bring forward their questions on their behalf. That was what I was elected to do, and if this government is making changes to that, I'm curious why. Where did they see the voice of those that are elected in this? Why are they shying away from listening to Albertans and what Albertans want?

I think that we're in a place with this government where so many things are being brought forward that really don't address the needs and the wants of Albertans, and they're stepping further and further away from allowing Albertans to weigh in on that. It's frightening. It looks at the democracy that we have, and it is just another step of taking away the voice of so many that we represent.

Today I had the pleasure of having two grade 6 classes from Baturyn elementary, which is a wonderful school in my community. They came here, over 70 of them. They had their teachers with them and some grown-ups that came along, and the kids were excited to learn about what we do. It's one thing to read about it, but these kids were just super thrilled to be able to be in this space and to watch democracy and to watch what question period looked like. I had met with these two classes in September during Read In Week, and we had some questions and answers. At that point in the curriculum they hadn't really learned yet about political practice, so being able to explain to them when they were here put it in context for them.

This is a place where we want to encourage people to come and watch and listen and have their government being open and transparent to what is happening. Bill 5, that piece of legislation that speaks to the referendum, takes away the capacity for Albertans to have some sort of experience when it comes to the legislation that's being brought forward for a referendum, and that's concerning, Mr. Chair. I really don't know, you know, how to take that back to these students that are learning about the importance of having a voice, the importance of advocacy, the importance of what their government should be doing when we're debating a bill that says that it won't even make it to the Chamber floor. I just struggle with the disconnect between what this government sees their role as and what they see as the role of the members of this Assembly and the people that we all serve, Albertans, not being able to have voice in this place. I think that there's lots that could be done; however, not all of this piece of legislation is something that makes sense and that supports Albertans.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will stop my comments and continue to listen to debate. Yeah. I hope that government is really paying attention and

that when increasing the capacity, they're supporting the capacity in another way, if that makes sense.

Thank you so much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to ask questions or add comments?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### Bill 7

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**The Deputy Chair:** Looking for members with questions or comments. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to have a couple of comments on our miscellaneous statutes bill for this session. I mean, this is a common practice, that you do group some miscellaneous statutes together, agreed upon between the parties to package them so that we can help to expedite them through the Legislature. You know, again, always, when we exercise the miscellaneous statutes agreement, I like to say from the beginning that it's always important not to abuse this or conflate it as an omnibus type of legislation, where you group together a whole range of seemingly unrelated concepts and try to pass them together as what's called an omnibus bill. I believe and always have that omnibus legislation is dangerous and it's confusing and it doesn't help with the democratic process or for the public to understand the democratic process, too.

With that being said, I mean, certainly, this particular version of a miscellaneous statutes collection truly is sort of a random collection in some ways. You know, I must say, Mr. Chair, that it's all been made necessary because of the way that this new government, this new version of the UCP government, came back together again after voting out their leader and reassembling with a different cabinet and so forth. If it wasn't done in such a sort of haphazard and comically confusing sort of way – you see that built into this miscellaneous statutes act, where they literally, this UCP government, failed to cover off some of their essential duties as a government and needed to amend those things in this miscellaneous statutes act so that they could actually cover off what a government is meant to do here in the province of Alberta.

4:00

For example, there was no minister responsible for the labour code or occupational health and safety. There was confusion about other responsibilities in this cabinet, which is, I think, one of the biggest in history if not the biggest in history. As one gentleman from the *Calgary Sun* sort of comically described it, everybody is a VIP in this government, right? Maybe you can take on what I saw FIFA do when they were here in Edmonton and have a VVIP category or have a VVVIP, I suppose, category since everyone seems to have a title over there.

You know, this expansion to 27 ministers, two Deputy Premiers, 11 parliamentary secretaries is unprecedented, and quite frankly it has lent itself to the requirement to have so many miscellaneous statutes amendments so that they could literally retool and reorganize the government. I don't think it's a good way to run a cabinet or to run a



government, to run a railway, as they say, to do this. Albertans have taken notice that a government that otherwise likes to pride themselves on efficiency and making cuts and tough choices – I mean, a tough choice to make everybody a cabinet minister or something, some version of a VIP, is not really good cricket as far as I'm concerned. Yeah.

I mean, we see that this collection of miscellaneous statutes otherwise has a lot to do with the reallocation of duties and trying to cover off duties that were missed and clean up this and clean up that. I guess, reluctantly, we have to kind of go along with it because that's what the government is supposed to do. Here we are with the miscellaneous statutes trying to cover off what they forgot they were supposed to do, so let's do it now. We'll be glad to, as always, help the government out because that's what the Official Opposition is all about. You know, we're helpers, and we've got constructive criticism that can make life better not just for Albertans but for the UCP government as well. There you go.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to add comments or ask questions?

Seeing none, I'm ready to call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Also carried.

Hon. members, we're just moving right along today. This is fantastic.

## Bill 6

### Police Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Any members wishing to add comments, questions, or amendments to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 6. I do have an amendment to move, so I will let the pages distribute that. I will read that amendment into the record, and then I will deliver some remarks.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you. Just give us a moment.

Hon. members, this is amendment A1. I'd ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to read it into the record, please.

**Mr. Sabir:** The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall moves that Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 4, in the proposed section 1.1, by adding the following after clause (e):

(e.1) it is desirable that policing services be provided in a manner that recognizes the importance of intersectionality, anti-racism and trauma-informed practice as critical analytical frameworks for meeting the diverse needs of individuals and communities in Alberta.

In this bill the government enshrines some guiding principles, that policing in Alberta should be conducted in accordance with the principles that are enshrined in section 4 of the legislation. They want policing to make sure that they protect the safety and security of all persons, that they respect their fundamental rights listed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that they should co-operate with the members of the communities they serve. They ask that policing should take into account health-related situations affecting individuals' mental health,

and police should promote a culture of accountability and be transparent. These are all good principles, and I do agree with it.

What this clause will do: this clause will enshrine an additional principle in that list. The reason for that is that, as is stated, police should respond to the needs of Albertans and should reflect the diversity of Albertans. We do know that Albertans come from many different backgrounds, many different cultures, many different talents. We have a huge diversity in our province, and seeing things through the lens of intersectionality will give us a better understanding of who we are as a society, what the makeup is of our society. That will help us acknowledge our differences better, and that will also guide public policy responses that we formulate as a result of such analysis of intersectionality.

Why it's important lately in particular: we have seen tragedies in the United States which receive huge media attention, in particular the murder of George Floyd, and then we have seen tragedies here in Alberta as well, how a person from South Sudan was killed in Calgary. We have also heard concerns from our Indigenous communities. They certainly have long-standing grievances about policing in this province, and when we look at stats about representation of Indigenous communities, other person-of-colour communities in our justice system, we do know that Indigenous communities are overrepresented in our justice system. They're disproportionately incarcerated in our remand centres and penitentiaries.

#### 4:10

This principle will make sure that we take into account intersectionality of gender, race, and all other relevant factors and try to understand our differences, try to understand a problem more holistically and come up with public policy responses in a much, much better way. Similarly, it will enshrine antiracism as a principle in the legislation. Again, we do know that Alberta is made up of people of many different backgrounds, and there have been concerns raised by person-of-colour communities, how they are treated by the law enforcement in this province and this country, and I think that having that enshrined as a principle will also help us make policing better in our province.

Earlier we also tried to bring forward a piece of legislation that would have asked this government to collect race-based data so that we can see the extent of these issues that exist in our system. Unfortunately, that bill didn't pass, but again, now with this legislation, we have that opportunity, that we have explicitly written in legislation that policing will be guided by the principles of antiracism.

Then it also enshrines that trauma-informed practice should be part of all delivery of public service. We do know that in particular our Indigenous communities have been through a lot. They have been through residential schools. There has been cultural genocide, the '60s scoop, and there are still impacts of that trauma that can be seen from generation to generation. We have enough evidence that such trauma that was endured by Indigenous communities, like, a few decades ago can still manifest itself in their current generations. So it's more important than ever before that when we know that such trauma can be seen in their generation today, we inform our policies, our services, be that police service, be that any other government program, with a lens that is trauma informed.

This principle, I think, will do a few things. One, it will send a strong message from the government of Alberta to Indigenous communities, to person-of-colour communities that the government recognizes their concerns, the government is listening to their concerns, and they're enshrining these key principles in the legislation that will guide policing in our province. The second thing is that this will also help us address the concern, gauge the concerns of systemic racism in our law enforcement. There are

those concerns. Those concerns need to be heard, and I think one way of doing that is that we guide our policing through the lens of intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice. This will help us make our law enforcement better. This will help us instill trust and confidence of Albertans in our law enforcement, in particular those from Indigenous communities, those from person-of-colour communities.

I think it's a very common-sense, straightforward amendment, and we can all agree that police services exist to serve the people of Alberta. They should be trained in diversity; they should be trained in principles of intersectionality. They should realize that those differences exist and be able to tailor their response to the needs of Alberta society as it exists today.

These principles will serve as the cornerstone for our policing going forward and help us with community safety and address the concerns that Indigenous communities, that Black communities, person-of-colour communities, racialized communities have in relation to policing. We have shared this amendment in advance with the minister for the minister's consideration. I look forward to hearing from the government side what they think of this amendment.

Thank you, and with that, I will take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, we are on amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Others looking to add to the debate? I see the hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Look, when it comes to this amendment that has been proposed by the NDP, we encourage police services to include these principles in their diversity and inclusion plans or their community safety plans. Police services already have this as part of their HR practices, and these are principles that guide recruiting and employee expectations. The ministry does in fact also offer training for police services which would cover some of the points in this proposed amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to stand up and overwhelmingly support this particular amendment. I think that the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has stated explicitly why it's so important that this particular amendment be accepted by the government, by all members of the Legislature in making sure that it is incorporated into the Police Amendment Act, 2022.

I can't tell you the number of times that I hear from multiple communities, not just one in particular, that they do not feel that policing services in the province of Alberta are sensitive – I guess that's the best word I could use – to the issues being brought up in this particular amendment. So I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall when he brings this amendment that wants to focus on intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice and including that in the framework.

Now, we have seen that in order to address these issues, you have to be intentional. You have to be intentional. That's all that we're asking. I know that it has been suggested, it has been encouraged, but if we bring it and we actually amend the piece of legislation before us, then this would include a level of intentionality that at the level of the Legislature we would like to be incorporated into the Police Amendment Act, 2022.

All we need to do is look at Alberta history. Why is it that Indigenous people are overrepresented in our justice system? It has to do with our track record of colonialism. Not only that, Mr. Chair, but you know the

greater injustice here, in my personal opinion, is the fact that it's not just Indigenous people that are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, but it's actually that a greater percentage of them are women when compared to the general population.

I can't remember the exact numbers off the top of my head right now, but I have quoted them in the Legislature before. They're as high as 30 per cent, if I'm not mistaken, in some cases, when Indigenous people only make up 3 per cent of the Canadian population. Now, you have to ask yourself: why is this the tendency?

4:20

Now, when you look at the legacy of colonialism in the province of Alberta and throughout Canada and throughout the world and how Indigenous people have been treated by policing structures and how they feel targeted by the policing services, it is – and this is where trauma-informed goes to, Mr. Chair. Trauma-informed. We cannot continue to expect this to change unless we're intentional about actually bringing trauma-informed perspectives into the understanding of policing and the relationship that exists between police and the communities that they are there to serve.

We need this intersectionality. We need the training in antiracism. We need the training in trauma-informed practice so that we can get this right. It's a huge injustice, that overrepresentation of Indigenous people in our prisons both at the provincial and the federal levels. It's something that I've called the Legislature's attention to before a number of times.

But, you know, I'll be honest with you, Mr. Chair. It's not surprising when we hear from Alberta chiefs of First Nations communities stating publicly that the Premier of the current government doesn't even understand the treaty relationship. This is not coming from my mouth; this is coming from one of the chiefs of the First Nations here in Alberta. If you don't even understand the treaty relationship that exists between nation to nation of Indigenous communities here, how can we expect you or people in general – and I'm not pointing any fingers – to then understand the trauma-informed practice as it relates to Indigenous people and the legacy of colonialism that exists here in the province of Alberta? You need to be intentional about this, right?

I see some shaking heads over here that just don't get it. It's very important. It's very important that we recognize, number one, that we're all treaty people and, on top of that, that there are specific calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when it comes to the gross injustices that have occurred here in the province of Alberta and throughout Canada with a legacy of colonialism. How can we ever expect to get it right if we're not going to, number one, accept the truth of what has happened?

I mean, that's the whole intention between truth and reconciliation. First, you've got to accept the truth, the historical truth that occurred, the injustices that occurred. And only from being able to understand that can we then actually hope to get it right. That's why this amendment is so important specifically when it comes to Indigenous people but not only Indigenous people, Mr. Chair.

Over the last several months we know that Black hijabi Muslim women have been attacked here in the province of Alberta, specifically here in the city of Edmonton. In one of the very first cases, Mr. Chair, the woman that was attacked, when she went to go and report what had happened to her, felt grossly mistreated by the officer that was taking her report. This is common knowledge. It was actually reported. It was in the papers. Here we have an instance where someone from a racialized background is saying: I don't even feel comfortable reporting the gross injustice that happened to me, the hate crime that happened to me, the violation that happened to me to a police officer and trusting that the system, the policing service system, is going to be able to actually get this

right and actually be able to correct the injustice that occurred. So you see how important it is that this not be left to a voluntary: well, it's nice if it happens. No. We have to be intentional about it. That's why this amendment is so important.

You know, I would have liked to see the Minister of Justice get up and actually support this amendment instead of saying: oh, yeah, we encourage policing services to do this. This is an opportunity for all of us here in this Legislature to make sure that every Albertan feels that the policing services that are being provided in this province are going to respect them, are going to be able to help them feel that they are being listened to. The officers, whoever they may be – I'm not trying to point fingers at any one or another; that's not the point here – every officer will have the knowledge because we've been intentional about them receiving education when it comes to intersectionality, when it comes to antiracism, and when it comes to trauma-informed practice and having a historical perspective when it comes to injustices that have happened in the past.

I'm not trying to shame or blame anybody here. That's not what this is about, and I hope that the members on the other side of the House aren't misconstruing my statements as that being the case. That's not what this is about. This is about trying to build a better Alberta, Mr. Chair, where people, when they've had an injustice or a violation happen to them, feel comfortable enough to go to the services and the individuals represented by those institutions and that they'll actually be listened to and understood. That's what this is about.

The Black hijabi Muslim sisters who, unfortunately, had to go through all that trauma want the policing services and the individuals of those institutions, at bare minimum, to understand: okay; well, in living your life as a Black hijabi Muslim woman here in the province of Alberta, you are going to feel different. It's not the same when you have a whole – Mr. Chair, it's been well documented – industry creating more and more Islamophobia, taking misconceptions about Islam and reinforcing them and sharing them as propaganda through social media.

It's well known that here in Canada we have over 3,000 – I want to be careful with the words that I choose – if I'm not mistaken, White nationalist either websites or social media pages, from my understanding of the last report that I read. More than 3,000 of them take these misconceptions – in this particular case I'm talking about Islam – and then add fuel to the fire and go out there and try to misinform other Albertans about Islam.

4:30

And it doesn't happen just with Islam, Mr. Chair, as you well know. It happens with anti-Semitism. It happens with the Jewish community. We've seen all kinds of places of worship being attacked, and I will say that, you know, providing a grant for places of worship to put up security cameras or whatever they deem necessary in order to protect their places of worship was a good step on behalf of the government. But notice that we still have this incredible problem of people being attacked on the streets of this province, in cities, where a grant to a place of worship is not enough.

We need to put our priorities in line with this particular problem, and at the root of it is people feeling safe enough to go to the institutions that are supposed to be there to protect them and serve them and make them feel safe in their community and that the individuals who make up those institutions are going to be informed and at least, bare minimum, not necessarily understand what it's like for a Black hijabi Muslim sister but at least know that there's a difference between what she is experiencing on the streets of Alberta and someone who is not identifying the same way.

That's what this is about, Mr. Chair, to be able to understand that we need to be sensitive to the experiences of others. I get it, you know. Like, people talk about cancel culture: oh, you can't say this, and you can't say that. You know what? It's a sign of respect. It's me telling the rest of the world that I'm not going to use offensive language or sexist language or whatever the case may be because I respect other Albertans who identify in another way. That's all it is. Nothing difficult about it.

I believe that it's so important that – in this case we're talking about policing services, and I'm sure that you've heard me get up in this House before, Mr. Chair, through you to all the members here, and talk about how important it is that we be sensitive to this in all of our institutions, that we need to decolonize all our institutions, not just the policing services, but in this particular instance we're here talking about this amendment, which is being intentional about including antiracism, intersectionality, and trauma-informed practice to the policing service.

You know, if the members on the other side of the House could get up and give me an actual, concrete, rational argument about why this shouldn't be done, I would like to hear it. It doesn't seem like something that far of a stretch for us to actually include in legislation. I don't understand why you would be against something like this, why you would be against this amendment, and for the Minister of Justice, the individual himself, to get up and say, "Whoa, we're already asking them to voluntarily do this; it's up to them if they want to do it or not" is not enough. And guess what? It's not enough for Albertans. It's not enough for the Albertans in this province that feel unsafe walking through the streets of their cities and other municipalities throughout this province, and it's not fair, Mr. Chair.

Here's an opportunity for this Legislature to go above and beyond and make a change that will drastically make a difference, make a huge difference, for a lot of people, racialized people, Indigenous people. This will make a huge difference for them to feel more safe on our streets and in our communities.

I can't fathom why the members on the other side won't vote for this amendment. Like, has the level of partisanship come to that degree where – and we're talking about 30 per cent of the population. Last I checked, 30 per cent of the Alberta population, Mr. Chair, is ethnically diverse. Thirty per cent. We're talking about 30 per cent of Albertans that this would actually go to serve, and all it's doing is saying: look, institutions, be intentional about providing intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed education to the individuals that make up your institution so that they can be better informed about how to help and serve the Alberta public, of which 30 per cent will be impacted, will feel safer, will feel listened to, will feel understood.

I challenge the members on the other side of the House. Get up and give me a good reason why this amendment shouldn't be passed in this House right now. I'm asking them. Legitimately, I'm asking: give me a good reason why. Or else the only thing that I can blame it on is the fact that we've gone so far down . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the floor.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment on Bill 6. I had the opportunity to speak to Bill 6, and as I indicated yesterday, I certainly have some aspects of Bill 6 that I wish to support. Hopefully, we'll see some of that move forward although I've also expressed my concerns, but it's nice to be able just to stand up and talk about something that I think would really improve the bill, help move things along, doesn't detract from any of the intentions that have been described by the minister.

I took a little bit of time to review *Hansard* records on this from yesterday and listen to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont as they talked about the bill and quite rightly talked about how important policing is and thanked the police officers in our system for the work that they do. I certainly agree with all of that. I don't think we're in an antagonistic place here.

I certainly have worked with police officers quite regularly in my career as a social worker with a specialization in the area of family violence. I worked with police officers in the child welfare system. I worked with police officers when I was at Catholic Social Services, our elder abuse program. I certainly found that when we worked together, we got great things done, and we dealt with some of the very darkest things that happen in society. You know, we had to deal with people that were abusing their children, abusing their elders. We had to do that from a place of clarity as to what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, but we also had to do that from a place of compassion, knowing that people who are in the position of becoming offenders are often there for very specific reasons in their own life, often related to their own experiences of trauma, often related to their own experiences of racism, often related to their own lack of receiving compassion throughout their lives. It means that at the time of the police intervention it's very important that that work be informed by an understanding of the circumstances.

4:40

There was a study done on one of the jails in the Edmonton area a little while ago now. I guess I've been out of the academic field for a while, so it's a bit of an aged study, but it was very interesting. What they did is they did an examination of everybody in the jail system and came back with the determination that upwards of 80 per cent of the people in jail demonstrated some level of involvement with FASD, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. I think that's very telling, because what it tells us is that it wasn't simply an issue of people making bad choices and people, you know, who were committing acts out of greed or other kinds of self-indulgence but, rather, that people were committing many of these illegal acts because of their inability to act in an appropriate way, because of their inability to make good judgments because of the consequence of many of the negative things that had happened to them in their own lives. And the more we understand that, the more likely we are to be able to intervene and to make changes in the criminal's life and, hopefully, therefore in the lives of all the current and potential victims.

I think it's very important that we move policing in an appropriate direction. I certainly found, when I worked with the police officers, that they understood this. They weren't antagonistic to this notion that we can do it better and that we can do it better by understanding the social circumstance of the people we're dealing with and to construct interventions that are reflective of what we know about their circumstances, about their abilities, about their traumas and that having done that, we can reduce the amount of conflict that we have, not only in society but conflict with the policing services themselves when they're out on the street.

I certainly don't want to see police officers in the position where their lives are threatened or their well-being is under assault, so if we can find a way to intervene with people that isn't about, you know, having more firepower than the offender – because that always leads to a clash of firepower, and that means that the outcome is often one that's tragic, not only for the people who are the suspects or the criminals involved but far too often for the public servants that are involved. So I think it's very important that we think very seriously about this issue.

Now, I know that there's a bit of a trend in the United States, particularly, of sort of the militarization of police, you know, bigger weapons, even bringing in armoured cars and so on, and I think that's a terrible, tragic mistake. I think it's a failure to understand that you can resolve issues without always coming in with more weaponry and more focus on the violent aspect of the interaction.

I know that's true because as a social worker, when I was working for child welfare, I, you know, frequently went into people's homes as an individual, the sole person. The people in these homes were often people with significant records, often involvement with gangs, and I would go in without arms and without violence and sometimes have to apprehend and remove their children. All of this was done without any violence. All of this was done without getting to a place of forcing myself upon the family but just simply using the authority invested in me by the Legislature under the Child Welfare Act. It told me that we could work with people no matter how much they were in conflict with the law, that we could work with people in such a way that we could come to a better resolution even when we had to do things that they were unhappy with, like remove their children from their care.

This happens thousands of times every year by child welfare workers who engage people who would otherwise be considered somewhat dangerous in other circumstances very often, but the fact that we make the decision not to go in from a militaristic perspective but, rather, from a socially informed perspective: we are able to achieve, I think, better outcomes.

Now, we certainly think a lot needs to be done to work on those kinds of interventions so that we get better at them. It's something we're just learning about now in the history of intervention, and I think that, you know, we have to give some patience for policing services and their affiliated support workers, like social workers, to figure out how to move forward on this. One way we can do that is that we can put into this bill a request, as the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has indicated, that the services that are provided recognize the importance of some of the social things such as intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice. This doesn't change the nature of the bill. It simply asks us to be supportive, to encourage police forces and their allies to think about ways that they can go about doing things to resist the Americanization and weaponization of the police forces and instead go to a set of interventions that are well informed, that are based on good science and good research, and that have outcomes that are more desirable both for the offenders and for the police services themselves.

I must say that I was disappointed earlier in the year when we made recommendations that race-based data be collected so that we could ensure that our institutions themselves are not causing some of the trauma that leads to negative outcomes. I was very disappointed that when we introduced that as a possibility here in the House, the government voted against it.

I'm asking them now not to go down that same route. This amendment does not change what it is that you're wanting to do. This amendment merely adds to it, gives it something more. It makes the bill itself more robust in its framing of the work that needs to be done in the community. I think it's a good chance for the government to say: "You know what? A reasonable amendment: let's go with it. Let's, you know, work co-operatively across the floor to create an outcome that will be desirable for everyone involved."

They could include, you know, some very specific directives like race-based data – I would certainly have liked to have seen that happen here – but given that they're not prepared to go that far, perhaps they're just prepared to go as far as this suggests, "that policing services be provided in a manner that recognizes... intersectionality, anti-racism and trauma-informed practice." It's not a directive. It's a suggestion. It's an establishment of a tone, of a manner of policing that we would like to see.

I think that if we do that, we will be able to reduce criminality in our society because we'll begin to intervene in ways that address the underlying issues that lead to criminality, and I think it's really important that we do that. It's quite easy for us to just sort of say, "Bad guys are bad guys," and therefore they should be punished. I think it's better for us as a society to say: these people have done bad things, but if we understand how it is that they arrived at the place where they've done bad things, then we can actually make the changes that are necessary.

Those changes may not even be with the individual. They may be with society. They may be with a society that is racist. They may be with a society that has too much alcohol being used inappropriately. They may be with a society that allows deep poverty amongst wealth. There are lots of social reasons why negative things happen in our society, and if we take responsibility for our part of it and then we assist and help members of our community to do that as well, we're likely to see some serious improvements in terms of the outcomes.

Hopefully, that means some desirable things for us, that means we have fewer people in jail and save a lot of money when we do that, we have fewer people committing crimes and we save a lot of money from that, we have fewer people ending up in hospitals from fights and conflicts and, you know, assaults and so on, and as a result we save a lot of money. There is a lot of money to be saved in policing if we do policing in a way that actually leads to reducing the underlying causes of criminality rather than putting more and more money into the notion that somehow we just have to be bigger, badder, more militaristic in our policing style. It's not necessary.

4:50

I certainly, as I said, have worked with many police officers who get this and who demonstrate exceptional skills in this area. They are quite able to enter into a situation and employ these social skills and come out with everybody being okay because they understood what it is that they're trying to do in their interventions. They didn't just go in saying: I'm in charge; I get to decide what happens, and if you resist me, I'm going to beat you up. They don't do that because they're skilled police officers. They are officers who understand that there are a number of ways to intervene: some of them accelerate the chaos, some of them increase the conflict, and others decrease the conflict and decrease the chaos.

So here it is. Here's a chance for us to say: look, we know some of the ways that we can decrease chaos in our society. We know that if we understand issues like intersectionality, if we understand issues like racism, if we understand issues like trauma, we can actually change our behaviour, we can change our social constructs, and we can change our interventions, and then in doing that, we can invite the citizens who are in conflict with the law to also change their circumstances so that they're less likely to find themselves in a place of conflict with the law. That seems like a pretty desirable outcome to me.

This amendment to the bill does it in a very nice way. It just simply invites the services to think about this and to create a circumstance where the opportunity to learn about this and to employ these kinds of effective skill sets will be done on a consistent basis and on a provincial-wide basis because every police service will have the same kind of mandate to do these kinds of things.

There's nothing terribly foreign about this to the police services I've worked with. Certainly, many of the police officers I've worked with can articulate these things much better than I can. They can tell you about how they have found ways to intervene that did not lead to violence. You know, when somebody is kidnapped in our society, for example, they don't always just bring in the guns; they bring in a negotiator. They bring in somebody who actually has learned the set of social skills that is likely to lead to the

kidnapping being resolved in a positive way, where neither the victim nor the perpetrator's lives are forfeited. The police officers know how to do this kind of work, and I think most of them would welcome doing this kind of work.

Unfortunately, there is a trend, I think, coming largely from the States going in the opposite direction, and I think it's a good chance for us to say: "Not here. Not in Alberta. We don't want to move in that particular direction. We want to move in a positive, progressive direction. We want to create a society in which everyone is treated responsibly and respectfully by the services that we have." In the same way that we would ask that of health care or social services, we could ask that of policing, and I expect that we will be very happy with the outcome if we indeed see police services being set up around this kind of agenda rather than an agenda of power and control over citizens, which is not a very productive agenda.

I don't think that our police services are asking for that – I'm worried about the trend I see from the States – but I think that we need to be really clear where we stand on this, and we stand in a place that says: all citizens are worth recovering; all citizens are worth inviting back into the fold, no matter what kind of activities they've been engaged in. We can do that by having intervention services that are focused on the structural reasons why people are outside of the fold, the drivers that have pulled them out of being good citizens.

I'll finish my comments by saying that I appreciate the government bringing forward this bill. Although I've had some concerns about it, I see some potential here. I certainly like the emphasis on citizen involvement and citizen review, some of the changes to ASIRT, and so on. I think that this amendment fits right into that, is really consistent with that, and will allow us to feel like we've had a fulsome discussion of what it is that we want to see in our police forces and will invite a new pattern in society that is citizen based and positive outcome based. It's not about control. It's not about the containment of people. It's about inviting people to become participants in our society in a positive way.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I rise today to speak on this amendment. I want to commend the members opposite for raising these issues. I think that everyone in this Chamber would agree that antiracism, trauma-informed practice, understanding the diversity of the people of Alberta are incredibly important.

I know that I've been personally blessed to be able to work on a number of issues in my time as an elected official. I've worked with the missing and murdered indigenous women joint working group, where indeed we undertook lengthy conversation, lengthy research, in-depth thought, and debate to produce the joint working group report. We had an emphasis throughout all of our discussions certainly on antiracism but definitely on trauma-informed practices.

We also see that – I see, at any rate – across our province police forces are changing. They have been changing for years. The police services that came in front of us, in fact, for the joint working group: we had Aboriginal police forces, we had city police forces, we had RCMP come before us to have conversations on how policing is done. Antiracism, trauma-informed practices, looking at desegregated data are certainly also important. I will say this. I have seen a great deal of change in policing. I look to Police Chief McFee, for instance, and the work that he's done in the city of Edmonton, and I don't think there's anybody in this Chamber who could say that Chief McFee and his police force don't understand these concepts.

I recognize the sentiment behind this amendment and why it was brought forth, but frankly I think that this amendment – at this point our police forces have this in their minds at all times, in my view. I think they work every day with these values as a premise to their work. I'm not sure that we need an amendment. Although I understand the sentiment and I appreciate the sentiment, I'm not sure that this amendment is necessary for this legislation.

I just want to say that I appreciate our police officers out there who are doing good work every day to make sure that diversity and inclusion are part of their everyday work, making sure that trauma-informed practice is occurring every single day and that antiracism is something that we all take seriously and our police forces take seriously. I think that that goes without saying. Our police forces understand antiracism, and they undertake it every day.

I would say that while the sentiment behind it is commendable, I think that this amendment is extraneous to what we're trying to get done with this bill today. I think the bill proceeds nicely without any amendments, and I'll just leave it at that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment regarding Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. I want it read into the record what we're asking, especially after the previous speaker and their comments. I just can't believe some of the things that come out of this Chamber. I mean, those comments were so tone deaf to what is happening in our province in regard to the treatment of Albertans. To say, you know, "This amendment is wonderful, but I'm not going to do it" just throws in the face of so many individuals their experience.

Mr. Chair, what we're proposing, what we're asking this Assembly to do is that the Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 4, in the proposed section 1.1, by adding the following after clause (e):

(e.1) it is desirable that policing services be provided in a manner that recognizes the importance of intersectionality, anti-racism and trauma-informed practice as critical analytical frameworks for meeting the diverse needs of individuals and communities in Alberta.

This is essential when it comes to an expectation of the police force and those that they serve that is representative of Albertans. We have a very, very diverse province. We have experiences that we have all heard first-hand, that we've witnessed in the news. We've heard heartbreaking stories of racism, of systemic racism, not just from individual officers but from the system itself. To ask that this be included but to have members of government say, "Yes, this is important, and it's already done" completely minimizes the experiences that so many in Alberta are experiencing.

We have a society that needs to do better, needs to come from a place of understanding, and when we're asking for an amendment to include these strong needs – intersectionality, antiracism, trauma-informed practice – I think those are key guiding principles that should be enshrined in the Police Act. It would enhance what this government is trying to do in Bill 6. I think that standing up and saying, "Yes, it's important, but we're not going to support it" tells a really strong story to those that are experiencing trauma, that it's not important enough to put it in writing, to make it part of the guiding principles.

That, to me, Mr. Chair, is very telling. When we have the responsibility in this Chamber to make sure that we are putting forward legislation that takes into account the human experience of so many, we need to take action and do something that not only

acknowledges that experience but puts real language to what the expectation is.

I've worked alongside police for most of my career in social work, whether I was working in the school system, working in group care, working in Children's Services as a family support worker. We relied heavily on the support of the police. Sometimes it was in awful circumstances where we needed police assistance to come in and to help. I can tell you that there is so much work that can be done. So many officers that I've spoken to when working with Children's Services have expressed a desire to understand and to learn more. But if that isn't an expectation or training for police, how can that come into place? You have to have legislation that supports this as part of the practice. You can't sit in this Chamber and say that it's already happening. We're talking to Albertans. We hear those horrific stories of mistreatment. To say that it's done in recruiting is enough – that's not enough.

I have sat in training sessions with EPS in Children's Services to go through sexual assault training and to assist with police members in understanding how to take a disclosure of sexual assault from a child. The interest of those members – they had to personally sign up for that. So often they had shared that they wished that that was something that was just part of their job. This gives the government an opportunity to highlight the importance and to take action in supporting our police in getting the critical analytical framework that they need to properly and effectively and compassionately support Albertans.

You do what you know until you know better. This is a wonderful opportunity to provide some very specific language that enhances the guiding principles of our Police Amendment Act. I think that encouraging their members to vote it down is a detriment to what they're claiming this act is intended to do.

I think that when we talk about antiracism and trauma-informed practice, it's essential that those serving Albertans, the first responders, have an understanding of what those individuals' experiences are. To show up at a call with that deep understanding of what it means to have trauma-informed practice is so essential. I know through social work over the years that as we learned better, we did better. We come from a place of truly wanting to serve and help, but if you don't have all the tools necessary, perhaps you're not able to do your best work.

I'm just baffled that this government sits here and says: "It's already done. It's good enough the way it is. We don't need to put that language in there." Well, that's the whole purpose of opening up the act, to be able to listen to the true life experiences of Albertans and to make sure that they are part of that act and that we have guiding principles that really meet the needs of individuals and communities in the province of Alberta.

With that, Mr. Chair, I hope that everybody in the Chamber supports this amendment. It doesn't take away anything. It adds incredible support and value to what this piece of legislation is intending to do.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has the floor.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment on Bill 6. I appreciate the comments that my colleagues have made so far on this. I think, you know, first and foremost, the Minister of Justice and, I believe, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore both spoke about: in their opinion, this amendment is not necessary. I strongly disagree. I mean, I'll start off by saying, first of all, that we're adding a guiding principle. There are other guiding principles that I think augment this bill: the fact that we're talking about acknowledging the history and culture

of Indigenous peoples. We're talking about the fact that "police services should strive to reflect the pluralistic character of society and the communities they serve," that they "should promote a culture of accountability." This is a guiding principle.

5:10

You know, earlier I listened to the Minister of Justice talk about the fact that police already do this. Well, if they do this, then let's codify it in legislation. Then there shouldn't be a resistance to it. This isn't adding more work. This isn't adding red tape. This is augmenting a guiding principle.

From my experiences, I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that there are some officers who are asking for this, who are looking for more training, you know, because they recognize that the communities that they serve are increasingly diverse.

Now, before I dive into this further, I do want to take a moment, as I foreshadowed earlier this afternoon, to recognize the outstanding work that our men and women do to serve and protect. I am firmly in the belief, Mr. Chair, that the men and women who serve in our police force in Edmonton's northeast are the best of the best. I was at an event a couple of months ago. It's the annual Fort Road AGM, so the Fort Road BIA, business improvement area. I've got to tell you that every year not only do our beat officers come to this event; we get all of the senior officers from the northeast division that attend.

This year being my final time to speak at this event as an MLA – it was back in October – I took, you know, an extra couple of moments to recognize the incredible contributions that EPS has made to improve the lives of so many constituents in my riding and the fact that the northeast division has a stellar reputation for building relationships with community members. They are active in the community. They turn up to every single community event, whether we're flipping pancakes or we're at the farmers' market or we're participating in a parade or we're doing a cleanup. EPS in the northeast are absolutely outstanding.

An example of that: one retired superintendent – a retired superintendent – showed up again this year because he is so committed to the community. Tom is his name, and I gave him a shout-out. One of the nicest human beings you will ever meet and a great leader and has accomplished so much for not only northeast but for all of Edmonton and Alberta. As well, Randy, one of our beat officers who's been in the northeast forever, got moved to another division but still showed up to show his support. We had, honestly, probably around 10 EPS officers that attended by choice – not because they had to – because they are so involved in the community and part of a community. I thank them. On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly I thank them for their service because they truly do make our community a better place and do it from a place of humility and sincerity. You know, with that, Mr. Chair, they want to find ways to enhance the work that they're doing. They want to provide an even better level of service for the community.

This amendment that my colleague the Justice critic has put forward will augment the work that they're doing. All that this is asking – I mean, this isn't even requiring additional training. This is simply recognizing the importance of intersectionality, of antiracism, and of trauma-informed practices.

Every time I listen to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford speak about his experiences as a social worker, likewise my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, I learn something new about their perspective but also, you know, the incredible service that they gave to our city and their communities. The fact that trauma-informed practice means that the men and women who serve can do an even better job, if there's a way that we can through our day-to-day practice foster a culture and be able to work with people where they're at and ensure that we're serving

them in a way that not only benefits them but can also benefit our system, then I think it's a win-win.

Again, you know, honestly, Mr. Chair, I will be shocked if the government doesn't accept this. This is a guiding principle. We're not asking them to make sweeping changes to the bill. There are already four guiding principles. This is adding one more.

But if there's one thing I've learned in this place, Mr. Chair, it is that it is important, words written on the page, that things like guiding principles matter and should be in legislation. They should be codified because entities like our police services province-wide look to the legislation, what's in there. This could result in enhanced and augmented training. This could better inform the men and women who serve our province on how they interact and deal with Albertans. This can help them do a better job.

Mr. Chair, I'm a huge fan of continuous learning and of professional development. I think everyone in every position should have opportunities to grow and to improve. I think a rising tide lifts all boats. When individuals are given those opportunities, they're going to do better in their job. It doesn't matter if they move to a different job; they're improving their whole workplace no matter where they move. This amendment helps them do that.

You know, I can talk a little bit more broadly about the fact that one of the things I appreciate in this bill is the acknowledgement and recognition of civilian oversight and the role of civilians in participating. I think that's important. I can go back to my example of why northeast division for Edmonton police is so effective. Do you want to know why, Mr. Chair? Because of the relationships that they build in the community. I did a ride-along with two outstanding officers – this was probably a couple of years ago now – and I was so impressed with the relationships they had built with members of the community, and I mean all members. I mean, even people who have been in and out of incarceration still have good relationships with EPS and help inform them so that they can do a better job.

The role of Albertans and civilians is critical. We see that all the time, how police services rely on the relationships they have with Albertans, because they can't be everywhere. A bill that enhances civilian oversight and participation is positive. It's positive for this bill, and I think it's positive for our police.

5:20

I honestly believe, Mr. Chair, that if we had the ability – and we don't because of time – to survey the men and women who serve as to whether or not they would like to see this guiding principle included in the legislation, I'm confident that there would be an overwhelming majority who would say yes. If we had time to go out and survey them, then we would. But for Albertans watching at home, I mean, the bill was tabled a week ago, we're in Committee of the Whole, and it'll likely pass out of committee sometime today and this week, next week pass out of third, so there just isn't time for that.

But in the relationships that I have with our police, whether it's EPS, the Calgary Police Service, the RCMP, or others, they're looking for these types of signals that will enable them to sign up for more training. There is no downside to including this in the legislation. This is where I don't understand when members get up and say: no, we don't need this; most of them are already doing this. Okay. Well, that's fantastic if they are. That's great. But, then, let's codify it in legislation.

Mr. Chair, I've told the story in this place of probably the most disappointing day of mine as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in my 10-plus years in this place. It was back in my first term, between 2012 and 2015, when I was part of a four-person fourth party, and we tabled an amendment to enhance a bill. Members of government, the cabinet, stood up and said: this is a very reasonable amendment; this

makes sense; we see no reason why we can't do it. But they still voted against it, and we divided.

During the division I went across and I spoke to members of Executive Council and said, "If you stood up and said that the amendment was reasonable, why are you not accepting it?" And the answer, Mr. Chair, was, "Because it came from the NDP." I can tell you that that answer is what disgusts Albertans. They don't want to see partisan politics get in the way of good ideas. And you know what? The reality is that good ideas come from all sides of the Chamber. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas, and for anybody who thinks they do, that's dangerous, and they won't put forward good ideas. The best CEOs surround themselves with really, really smart people who help them make those great decisions and come up with those great ideas.

So that day I will never forget, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Eggen:** Was I there?

**Mr. Bilous:** You were in the Chamber. The Member for Edmonton-North West was in the Chamber. I served with him, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and the former Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

That was really disappointing, and that's why, you know, Mr. Chair, I will give credit where credit is due and always have. When I've been in opposition and the government has accepted amendments, I will give them kudos. I will give them the appreciation that they deserve. When we were government and I was the minister of economic development and trade, I adopted a number of amendments from the opposition. If they are good and they're going to strengthen or enhance a bill, then why wouldn't I? It is the most ridiculous answer in the world to not accept an amendment because of the party or the person who is moving it.

Albertans want to see good policy. Every time I talk to a business owner, whether it's a sole proprietor, a small-business owner, or an executive from a multinational, they just want to see good policy. Frankly, Mr. Chair, that's part of the success of the Westminster system. We have a multiparty system to be able to share ideas, to come up with the best solutions, the best approaches to tackling problems.

I'm of the position: let's encourage that; let's adopt that; at every opportunity let's accept good amendments. And to say, as the answer, that police are already doing this – great. So let's enshrine it in legislation. That's not a reason not to accept it. I've yet to hear a good reason for the government to not accept this amendment. This is augmenting the guiding principles.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will urge the government to do the right thing, to accept this reasonable amendment. Let's strengthen this bill, and let's do what we came here to do, which was to bring forward the best possible legislation to serve our constituents and Albertans and make our province a better place.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to rise again just for a few moments. I have really appreciated the debate on Bill 6 and, in particular, this amendment this evening and want to thank, well, all of the members of the opposition for speaking to this. I'm sorry if I leave anyone out here in particular, but I want to give my thanks to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie as well as the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I'm going to end up naming everyone here, so I'm going to stop. I really appreciate, over my last seven, going on eight years in this House, the wisdom of those

members as well as the members for Edmonton-Castle Downs, Edmonton-Rutherford – okay; I think I've named most of them now – and everyone on this side in their own respect, whether they're a social worker, whether they've dealt with these issues in other ways.

I do just want to reinforce one more time the very important point that many members on this side of the House have made, just recognizing this amendment, again, just adding in the guiding principles. We see many guiding principles here, and they all seem very reasonable. I think they strengthen this legislation. I think that they're valuable to have included in this legislation.

I was disappointed, to say the least, to hear government members say: well, you know, our police services already do things like consider intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice, so we don't think it's necessary to include it in this legislation. But then I would argue, Mr. Chair – and I would disagree with this point. It seems that the government is arguing that none of these guiding principles need to be in here, then, if they already recognize the history and cultures of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people in Alberta. I don't think that the government is arguing that they don't already do that, but they are including it in the guiding principles within this legislation because it is valuable to have it included and codified in legislation, as the previous member and many members of the opposition said before.

Very quickly, Mr. Chair, I think this is an incredibly important amendment. I think that it is a valuable addition to the guiding principles. I think that it's become very clear, the importance of considering intersectionality, whether we're talking about GBA plus policies when we're considering any government policy, especially in cases of police matters and the idea of antiracism.

The fact is that in this day and age, Mr. Chair, we need to be more than not racist. We need to take every opportunity we can to be antiracist, to call out racism, and to uplift communities who have traditionally been affected by racism. It's not enough to simply let people, you know, just live, I guess, to not call out racism. We need to celebrate and recognize the importance of their contributions, of diversity, of backgrounds, considering intersectionality, considering ethnicity, culture, and many other things.

With that, Mr. Chair, I look forward to hearing more and eventually voting on this, but I do appreciate the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall for bringing this forward. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

5:30

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my privilege, actually, and my pleasure to rise in the House and have the opportunity to add my comments on this amendment to Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022. I understand that there's not much time for me to say this, and I also really will say thank you to my colleague who put this amendment forward and many of my other colleagues who added their important comments and supported this amendment. I don't know exactly how much time I would have, how far I wanted to go, but this issue is very close to my heart, and I've been very passionate about this. I was looking for the opportunity in this House where I could just share my views and my learning and enrich the experience of this House, how both sides of the House can come together and then do better to address the issue of racism in this province and social equality and all those.

We have a history of racism in this country. The history is deep rooted in colonial rule. We all know that it goes back. Canada was,



I now understand, not very unique. I come from the very place that also was ruled by British colonial rule for over 200 years. What had happened: Canada was probably one of the very real places where the Indigenous people of that land faced genocide, and they were systematically attacked over 100 years, 120 years, 125 years, during the residential schools, how the children were snatched from the families. Canada probably is one of the rare places in the world where you will see the mass graves of those children are being recovered, you know, day to day. Canada is the only place, probably, where we call the graduates, the people from the schools, the survivors – not the graduates; survivors – the term coined because of the history and brutality and the options and the choices and lives existed for those very people.

We also know that Canada was built by immigrants. Immigrant communities have played a very important role in the development of Canada and this province, but unfortunately every immigrant or nationality did not experience actually the same thing as the majority of the immigrants coming from, probably, European countries. They were privileged to receive welcome and support and settlement help, including in Alberta. We see that happened from the early '90s to the mid-20s while Canada was openly accepting the immigrants from some parts of the world, mostly the White immigrants. Similarly, those immigrants from other places played a critical role. Chinese immigrants, from the late 1800s to early 1900s, played and worked hard to build the Canadian railways, but they were provided with the Chinese head tax in the 1920s, one of the worst things that could happen to them in Canada.

Similarly, Indians – united India, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, many countries. The immigrants from India: as British subjects they were under British rule. They served in the First World War for the British. They served in the Second World War for the British. But they had a very different experience coming here. Coming to Canada, what they experienced was that in restaurants, in stores, in public places Indians and dogs were not welcomed. This is what they faced. This is when their light and fight against racism started. Not only this. In 1908 the right to vote from Indians was taken back, snatched. They had to fight for another 40 years, until 1947, when they got it back.

There's a lot to talk about. We know that racism is not any government's policy in this country or any of the provinces. We also know that many of those colonial practices do still exist, not only in Canada. Canada has definitely the overt things – the people like me who come from different parts of the world can see what is happening – but in many of those countries where the British ruled, those practices still exist the way it was.

The bill we are discussing, the Police Amendment Act, is very important. We have discussed this in this House many times. As a multiculturalism critic I had the opportunity with the consultation of Albertans, the consultation we had for almost 10 months in this province. That was one of the main, actually, feedbacks that we got back, addressing the issue with the police force, law enforcement. This was one of the biggest ones, that, you know, the police force, law enforcement's force, comes in many cases, to the immigrant particularly or the racialized communities, as a substitute to the support for mental health, a substitute to the trauma-informed situations.

We have seen the recent case of what happened in Calgary with Latjor Tuel, the very gentleman, a hard-working individual, how he fell through the cracks and ended up in, you know, the police. I would not call this encounter that; he was killed. A number of those issues. I know the UCP members – the family came all the way from Calgary to speak with someone from the government, but no one was available. I had the opportunity to come out and listen to them and even received the memorandum not only for ourselves but for the government members.

This issue is very critical. What we are asking is the bare minimum. That is one of the demands. There are a number of those things we can do, but adding in the intersectionality just as a guiding principle: I think this is just a symbolic change. There's a lot more to do. If we don't seem to see that we cannot even, you know, come up to support this bare minimum thing, then this is a demonstration that we have a long way to go. Our legislators themselves need to learn a lot about our own society, what is happening, because what happened a hundred years ago – probably not in the same way, but we will see that practices still exist. We will see the disproportionality of those communities when it comes to law enforcement. We need to start it from somewhere, and this is the bare minimum and a very good proposal. I would call this a friendly amendment, that my colleague has actually proposed.

I would really like to see support coming from the government House members. They had a chance. I brought forward a motion not long ago, when the government announced the Police Act review, that the antiracism panel should be formed to go out, speak with racialized communities and minorities, Indigenous leaders, the Indigenous community, and come back and set up their report, but that was defeated. Now we have a chance to do it. I would really appreciate – I would like to see this – the government House members supporting this.

With that, I conclude my remarks, Mr. Chair, and I'll be happy to see that all the members of this House will support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Loyola
Carson	Feehan	Sabir
Deol	Goehring	

Against the motion:

Allard	Luan	Rowswell
Amery	Madu	Sawhney
Copping	Milliken	Shandro
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Smith, Mark
Gotfried	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Guthrie	Orr	Wilson
Issik	Pon	Yao
Jones	Rehn	Yaseen
Loewen		

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the main bill.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also rise to now move another amendment. I can read that into the record while it's being distributed.

The MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall to move that Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended as follows. In section 28 in the proposed section 42.2 by adding the following immediately after subsection (9):

(10) For greater certainty, a complaint may be filed with respect to a former police officer under this section if, at the time the subject matter of the complaint occurred, the former police officer was a police officer.

In section 29 in the proposed section 43 by adding the following immediately after subsection (9):

(10) For greater certainty, the chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission may not dismiss a complaint under this section with respect to a former police officer if

- (a) at the time the subject matter of the complaint occurred, the former police officer was a police officer, and
- (b) there is no other basis for dismissing the complaint.

Basically, this amendment . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** One moment.

Hon. members, this amendment will be known as amendment A2.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. Basically, this amendment protects the jurisdiction of the police commission for the review of conduct of the police officer for conduct while employed as a police officer. This aligns the professional conduct review of police officers in line with the medical profession. This ensures that an individual cannot avoid justice by quitting, being fired, or moving to a different police force. It is important for accountability that the procedure is protected in alignment with other regulated professions and bodies.

With that, I urge all members of this House to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any others wishing to speak to amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

And, hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Oh, no.

**The Deputy Chair:** . . . but the time for debate this afternoon has concluded. The House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30 p.m. The committee; sorry. The committee will resume at 7:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 14, 2022

Day 10

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

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New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 6 Police Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Would anyone like to add comments or questions to the amendment? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole on Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022, and specifically to speak to what I believe is amendment A2. If I'm correct, the number of it is A2. For those who may not be aware yet or maybe are just joining us on live TV wanting to watch what's happening in the Assembly tonight, which I do encourage everybody to do, we are speaking to an amendment that was brought forward by my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, which is an amendment related to, essentially, when complaints can be brought and who they can be brought against under the police.

I want to begin – I haven't had an opportunity yet, Mr. Chair, to actually speak to this bill. I know that we're on the amendment, and I certainly will be speaking to the amendment; it's very related. But just more generally for those, you know, who are interested in knowing what's happening, Bill 6 is taking what I believe are some very positive steps towards providing some more independent oversight over the police, really, by establishing a commission that will be responsible for reviewing complaints made against police officers. This is really important, of course, because we have significant concerns, as many Albertans do, about, you know, the fairness of a process when it is police essentially investigating themselves. We've heard those concerns raised loud and clear, that police shouldn't be investigating police. There are conflicts of interest there. There are skewed perspectives that have challenged, really, the credibility of some of the decisions that have happened.

More than ever I believe it's important for Albertans to have trust and have faith in their police. We also know that there are so many really fantastic police officers who are doing incredible work, and, you know, that relationship and that credibility should not be undermined because of the actions of some. One of the steps to ensure that we have a process in place that's perceived as as well as is fair is to provide that civilian oversight of complaints that are made against police.

Bill 6 does a great deal in terms of establishing the police review commission and processes for handling certain complaints that are made. In particular, I noted that it's established what they kind of call level 1, 2, 3, 4 complaints. Certain complaints, level 1 complaints, are, you know, an allegation that – actually, I'm not going to try to paraphrase it, Mr. Chair, because I think it's important to be accurate. It does say that a level 1 complaint is where

An incident has occurred involving serious injury to or the death of any person that may have resulted from the actions of a police officer, or a complaint alleges that

- (a) serious injury to or the death of any person may have resulted from the actions of a police officer, or
- (b) there is a matter of a serious or sensitive nature related to the actions of a police officer.

Those are level 1 complaints. They will continue to be investigated by what we all know as ASIRT, but it will now be done under the auspices of the police review commission. There are a number of other levels of complaints that can be made, as set out in this bill, based on the seriousness and the nature of the allegations.

Again, very supportive of the idea of an independent body reviewing complaints made against police. That's actually good for everyone. It is good for Albertans. It is good for police officers. It is really the best outcome. This is really something that, you know, had been initiated when we began the review of the Police Act as the NDP back in I believe it was 2017 or 2018. I may have my dates wrong. My apologies, Mr. Chair. But this was really one impetus behind that review of the Police Act: how do we provide better oversight of police, but also, how do we ensure that Albertans have confidence in those processes to make sure that they are fair?

In that spirit, Mr. Chair, really, the amendment that was put forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall was really to go further than perhaps what the act has suggested, to ensure that a police officer cannot sort of escape a complaint being made or being investigated by the police review commission by virtue of either quitting the police force or moving to another police force. Essentially, what the amendment does is, you know, clarifies and proposes an amendment to the proposed section 42.2 of the bill by adding the following, which would be subsection (10):

For greater certainty, a complaint may be filed with respect to a former police officer under this section if, at the time the subject matter of the complaint occurred, the former police officer was a police officer.

And it goes on by adding in section 43 another subsection (10), which reads:

For greater certainty, the chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission may not dismiss a complaint under this section with respect to a former police officer if

- (a) at the time the subject matter of the complaint occurred, the former police officer was a police officer, and
- (b) there is no other basis for dismissing the complaint.

It's pretty straightforward. It's simply to say that if an allegation and a complaint is made against a police officer, they can't just quit and that's the end of the complaint. That doesn't provide resolution to the complainant or the individuals who may have been affected by simply saying: oh, we can no longer look into this complaint because that police officer is no longer employed.

I would say there is precedent for this in many other, you know, settings, which is that simply because an employee is no longer employed does not mean that the conduct by which a complaint is made – and let's be clear. We're talking about very potentially serious issues, and when we're talking about police, we're talking about individuals who are in a great position of public trust and of power.

The reality is that the police serve Albertans. They serve the public, and if the conduct of one police officer, you know, would merit a complaint and would be found to be legitimate by a complaint process, you would not want that person to just escape sort of any investigation or outcome or resolution simply because they have either been fired or they have resigned from their position. That conduct doesn't just fall – it's not just a matter that affects that individual police officer. If a police officer has engaged in conduct that is worthy of a complaint, that's calling into question the very trust that Albertans have in that police force more generally. It's why the complaint process must still be able to apply to police officers even if they've stepped down.

So this is what the intent of this amendment is about, and I'm really hopeful that – you know, this is not a partisan issue. In our

view, this is something to simply clarify the language of the bill, to be clear that they're still going to be held, some accountability held, when somebody steps down as a police officer. Again, very similar to what happens in the medical profession: simply, if a doctor stops practising, it doesn't mean that their conduct is no longer investigated. It is important to have that trust. That is what I believe the intent is behind Bill 6, to actually encourage trust in our police, provide that oversight, and the intent of this amendment is simply to provide clarity for Albertans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, I think we have an example that is very top of mind for many Albertans, particularly Albertans who are in Calgary, where they have a sitting city councillor who has actually not even disputed that he engaged in inappropriate conduct with a minor when he was a police officer. In fact, he tried to imply that there was some kind of consent, at least, or something. You know, it is quite egregious that we having a sitting city councillor who as a police officer sexually assaulted, really – let's be clear – a minor while performing his duties as a police officer. We would not, I think, feel satisfied that that person, that individual, should be not held accountable for what they've done simply because they're no longer a police officer. In fact, that is a breach of public trust, and we certainly deserve, Albertans deserve, I can say Calgaryans deserve to be able to hold Mr. Sean Chu accountable not only as a former police officer but, of course, also as a city councillor.

I will take this opportunity to note that we are still seeing no movement from this government on taking action to remove Sean Chu as a sitting city councillor in Calgary, and that continues to send a profoundly insulting and disturbing message not only to Calgaryans but particularly to those who may have already been survivors of sexual violence. Really, it's this message that women in particular should not feel safe around their city councillor. So I encourage once again – and I use this opportunity, when we're talking about public trust in police officers and complaints made against police officers, to encourage this government, its cabinet, particularly its Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Justice, to take action, because I think Calgaryans have spoken out loud and clear that they expect Sean Chu to be held accountable, and I can say I certainly do as well, Mr. Chair.

**7:40**

The other piece I want to add to this, which is not necessarily part of this amendment – but I hope we will have an opportunity to bring forward another amendment to address the limitation periods that are in Bill 6. Currently in Bill 6 it talks about – I want to just get the section correct here, Mr. Chair. I know I tabbed it. Apologies. Here we go. It is in section 29 of the bill, and it is set out in the new section 43 proposed for the Police Act. It says that

The chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission shall dismiss any Level 2 or Level 3 complaint that is made more than one year after

- (a) the conduct complained of occurred, or
- (b) the complainant first knew or ought to have known that the conduct complained of had occurred, whichever occurs later.

In plain language it essentially means that the complaint must be brought against a police officer within a year. If it's not brought within that year of when the event occurred or when the complainant became aware of the circumstances leading to the complaint, then it will be dismissed.

I want to remind Albertans that level 2 complaints include those where a police officer may have committed an offence under an act of the Parliament or the Legislature, or level 3 is “a complaint alleges that a police officer has committed a contravention of the regulations governing the discipline of police officers.” These are

still significant concerns, and right now Bill 6 puts in a one-year limitation period on that. I would suggest, Mr. Chair, particularly when we're talking about allegations of sexual violence against a police officer, that there should be no limitation period.

Honestly, I think we all know in this House enough about the challenges, both emotionally, psychologically, administratively, all the reasons why there are challenges in bringing sexual assault allegations and claims forward in a timely fashion, not the least of which is, of course, that too often those who bring forward sexual assault or sexual violence allegations are not believed. They are treated very poorly through the whole process. Honestly, Mr. Chair, since we are talking about the context of police, we do know that many fear bringing allegations to the police itself. That is actually where we often see that women in particular but any person who has been subject to sexual violence will be hesitant to go forward to police because the very process can be incredibly traumatizing.

Let's add on, Mr. Chair, that we're talking about allegations of sexual violence potentially being brought to police against a police officer. We can imagine that that provides a huge additional barrier for individuals to bring forward those complaints. Of course, we often know that there are so many emotional factors that go into why a person may not be able to bring an allegation immediately after the event takes place. We know that there is a multitude of complex factors that go into that. I do think it's important that the government consider reviewing the limitation period as set out in Bill 6 and consider removing the limitation period for allegations or complaints against police officers that relate to sexual violence.

In fact, I'm very proud that the NDP government, when they were government, brought forward changes to the limitation periods for civil claims of sexual violence and actually removed the limitation period, recognizing exactly what I just spoke about, Mr. Chair: the challenges of bringing forward those complaints. I bring that in the context of this amendment because when we're talking about a former police officer, we want to ensure that simply no longer being employed as a police officer should not prohibit somebody from bringing a complaint.

Likewise, if the allegation is about sexual violence, that may take place somewhere long after the fact. I think those two amendments are pretty important to consider together because they certainly would apply to the example of Sean Chu in Calgary. You know, he is no longer a police officer, and those claims and allegations, which actually were founded, occurred many, many years ago. We do not want to see another situation where a police officer escapes accountability simply because they're no longer a police officer and the allegation of sexual violence happened many years ago.

I think we understand in this Assembly how important it is to offer those protections to individuals who may be subject to that kind of violence and enable them to access this process, which I again go back to believing was brought with the intention of providing greater transparency, accountability to the public for the actions and conduct of police. If that is the objective, Mr. Chair, I'd argue that the members in this House should vote in favour of this amendment, and if they are not going to vote in favour, I would really, genuinely like the members of the government caucus who may vote against to stand up and express why, why they would not support an amendment that would say that former police officers are also going to be held accountable.

I genuinely hope – we often have the situation, Mr. Chair, where we bring forward thoughtful amendments and they're voted down, and we don't even hear why. I think Albertans need to have an explanation. I certainly would not like it to be that it is voted down simply because it was brought forward by the Official Opposition. This is a thoughtful amendment that is intended to improve

accountability, to meet the objectives set out by this government in this bill, and it should be given due consideration. I do hope that the members of the government will vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. I just wanted to add that you can't quit your job and run away from criminal allegations. If a crime has occurred, simply resigning as a police officer doesn't absolve you of responsibility. You can still be investigated for that.

I just wanted to make sure that that was clear for everybody here, because I think it sounded like – if somebody, you know, say, 20-plus years ago had committed a sexual assault, they could still be charged for that, whether they're employed as a police officer or not or if it's under the Police Act. You've still committed a Criminal Code offence. You could still be held responsible for that. I just wanted to clarify that as well. I think that's the only thing I really wanted to touch on, because I think it insinuated that you could somehow do something criminal while a police officer and just simply resign and you've absolved yourself of that responsibility, that you can walk away from it.

The other part of it, the one-year limitation: it does exist. It is to make sure that complaints are handled in a timely manner. I think it's important for people to understand how complaints should be made. I think that having a provincial body as proposed in the main bill is important so that people understand how to make a complaint, how to do it quickly. I think we should get to those complaints and investigate them well to make sure that if any discipline needs to happen, it does happen, that if any training needs to happen, it does. Changes in practices are also important. There are many lawyers who wait one year less a day simply for their favour as well.

So having that one-year limitation: it does exist. I don't see any problem with that. I hope that anybody who has a complaint against a police officer knows where to go and how to make that complaint and also knows that if it's a criminal complaint, that can be investigated regardless of their employment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Others wishing to speak to the amendment? I see the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the member speaking and responding. I just want to clarify: the police review commission is not a criminal body. I don't think that anything in Bill 6 suggests that this is proving criminal allegations. The purpose of the police review commission is to carry out investigations and conduct disciplinary hearings.

What we're saying is that a former police officer should not be able to avoid a disciplinary hearing and a review of their conduct simply because they are no longer employed. It's very different than criminal provisions. That's not what this bill is about. It cannot be establishing a criminal process. The police review commission is about disciplinary hearings.

What we're saying is that certainly it is possible, under the reading of the bill that's currently before us, that a member who is no longer a police officer, who has stepped down, has resigned, has been terminated, cannot have their conduct reviewed for disciplinary purposes as a result of the way Bill 6 is drafted. What we're suggesting is that that former police officer should still be able to, within the

time limitation period set out in the bill, be subject to disciplinary investigation and a hearing.

We're also saying – and I want to go back to the limitation period – that we're not necessarily objecting to one year as a limitation period. What we're saying is that there should be an exception made for those who are making allegations around sexual violence. That was my point, Mr. Chair. We're saying that in those circumstances where an allegation is made around sexual violence and the additional barriers that exist to bringing those claims in a timely fashion, many of which are compounded when those complaints are being made against a police officer, we're expecting somebody who's experienced sexual violence to go to the police to complain about conduct done by a police officer. Those are compounding issues which would create additional barriers. For sexual violence, for which we have recognized in civil law that the limitation period should not apply the same way as other allegations, we're simply suggesting and I put forward – it's not in an amendment right now before the House, but I certainly hope it will be – that that is the consideration.

I just want to be very clear that I do appreciate, though, members of the government standing up to respond, because I think this is the purpose of Committee of the Whole, to have this opportunity to engage back and forth. This is a well-intentioned amendment, simply to make sure that the police review commission, in its authority to conduct a disciplinary hearing, can include former police officers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Anyone else wishing to ask questions or make comments on amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Committee, we are back on the main bill, Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. This is an important bill, and I'm very happy to see it arrive at long last in front of the House. This is a process that, we know, began in 2018, and this is an act that has not seen significant review or a full-scale update since 1988. Certainly, in the years between 1988 and today we have seen significant shifts in many aspects of our society, how we view the treatment of many members of our population. We have learned a lot about inequities that exist in many of the systems that each of us lives under every day. Certainly, we have seen that there are disproportionate impacts within the justice system, and that also affects policing.

Of course, the changes we are making today are not solely about addressing those sorts of inequities and concerns around systemic racism, but they are certainly a large part of the conversation we've been having over, I'd say, the last decade, certainly as we've seen the conversations that arose as we began to see the conversations around Black Lives Matter, with the killing of a number of young, unarmed Black men in the United States, concerns that we have seen that have occurred here. Indeed, you know, we have seen that here in Alberta, the death of Latjor Tuel in Calgary in the last year. His family was just recently here, I believe, just arrived this week from Africa to pay tribute at long last.

I recognize, Mr. Chair, that this has become a very politically fraught conversation. It is wrapped up in what can only be termed a larger culture war, a lot of people wrapping themselves in a lot of

flags, a lot of sloganeering. It has made it difficult in many ways to have the conversations that we really need to have about important changes that need to be made. But what we have in front of us in this bill is, hopefully, some steps that can help to reduce some of that tension. This conversation has been going on for some time, but certainly one point on which all in this conversation are agreed is that police should not be making decisions about police when it comes to a discipline and investigation process. This is one of the most politically fraught aspects of these situations.

When a citizen brings forward a complaint or a concern – indeed, again, this has been a big topic of conversation as we have had these conversations about the impact on racialized communities of policing, the concern that when a citizen brings a complaint forward, that complaint then is considered within the same police department in which the individual to which the complaint is addressed is working. Frankly, what we have heard clearly is that police themselves no longer want to be put in that position, where police officers have to think about how their decision on one of their fellow police members is going to be taken by others within the force. What is the impact that's going to have on relationships? What are the repercussions going to be within there?

They would prefer that this is taken out of their hands and put within an independent body to remove that challenge. Certainly, that is what we hear from citizens and others who have raised concerns about policing, that this should be in the hands of an independent body who themselves will not be influenced by relationships that they may have already and that are pre-existing or biases that may come from being in similar circumstances or knowing these individuals.

That is one of the pieces we indeed see coming forward in this bill, the creation of an independent police commission here in the province of Alberta to handle these complaints. I absolutely support that, Mr. Chair. That is an important and essential step. As I said, I think this is one step that can help to reduce some of the tension in this conversation, if when we have a complaint brought forward, it is considered by a fully independent body that has no connections to the police service or the police officer that is being investigated or against whom the complaint is addressed. That allows for a far more open conversation, that allows for more trust and faith in the decisions that are made, and that allows, hopefully, then, for a better quality of justice and certainly the feeling of a better quality of justice.

Again, Mr. Chair, what we talk about so often when we talk about concerns around conflicts of interest – and that's really what this boils down to – when police are investigating police and holding police accountable, the concern of conflict of interest, is that we must not only have justice be done, but it must be seen to be done. So that means that we go above and beyond to ensure that all involved can be sure that there is no bias in this system. This is important.

You know, when we talk about this, it's easy for, I think, folks to speak up and misconstrue or misunderstand and suggest that by having these conversations or bringing these things forward, people are denigrating police or that by suggesting that there needs to be a heightened level of accountability, we are targeting police. We should be clear. Police are given extraordinary power. In their duty to enforce the law, they are given a wide latitude regarding the use of force, regarding being able to restrain someone, to arrest someone, to place that person in prison. I recognize that there are a number of constraints that are built into that, but the fact is that, if I may revert momentarily to my comic book nerd roots, with great power comes great responsibility.

So if police are granted extraordinary power, there should be an extraordinary system of oversight and accountability. What we are

talking about today is what that accountability looks like. I think we are likely all in this Chamber in agreement with having an independent oversight body. That is an important step, and I'm glad that that is being taken.

Now, I would note that there have been some comments about the way this has been structured. A friend of mine, Dr. Temitope Oriola – again, if we're going to talk about and be honest about conflicts of interest, I'll note that Dr. Oriola is a friend of mine. I have a lot of respect for him. We have some good conversations. He provided advice to the previous Minister of Justice, now the Deputy Premier. He was tasked as a special adviser, and he provided a report to the minister at the time. He is speaking now and giving his opinion on this particular bill, and what he has stated about this independent oversight body is that he has raised a concern that, unlike other jurisdictions, unlike what he says is the standard amongst our peer countries around the world, there is no provision that will prevent a former police officer from serving on this commission. Now, again, that is not to suggest it is impossible for a former officer to impartially assess the actions of a current officer.

8:00

Again, if we are talking about wanting to ensure that we are eliminating even the appearance of a conflict of interest, if we want to ensure that all communities who were affected by the extraordinary power that is granted to police trust in this independent oversight body, there is a question of whether the involvement of police in that oversight body, whether they are former police officers is appropriate. What we see in other jurisdictions is that they have taken steps to have that not be the case. In this case the government is not choosing to do that. I think that's something that should be under consideration, and Dr. Oriola agrees. The reason is, Mr. Chair, that we have a public perception.

I note a recent story which just came out about an officer in Calgary who was charged and under investigation for his treatment of an individual who was in a wheelchair. Video was released in the court, and just released recently this week, which shows that officer pushing over the gentleman in a wheelchair. He was handcuffed in the wheelchair. The officer pushed him over, stepped on his bare foot, and kicked him in the face. I think we're all in agreement, Mr. Chair, that that is unacceptable behaviour under any circumstance. That is an abuse of the power that is granted to a police officer, so it was appropriate that that was reported then by staff at AHS and that was duly investigated.

Now, that officer has been given, in my understanding, a suspended sentence, but the thing is, Mr. Chair, that at that court trial, where this officer was summarily found guilty of inappropriate behaviour, the news report says that at least 15 Calgary police officers attended the court that day to support that officer. Half a dozen of them were in uniform, and after the court ruling they greeted the officer with smiles, hugs, and handshakes to celebrate the fact that he did not go to prison.

Now, Mr. Chair, the judge noted that at the time of the incident that officer was going through a difficult divorce. I think we've all been in circumstances where we are emotionally vulnerable, where we are in a bad state, where our anger may get the better of us, but in this case this, again, was a police officer with extraordinary power, and he allowed that to override and to physically assault an individual who could not fight back.

The appearance of this, that his fellow officers would arrive at a court case where he was found guilty of that assault and congratulate him on escaping a prison sentence: what message does that send to the broader public? What message does that send to others who have experienced potentially abusive police powers? We know it

does happen and it does exist. That is not impugning all police. It is just simply being factual about what we have seen in stories we have seen reported and, unfortunately, reported more often than really should be occurring.

Again, when we have these sorts of situations, one can understand why members of the public who are vulnerable and who statistics show are more likely to experience these sorts of circumstances at the hands of police would have difficulty with the idea that an independent oversight commission that investigates these sorts of incidents should be allowed to have police officers sit on it. When we see, at times, the kind of culture and camaraderie – again, it may simply be a question of these officers not understanding how their actions and their choices in this matter appear to members of the public and people from outside of that culture and that circle. I think we're all familiar with the idea of dome disease, how we ourselves can get caught up in our political culture here and forget sometimes how our actions and words and behaviour can appear to people who are outside of this. Again, I absolutely support the idea of an independent oversight commission, but I indeed share Dr. Oriola's concern that he raises regarding police officers being allowed to serve on this independent oversight commission.

The other piece I would note here is that this government is awarding itself the power to appoint members to municipal police commissions. This is something that some municipal leaders have raised concerns about. Tanya Thorn, the mayor of Okotoks and a board member with Alberta Municipalities, has said that she doesn't love the idea of provincial politicians being able to appoint members of their local police commissions. She notes that those groups need people who understand the local area and its people and policing needs, and there's certainly nothing in the provisions the government is giving itself that says that they have to appoint anybody locally or who knows that community or is involved with that community. What she said was: anything that takes away from our local autonomy as municipalities we always have a concern about.

Of course, Mr. Chair, we've been having some very robust conversation in this Chamber about autonomy and sovereignty and certainly this government's deep concern about anyone taking away its sovereignty and autonomy over areas over which it feels it should have sole jurisdiction, to the point that we have ministers shooting videos using some very interesting old literature that certainly has some questionable commentary about racial history in the province of Alberta. The fact is that I can't help but feel that in some senses this is a government which says one thing and then does another, which sets one standard for itself and has another expectation for others.

Now, the minister did note that in B.C. that is the case – the B.C. government has the ability to appoint members to local police commissions, and that is true – but I would note, Mr. Chair, that it is a very different process. The minister did not note that. It is not the minister by regulation, sitting in his office by stroke of a pen, that simply appoints them; they go through a process, just like we do for independent officers of the Legislature, where a motion is actually brought into the Legislature and in front of all MLAs for consideration before an appointment is made.

We have seen again, repeatedly, that this is a government that likes to try to look for opportunities to give its ministers more power to make these decisions behind closed doors, by the stroke of a pen, without the oversight of the Legislature. Now, this isn't quite the circumstance that we had under Bill 10 or recently was originally in Bill 1, denied by the government for a good while before they finally admitted it was there and amended and took it out, but that said, it is still a circumstance where I think there's reason to question whether this is the appropriate way for the government to

do this or even to have the discussion around whether the government should be appointing members of local police commissions at all.

Certainly, I can say, Mr. Chair, as a representative here in Edmonton's downtown and having seen some of the recent conversations at our local city council and with a number of members in our community about the role of policing in our community and how funding is allocated to police or to other folks who may provide similar services or oversight or other options, we have seen a tendency from this government to weigh in with a bit of a heavy hand. Certainly, their recent appointment of a task force to deal with some issues here in the city made it very clear what their opinion is of a good majority of our city council and certainly our mayor. I was accused today by the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction of politicizing the issue. Let me be clear, Mr. Chair. This government chose to politicize that task force by the means by which they put it together and who they chose to include and exclude.

Certainly, I would have some concern that when we have had the sort of government we have had, who has not been afraid to go in and try to interfere with, say, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, which has targeted the Alberta Medical Association, which has gone on a great crusade about the need for greater oversight of the Alberta teachers and taking those things away from them, certainly treating them much different from how it's choosing to treat police officers, this government could choose to use the powers that it wants to give itself to appoint members of a police commission to attempt more interference.

**8:10**

That said, I do appreciate some of the other aspects that are brought forward in this legislation and some of the other pieces that are being put in place: certainly the requirement for police to develop community public safety plans, report annually on their progress on achieving their goals, report greater public transparency and accountability. Indeed, that's what we attempted to bring forward for our health care system in Bill 201 recently, which this government chose to defeat. Certainly, in principle I agree with having greater data and accountability, the requirement to develop a diversity and inclusion plan, again, having better representation.

I've had the opportunity to attend and speak at a number of police graduations as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre during the time we were in government and certainly always appreciated seeing growing diversity in the ranks, having the opportunity to be there to see folks from diverse communities stepping up as police officers and seeing the difference that makes. For people to see themselves and have people there who understand those communities can make a real difference in building bridges and building trust between our officers of the law and our local communities.

I think, certainly, the provincial guiding principles respecting human rights, recognizing the history and culture of First Nations, et cetera – I'm sorry the government did not want to accept some of the additional suggestions we had, but certainly those are important, too. I look forward to further debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to Bill 6? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise once again in the House to speak to Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. I just wanted to state for the record that I know many of my colleagues have said similar words, that the Alberta NDP supports civilian oversight of law enforcement in order to ensure policing is responsive to the needs and diversity of our communities. There

was a time we took some initiatives in this House, and I regretfully remember those moments were not supported by the government House members.

This legislation includes some positive steps, and we welcome this bill in the House. In that regard it is, however, very thin on details regarding how they plan to achieve these goals we are discussing in this bill. The Police Act review was started under the NDP government, and in general this legislation is on the right track, but there are a number of issues that will have to be addressed in a committee for us to support it. There are some questions, concerns. I know many of my colleagues and my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre highlighted those in the House. I just wanted to as well, you know, on behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Meadows who'd like to be on the record.

This bill leaves too many questions to regulations that are not developed. The bill creates new rules and new compositions for police commissions but allows the minister to appoint up to 50 per cent of provincial representatives to the commission, which, in turn, set local policing priorities. One of the main stated goals for the bill is independent oversight, but this bill technically, looking at what it proposes, is centralizing too much power and discretions with the provincial minister.

As I said, the review of the Police Act started under the NDP government, and the UCP state that this legislation is a result of the findings of that review and subsequent report. Interestingly, we did not see the findings of the reports. We will be happy to see if the UCP will share the findings of those reports or just make those reports public. The question is there: what is the rationale for stacking commissions with up to 50 per cent provincial representatives appointed by the minister? A number of the details on the composition of the policing committee are left, again, up to the regulations. Will the impacted communities and municipalities be consulted on regulations as they're being developed? That is the exact same concern we tried to address when the previous, you know, Justice minister actually promised in the House that they will share the Police Act review very soon.

We brought forward a motion addressing a similar mandate, that the antiracism panel should be constructed to talk to, you know, minorities and consult with racialized communities and Indigenous communities and provide a report back to the Legislature, and that was defeated by the government members.

The powers and the duties of the provincial police advisory board will have the duties and functions set out in the regulations. Why is this important work, why are these being left to regulations and therefore subject to the particular will of the government? The advisory board is intended to represent communities served by the RCMP under the provincial police service agreement. According to the materials provided by government, it is not clear how this representation will happen. How many communities are covered under this service agreement? Will the government be consulting with representatives, communities on regulations that will determine eligibility for requirements? Will there be formal changes to require an Alberta agreement with the RCMP K Division?

Proposed section 21 of the bill proposes an amendment to section 30, ministerial intervention, which would allow the minister to intervene with the council. This section of the act already allows the minister to intervene in the instance that adequate or effective policing services are not being maintained or contravening the act or regulations. What other areas does the minister envision needing to direct the council on regarding policing that is not already covered? Would this include requesting the council to amend funding decisions even when there is no increase in funding? Can you point to best practices and examples from jurisdictions where a

provincial minister has broad discretion to reach in and set local policing priorities.

Proposed section 22 of the act would amend the responsibilities of a police commission to include two new reporting requirements, reporting of policing priorities and annually or on request reporting of the programs and services to implement these priorities. Will the government be increasing financial support for policing to ensure that councils have the ability to provide adequate resources to the commission to meet the requirements of the act? We have seen that many times the government has brought bills forward and passed the legislation, even in many cases setting the timelines, but did not provide the required amount of resources to implement those legislations.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would like to move an amendment on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I think you could probably call this amendment A3. Moved that Bill 6 . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I'll just have you send copies to the table, please, and then we'll have you read it. Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** Sure. That Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended as follows . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, just wait a moment, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** Sure. Okay.

8:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, this will be amendment A3.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, please go ahead and read it into the record.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Amendment A3 reads that Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended (a) in section 17(b), in the proposed section 25, by striking out subsections (1.1) and (1.2) and substituting the following:

(1.1) The Minister may appoint additional members to a regional police commission if the Minister considers it necessary, provided that the total number of members appointed by the Minister does not exceed 25% of the total number of commission members.

(b) in section 18 in clause (a), in the proposed section 28, (A) by striking out subsection (2.1) and substituting the following:

(2.1) A commission shall consist of not fewer than 3 nor more than 12 members appointed in accordance with subsections (2.2) and (3).

(B) by striking out subsections (2.3) and (3) and substituting the following:

(3) The Minister may appoint additional members to a commission if the Minister considers it necessary, provided that the total number of members

(a) appointed to the commission does not exceed 12 members, and

(b) appointed by the Minister does not exceed 25% of the total number of commission members.

(ii) in clause (b), by striking out "subsection (2.3)" and substituting "subsection (3)."

Mr. Chair, this amendment reduces the ability of the minister to appoint 50 per cent from the bill, down to 25 per cent to the police commission. This appointment of authority over the operation and oversight of policing should not be centralized with the minister. In particular, it makes no sense to limit municipal representation so significantly, especially given the cuts to municipal funding and downloaded policing costs.



This amendment also reverts to the 12-member police commissions. We do not support the blatant overreach of the power that the bill in its current form is proposing. This amendment ensures that local voices are the majority at the table in police commissions.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would request all House members to support this amendment A3. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone else wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the floor.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to rise this evening to speak to such an important amendment and important piece of legislation. As has been mentioned by previous speakers, it is a piece of legislation that has been long coming and one that was initiated by a review that was begun under the NDP in 2018. The UCP, of course, has stated that this legislation is a result of findings of that review and subsequent reports, so we certainly would like to see that report being made public by the UCP and finding out if indeed that report did show what the rationale was for stacking the commissions with up to 50 per cent of provincial representatives appointed by the minister.

The basics of the amendment, Mr. Chair, are to actually get at the concern that we have in the opposition about the percentage of commission members that the minister would be able to appoint, thus affecting the perception of the public in terms of the impartiality of the commission. That's at the root of the concern, I think, of all parliamentarians here in the Legislature when it comes to amending the Police Act, because we are in a time of extreme stress on the reputation of the police not only in our province and our country but throughout the western world, where it is deemed that the police need to really take a close look at how they relate to the public in terms of protection of rights versus the perception of somebody is guilty before – you know, everybody seems to be a guilty party till proven innocent.

Mr. Chair, the police have a rather special obligation – and it seems to have been lost in recent years – to uphold to a higher level a perception of impartiality to the public, and that, I think, is something we're revisiting, hopefully, with this amendment by ensuring that the minister is limited to a 25 per cent total number of commission members that he or she has the ability to appoint. Public trust is absolutely sacrosanct when it comes to many things, and it really, really includes the police. The public has to know that when they are subject to any type of disorder, when criminal activity is found in their neighbourhoods, when indeed we find that there's a threat to our democratic rights, the police can be counted on to be impartial protectors of the law.

When it gets to a police commission hearing, Mr. Chair, if indeed the component membership of a police commission is not deemed in its inception to have been fair, then, of course, the public faith and public trust in the outcome of the commission's findings when they are considering the conduct of police and disciplinary actions will be suspect as well, and that's something we cannot allow to happen. So it's very, very critical that we make sure that we don't do anything that's going to cause the public to have misgivings about the very process we are about to formulate here in this House by setting the terms of membership for police commissions. Giving the minister the ability to appoint up to 50 per cent of the provincial reps is, I think, too much. This amendment serves to restore public faith in the process and to ensure that they believe the police commission will be an impartial body.

We've gotten to a point, Mr. Chair, where when we hear on the news that a police officer has been either charged or has been

accused of misconduct in a particular incident, the public doesn't expect the police officer ever to be found guilty, where there's an expectation of innocence, not necessarily of innocence but the expectation that the officer will be absolved of responsibility or guilt. The expectation of the conviction of a police officer is not something the public has. There's no surprise expressed by almost any member of the public now when a police officer is absolved of responsibility in a situation where they were accused of misconduct. We can look at the case law and look at the numbers and find that it's pretty well documented that the highest percentage of cases do not result in convictions or findings of wrongdoing against police officers. That in and of itself has led to a diminished level of public trust in the whole system of police oversight, public oversight of police officers. That, I hope, is something that the government is really wanting to address and rectify, because it's something that I can't imagine the police would want otherwise as well.

**8:30**

Police officers are part and parcel of many families of members of this Legislature, and you don't have to go very far beyond anybody's family to know that there are police officers close to one's family. They live amongst us, and we are grateful for their service, but they would be the first ones to know that the public trust is what they need to have in order to function properly. Often you hear it said that the police officer's best defence is their mouth, in other words talking. You don't gain somebody's trust without being able to communicate properly. At the very basic street level – I'm sure most police officers will agree – if that initial trust isn't there, then you've got a much more difficult job ahead of you to form relationships which will help you in your policing on the street or at higher level investigations.

The limitations that we are proposing in this amendment, Mr. Chair, will go a long ways to ensuring that the public trust in the whole process is encouraged or is augmented by the changes to the Police Act that we are contemplating under Bill 6. I hesitate to say that this in and of itself will cure the lack of trust that many people have in the oversight system that we have in this province of the police services. I think that if indeed we would have had a different composition of police commission members, we might have ended up, potentially, with different outcomes and findings in some of the cases that have been before them in the most recent years and even in past years. We shouldn't be in a judgment situation in a police commission hearing where the outcome is almost going before it, where there is no expectation that there may be a finding of guilt.

I know that those who are in more vulnerable populations than myself certainly have about zero faith in ever having a police officer found guilty of misconduct. The cases are so rare that they actually make much bigger news than the cases of police acquittal. That's not to say that the system is totally broken, but it certainly has lost the public trust that it needs to have in order to function properly.

As has been noted by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, police officers will be the first ones to say that they are not comforted by being judge and jury. They don't want to have an overabundance of members on a commission, and they want the public trust in the whole process. The last thing that police officers want is a disconnect between themselves and the public, because once that trust is gone, their job is almost impossible to do.

Their job is a difficult one. I've been on a ride-along. That was a one-day contract for a dollar when I was a volunteer in the Solicitor General's court intake unit. That in and of itself was a bit of an eye-opener. But there are police officers in my family. My sister is married to an RCMP officer who is retired now after 25 years, so I've had that through him and his experiences and those of his

brother, who's a city constable, now retired, and many others who I grew up with in Edmonton. I think half of the recruited members for the years 1975 to 1980 probably came from my neighbourhood of Wellington Park under the Edmonton Police Service, because as we go down the street, there were – I don't know – 10 or 12 members from my graduating class that actually went into the Police Service.

There's a large understanding that, you know, police officers are us and that we are them but not necessarily in communities that are found closer to the inner city. We certainly see that the police officers are underrepresented when it comes to people of colour, minorities, Indigenous populations, and that's an ongoing problem that police organizations are attempting to address. But there's a lot – a lot – of work that needs to be done, and part of it is because of this trust issue, Mr. Chair, that we need to address and that we hope to address in part by the amendment that we're contemplating this evening by making sure that the complement of individuals that can be appointed by the minister to police commissions is limited to 25 per cent rather than the 50 per cent that the bill has in place currently.

I encourage members to take a serious look at this amendment, realize that it is put forward in very good faith, that it is an idea that wasn't drafted up over coffee just before we got here. It's something that we feel strongly about on this side of the House, and I think that it should be accepted by other members of this Legislature and the government members as a very respectful and carefully considered amendment that will help heal the trust issue that exists in Alberta between the public and the police.

The attempts that have been made in the past to do this perhaps have been stymied by some of the issues of the membership makeup of police commissions, and I hope that the goal of the government isn't to centralize the appointment process so that it rests primarily with the minister to appoint police commissions although that seems to be part of the underlying philosophy. The local nature of police commissions, I think, is their strength, is something that they have a long-standing tradition of, and I don't think it's a problem that needs to be solved. I think that the minister is perhaps creating another problem that didn't have to be created and creating another source of distrust with the public by reserving unto himself or herself the ability to nominate or appoint 50 per cent of the members of a police commission. I can't think that it was anything but a deliberate attempt, and I hope they will reconsider, chat amongst themselves as a caucus, and come up in support of this amendment and look at it in the spirit in which it was brought forward.

I don't know if there are any other members who wish to speak to this amendment. I'd like to encourage members on the other side to do so because I'd like to hear their opinions as to our well-considered offer of limiting the percentage of members to a police commission that a minister might appoint. I think I see members opposite rushing to stand to speak, so I'll yield my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. chief government whip has risen.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Oh, the many titles tonight, Mr. Chair. Thank you. First off, I just want to agree that public trust is extremely important, that being impartial is extremely important, but when we're talking about public trust, I think that you can damage public trust by openly speculating that if only there were different people at the time, there would have been different outcomes in a conviction. Without more examples – I don't doubt that they exist, but I think that talking about it like a disciplinary hearing or going before a judge is a predetermined outcome just isn't accurate. There

probably are examples of it, but I think that to say that they are all like that just isn't true.

**8:40**

People's perceptions, though, may be of that, and I think we need to work on that. But I think that how we phrase it we need to be somewhat careful on so that we're just not perpetuating that misconception. I know officers who have been before disciplinary hearings, who have gotten in trouble, who've had additional training, who have been fined, who have been fired – that all exists – people who have been convicted of crimes. These things all happen, and I think we need to make sure that the public is aware that when somebody is performing poorly or they do something egregious or something criminal, they should be held accountable for that. I think we can all agree on that.

I just want to highlight, though, that in regard to this amendment it says that if they're appointing more members, it has to remain less than 50 per cent. In section 17 it already lays out the number of members that the minister can appoint. It keeps it below 50 per cent. I don't agree that the minister of public safety – we know who it is today – five years from now or 10 years from now is simply going to use that mechanism to be able to skew outcomes. I just don't agree with that. I think that there are enough checks and balances in our system to make sure that those people who are appointed to that are vetted, are watched, and that if there are issues, it is dealt with. I just wanted to add that.

I think that having provincial appointments to these boards is important as well because we are looking at a province-wide complaints system. Having some provincial input and feedback to the province can be helpful in making sure that the system is working for the public.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to ask questions or add comments to amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022. Anyone looking to add to the debate? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in committee to Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022. It's unfortunate that these amendments continue to be defeated. It was my hope, I think, that this new front bench and new sort of collection of people that are in charge would be a little bit more open to making their legislation better or working with the opposition to try to make it better, and that just doesn't seem to be the case, which is unfortunate.

In any event, what I would like to say and add my voice to what my colleagues have said is that it is profoundly disappointing, Mr. Chair, that this government has once again demonstrated that they basically have earplugs or earbuds or whatever you want to call it in their ears and that they are just not listening to Albertans. I think Albertans have been very, very clear over the last while – I don't recall the exact date where the UCP started to talk about a provincial police force, but I think Albertans on the whole have been fairly clear that it's not something they're interested in. I think organizations like Alberta Municipalities, Rural Municipalities of Alberta have been fairly straightforward and fairly clear that this is not their priority. So it is unfortunate but not too surprising that we see once again that the UCP is just unwilling to hear from Albertans and hear what they want.

It's been significant opposition, so let me just put on the record once again that in the community that I represent, which is St. Albert, the mayor and council and the people of St. Albert have been crystal clear that this is not something that they're interested in pursuing. They are quite satisfied with the way things are right now in St. Albert, and they have some really heavy priorities for the next few years, over the next few years, as all municipalities do. They have numerous challenges, and they recognize, as do others, Mr. Chair, that there's a huge cost, there's a huge price tag to this.

But this UCP government doesn't seem to be too concerned about spending a lot of money, spending a lot of taxpayer money on things that Albertans, taxpayers don't actually want, you know, like a pipeline to nowhere because they're betting on Trump getting re-elected or a ridiculous war room, yet they'll tell disabled Albertans that they need to tighten their belts because we're having rough financial times right now, so they're going to deindex their measly little disability pension, and they just need to suck it up. But you know what? Provincial police force? No problem; we got the money for that. That is unfortunate.

St. Albert has been very clear, the mayor and council have been very clear that this is not something they're interested in. I think they've also been very clear that there has been very little to zero consultation with the communities that will be impacted, and St. Albert is one of those communities. We don't have a St. Albert police force. Well, we actually use the RCMP, and there's actually a terrific relationship with the RCMP on the whole.

I think they have done a lot of work over the last few years, and as I'm going to sort of touch on some of the work that they've done, I would just like to thank the women and men who serve in St. Albert, the RCMP detachment in St. Albert. I have had a chance to meet with their commander and the women and men that work there, and I think they do extraordinary work. Certainly, it's always in the news when we hear about problems or those bad apples or officers that are choosing to do things that are against the law. But for the most part the people in St. Albert, anyway – I'm deeply grateful for their service, and I'm thankful that they're there when we need them, and they're always there when we need them in St. Albert. Again I thank the women and men who serve with the RCMP.

One of the things that this bill purports to do – as I was looking through some of the notes about this particular bill, you know, it almost seems like a bit of an afterthought, Mr. Chair. I like it. I'm not going to say that I don't like it because I actually appreciate that it's in here. One of the things that the legislation – it would require police to develop diversity and inclusion plans. That's awesome. That's fantastic. I think that developing diversity and inclusion plans is terrific. But I find it really, really strange that this particular government has paid so little attention to supporting diversity and inclusion in their other work, yet this is something that they feel is so important.

Now I'm just going to give you a really small example of that. Now, inclusion can include all kinds of things. I guess that's the whole point of the word: it's a bit of an action word; it's a verb in some instances. But it requires measurement. It requires a goal, and it requires measurement, and it requires thoughtful evaluation, and then it requires more work. In the portfolio that I am fortunate to be critic for, Seniors, Community and Social Services, inclusion is vitally important. It is vitally important in education, in health care, in every area, really.

But what this government has failed to do – and we know this because we have been repeatedly asking questions to different ministries through Public Accounts for years now, Mr. Chair. When we're in session, every single Tuesday morning there we are, asking

questions of officials of different ministries. Of course, as you can imagine, frequently my questions are around inclusion and diversity and about measures. "You say that you have spent this many millions in Advanced Education to promote the education and therefore future employment of people with disabilities. That's terrific that you're investing all these millions. Where are your metrics? Are they getting employed after finishing, after graduating? Are they graduating? At what rate?" But we don't get any of that because this government doesn't seem really interested in doing a deep dive. Certainly, to see this mentioned in a piece of legislation, diversity and inclusion: great idea, love it, love it, would love to see it everywhere. But, Mr. Chair, I'm a little disappointed that their track record is so sad.

I will have a chance to stand up a little later and chat a bit more, but I'm going to talk about the policing committee in St. Albert. This act proposes a number of changes to work with committees, but St. Albert is so far ahead in this work in terms of their goals and their plans and their monitoring and their reporting. Their reporting to council and the community is transparent and open. Why I will spend some time focusing on that is because it is very clear, when you see what is in this bill and the plans that this government has, that they have not done the consultation they need to do. Otherwise, they would know better.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you.

8:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to add to debate on the main bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 6 in Committee of the Whole. This is my first opportunity to speak to this bill, so I'm just going to make some broad comments initially, and then I do have an amendment to introduce.

I'll make some comments to begin with, starting with: Bill 6 does have some positive steps inside of it. Certainly, the Alberta NDP supports civilian oversight of law enforcement. We need to make sure that policing is responsive to the needs of our community. The Police Act and its revisions is something that's been a priority both under the NDP government, when a review was started – and that work has continued through under the UCP government, where this legislation has been introduced. Now, there are a number of issues with Bill 6 that, through the Committee of the Whole process, the Official Opposition is trying to address. Now, often we see legislation that leaves too much to regulations that are not yet developed – that is a common theme with the government in the legislation we've seen introduced over the last three years – and we see that again here.

We've introduced a number of amendments that I think would have materially improved Bill 6 and done some very important things, starting with amendment A1, which we talked about earlier today, enshrining the principles of intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice into Alberta's police services, making sure that these principles are included, because we know they are key to creating a safe community for everyone. That amendment would have ensured that intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practices were a cornerstone for community safety and policing structures. Certainly, I know a lot of my colleagues spoke significantly towards that earlier today.

We also offered amendment A2, talking about making sure that the jurisdiction of police commissions for review of the conduct of a police officer is protected as well as just recognizing that, in line with other professions and other regulated bodies like, for example,

the medical profession – making sure that an individual cannot avoid justice by quitting, being fired, or moving to a different police force: that was amendment A2.

Amendment A3, which I thought my hon. colleagues from Edmonton-Meadows and Edmonton-McClung did an excellent job putting forward – really, seeing the minister appoint up to 50 per cent of the members of these boards is quite concerning, particularly in an environment where municipal governments are having some of their influence damaged by the downloading of costs and the budget pressures that are being put on. Having that oversight and operation centralized to the minister does not make sense. That amendment would have reverted to the 12-member police commission and not really put forward some of the overreach we see, because we really want local voices to be a majority at the table of the police commission.

Again, there are some positive steps that this bill is attempting to move forward on, but there's a lot of concern about the details in the implementation.

With some of those introductory comments, I would like to put an amendment on the record, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

This will be amendment A4.

If you could read it into the record for us, please.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 29, in the proposed section 43, as follows: (a) in subsection (1) (i) by adding “Subject to subsections (2) and (2.1),” immediately before “The chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission shall” and (ii) by striking out “one year” and substituting “2 years”; (b) by adding the following immediately after subsection (2):

(2.1) The chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission must not dismiss any Level 2 or Level 3 complaint under subsection (1) if the complaint relates to

- (a) sexual assault or battery,
- (b) any misconduct of a sexual nature, other than a sexual assault or battery, if, when the subject matter of the complaint occurred,
  - (i) the complainant was a minor,
  - (ii) the complainant was in an intimate relationship with the person who is the subject of the complaint,
  - (iii) the complainant was dependant, whether financially, emotionally, physically or otherwise, with the person who is the subject of the complaint, or
  - (iv) the complainant was a person under disability.

(c) by striking out subsection (4) and substituting the following:

(4) If a complainant in a Level 2 or Level 3 complaint refuses or fails to participate in an investigation, the chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission may dismiss the complaint if

- (a) the complainant has been provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate in the investigation, and
- (b) the chief executive officer is satisfied that the refusal or failure of the complainant to participate is not the result of intimidation by the person who is the subject of the complaint.

Mr. Chair, this amendment is doing two distinct things. First, you will note that in section (a) it is striking out “one year” and substituting “2 years,” so aligning the time limit on filing a complaint against a police officer with the statute of limitations on similar conduct for wrongdoing that is not of a criminal nature. We are putting forward this amendment quite seriously and after a great deal of consideration because it's very important for Albertans to have access to justice in all its forms. Increasing the time limit for

the filing of complaints against police officers is in line with the values of ensuring there's access to justice as well as aligning with other time limits for filing complaints against a police officer.

Certainly, we understand that when someone experiences wrongdoing, it can take time to process a situation, to understand what's happening, to understand the impacts, or even to understand what the course of justice can look like, because it may not always be easily accessible or understood for someone who has been a victim or is involved in a complaint like this. I think that the move from one year to two years is a reasonable and measured choice to make. If the government is not supportive, I would be very interested in hearing any specific or detailed reasons on the difference between one year versus two years, because the extended timeline, to me, would provide access to justice, does assist someone who has potentially been a victim or is a complainant, and, I think, makes good sense.

Now, the second part of this amendment is also incredibly important – that is part (b) – because it essentially removes the timeline entirely when there is a complaint that relates to sexual assault or battery or misconduct of a sexual nature when the complainant was a minor; when the complainant was in an intimate relationship with the person who is the subject; when the complainant was a dependant, whether financially, emotionally, physically, or otherwise; or a person under disability. Specifically talking about someone who was the victim of sexual assault or battery or misconduct of a sexual nature, I think we need to recognize and acknowledge the distinct trauma that happens to an individual who has been victimized by these types of crimes and the reasons why sometimes it can take years before someone is prepared to come forward and to report these crimes. This is known, and we have adjusted legislation in this very Chamber to acknowledge the trauma that can happen and to extend timelines when it comes to the criminal nature of these types of incidents.

**9:00**

Here we are asking for those timelines to be removed when we are talking about this complaint process as part of Bill 6, and this again, like I said with section (a) and section (b), aligns the complaint procedure time limits with the same statute of limitations that ensures police officers are held to the same standards of justice as lay people.

I know I have other colleagues who would like to speak to this, so I will conclude my remarks with that, only to say that I hope that the government will seriously consider the context and the situations that we are talking about with this amendment A4, because I think this is one where we can come to an agreement and improve Bill 6 when it comes to the complaint timelines. We'd be pleased to work with the government to be successful with amendment A4.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A4? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in support of the amendment just proposed by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. I've already placed on the record this evening my thoughts about why it's critically important that we remove any limitation period related to allegations of sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual violence against a police officer. This is a very thoughtful amendment that's meant to align with, really, measures that were already taken when we were in government to remove limitation periods for complainants to bring forward claims

of sexual violence in civil court. It does not need to be said again that it is very clearly established, the multiple layers of challenges of bringing timely sexual assault allegations, for a variety of very complex reasons.

I will come back, Mr. Chair, to the example of Sean Chu, a city councillor. If this Assembly will note, the allegations that actually were founded and were the basis of reprimand of councillor Chu when he was a police officer were because of sexual conduct that was made against a minor, a 16-year-old, in 1997. Now, I believe in this circumstance that young woman was incredibly brave and came forward with those allegations quite quickly, but one can imagine a 16-year-old may not be in a position to be able to bring forward such an explosive allegation against a police officer, somebody in a position not only of trust but of power. I think we can all imagine how many young people would not be able to bring forward an allegation like that, particularly not within a year. A year from when this incident took place, that young woman was only 17. We cannot expect that somebody who has suffered sexual violence from a police officer should only have a year to bring forward that complaint, again, not for criminal proceedings but for disciplinary purposes against a police officer.

This is simply, I believe, a common-sense amendment. As my colleague mentioned, we are absolutely willing to work with government to make this happen. We are simply wanting clarity that there is no limitation period for a complaint to be made against a police officer on the basis of sexual assault or sexual battery. This is the decent thing to do. Again, it is about ensuring that the public can have trust in its police, that there is accountability, and that we continue to respect those police officers who do conduct themselves by professional standards and perform their duties well to serve Albertans and their local communities as well. We owe them as well an obligation to make sure that when there are police officers who do not conduct themselves in that way, there is accountability. It ensures that the public has faith in those who are protecting them.

I just simply wanted to add my comments once again to say, please – I sincerely hope that the government members will consider this amendment in the thoughtful way that it has been presented and that they'll work with us to find a way to make this happen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Anyone else wishing to speak to amendment A4? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, truly, to my colleagues who have spoken tonight on Bill 6 and on the amendments. I tweeted about it. I just noted that – just really proud to be able to serve with colleagues who are, you know, just sharing such eloquent thoughts. My colleague from Edmonton-City Centre brought forth a lot of really powerful ideas related to the impacts on racialized communities, and of course he's done some really great work, which you can find at Alberta's Future, including his work on race-based data, and my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud, of course. Yeah. I'm going to echo a few of her comments here shortly but, again, particularly her comments around police accountability and her very apt and timely example of city councillor Sean Chu.

Okay. This amendment that we have in front of us is a really, really important one. Like my colleague to the left of me, I too want to urge the members of this Chamber to collaborate with us and to really consider the power of this amendment. As was noted, this amendment aligns the time limit on filing a complaint against a police officer with the statute of limitations on similar conduct and

increases the time limit for two years that is not of a criminal nature. What that essentially means is that, you know, there won't be a time limit at all when it comes to, say, sexual assault.

I want to just bring this Chamber back to conversations that we had in this very House starting in about – I should've checked the timing on this, but for sure starting in early 2021, related to victims of crime. Bill 16, I believe – I still don't remember the bill name, but time is confusing, as you all know, being in a pandemic. Victims of crime was a piece of legislation that we pushed back against because one of the things that it did was it narrowed the window for survivors to report. We talked about it. We stood up. We had people – I remember I talked to two young women on social media who were willing to share their stories, and they basically said incredibly powerful stories. One of them, who'd never shared her experience of horrific sexual assault, shared it publicly in the hopes that this government would change their mind, so that they would remove that window. They didn't. They didn't.

However, fast-forward two-plus years, we've seen, through some of the consultations that have been done on victims of crime, that they've reversed that decision, which was the right thing to do. It should never have been done in the first place. But the point is, bringing it back to this amendment, that we know that survivors need time. They need time, and that's a fact. You know, this government, this current minister responsible for status of women, that fellow has gone on the record even just today talking about gender-based violence and talking about how his government is taking this seriously, and I applaud that. I support that. We need to see investments. We need to see investments in housing, in prevention. The list goes on. I support that. But this is an opportunity today to show that you really are serious about sexual violence and sexual assault.

I assure you, Mr. Chair, that I won't refer to the presence or absence of members, but I must say that, you know, today I've seen the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore, both of whom held the role of minister of status of women. I would love – I haven't heard them speak. Again, not saying whether or not they're in this Chamber right now. I haven't heard them speak, however, and I'd love to hear them stand up and speak to the importance of this amendment. They might not hold those titles now, but they can be leaders. I know both of them. I remember speaking to both of those individuals in their roles, and I'm not putting it just on them as women – absolutely not – but they both held those roles. I spoke to both of them about the importance of addressing sexual violence and gender-based violence, and I know both of them took that seriously. That's my call to folks who I know care about these issues, to put a little bit of action behind the words that they've shared with me.

The case of Sean Chu is a horrific example, and I don't want to talk about him too much more, but what a perfect case study in why we need to amend Bill 6 and why all of us working together can do the right thing, not just for the survivor involved in that situation but for future survivors as well.

Like I said, I've had the opportunity to hear from a lot of survivors in my role as the critic for status of women and 2SLGBTQ-plus people. That's a reminder to me as well that, again, we're not just talking about women who are survivors or victims of sexual assault or sexual violence. We know that members of the 2SLGBTQ-plus community are disproportionately impacted.

**9:10**

We know, as an example, that racialized trans folks experience the highest levels of violence and discrimination. We know that Indigenous women experience far higher levels of violence and discrimination than their Caucasian counterparts here in Canada.

We know that Alberta has the second-highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, right? So we've got a lot – we've got a lot – we need to work on here in Alberta. We do. I know that everybody in this House is aware of that.

I heard the Minister of Indigenous Relations stand in this House and deliver a powerful statement, and in his statement he, too, talked about the need to address violence against Indigenous women, and using the words – I think the words that I've used way too many times in this House and many of you as well who've delivered either ministerial or members' statements, saying that words aren't enough. We need action, right? I know I'm a broken record on that.

Fortunately, in my role as an opposition MLA I do have to use words a lot, and I do have to urge this government to do the right thing and to, in this case, accept our amendment. I'm hopeful they will. I've heard a rumour that they're looking at it and that they are assessing it. I won't presuppose the outcome of this House, but that makes me hopeful. I'd also love to see, you know, perhaps more members speak to not just this amendment but the bill broadly. I've heard both in second reading and in committee as well a lot of really important questions being asked around Bill 6 and, you know, not getting a lot of answers.

I can again say – and I know that I'm obviously biased – that, you know, on this side of the House we've done a lot of consultation. We've done a lot of consultation with racialized communities, with women, with the 2SLGBTQ-plus community. So it's not just us. It's not just me, a White cisgender woman with a whole heck of a lot of privilege, asking you to do the right thing; it's all of us.

Mr. Chair, I would just really urge this entire House to do the right thing tonight and to support us in this amendment. Thank you for listening.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you to the hon. member.

Looking for others wishing to speak to the amendment. I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that the members opposite have made some good points. I don't disagree with that. In my time in policing it can take victims of sexual violence many years if not decades to come forward and to report an incident that has occurred to them. Some early on don't want to be retraumatized. They are intimidated. There are many factors for that individual that might dictate when and how they decide to come forward.

I'd like to just point out that subsection (2) says, "Despite subsection (1), the chief executive officer of the Police Review Commission may extend the time for making a complaint in accordance with the regulations." I know that the members opposite often say, "Well, we don't see the regulations" or "We don't trust what the minister is going to put in the regulations." Okay. I would, you know, take those arguments back. But at the same time, when they bring up the Sean Chu incident, would two years have been enough at this point? Are we looking for something further or something broader in regulation that can be more flexible in making sure that we are capturing different circumstances that are coming up as well?

I think the purpose of this is to address this in regulation, as I understand it, and that would provide further flexibility later on as well to be able to make changes as needed, keeping and respecting the fact that there are many victims who take a long time to come forward. It also doesn't absolve anybody of a criminal charge either. If they've committed a crime, this one year does not apply to that. Those charges can still come at any time.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the government responding on this. I will say that what it sounds like: rather than removing timelines for someone who is potentially the victim of sexual assault or battery, they are asking that person to go through additional hoops to get an exemption to a process that by default they would potentially try to make a complaint, be told that the timeline has expired, and then have to do additional work. That's the type of barrier that this amendment is trying to avoid, in line with what we've seen for other court processes in other legislation. I appreciate the government's response, but it does not address what we are trying to do here: increasing access to justice and recognizing the impact of these types of traumatic incidents when it comes to somebody reporting and seeking that justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to see the regulations put in additional hoops either. I think it needs to be clear what the expectations are so that that is also clear to the public.

The one to two years: making that the cap, then, would put additional – if there are additional hoops, they would then come at the two-year-plus mark. The regulations need to cover these kinds of things off – I don't disagree – but I think that the regulations could provide the flexibility necessary to ensure that if there are barriers that are coming up, they can be quickly changed, and we are respecting the fact that intimate partner violence or sexual violence can take people a very long time to come forward with. They will come forward in their own time, in their own way, and we just need to make sure that we are as flexible as possible and make sure that that can still be reported, respected, and dealt with as well.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I'll just be quick. Thank you very much for this discussion, and thank you to our government members for answering back to you.

I think one of the things that is really important, particularly when we're talking about the Sean Chu incident, is that multiple times this person went back to try and actually change the course of that situation. What's happening right now is that we're actually giving parameters around the work that actually has to be done initially, which I think actually changes the outcome, particularly in that situation. She was 16 when it first happened, so she had no advocacy. On top of that, we have coercive control, which means that you have a person in a position of power holding that over a young person.

There are several things that need to happen, but if we don't have timelines and parameters to actually make this happen – the regulation, in my opinion, will actually help to set the standard for how it is that we come forward with this information. The biggest issue we had in that particular situation and others who are dealing with domestic violence and sexual assault is like the member said: they come forward in their own time. But for those who are coming forward, who find the strength to come forward initially, at that beginning part there has to be a way for the system to be actually able to manage and help out initially. That's how the system failed this particular person who was assaulted when she was 16.

I really think that this is a great jumping-off point to understand, and I think as we go forward and understand how it's going to – I mean, unfortunately, when we're dealing with this, the person is already a survivor. The act has already been perpetrated. There have to be parameters around being able to actually get action done initially, because that's how we failed this person initially.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:19 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Irwin	Renaud
Deol	Pancholi	Shepherd
Gray		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Singh
Allard	Long	Smith, Mark
Amery	Lovely	Stephan
Fir	Milliken	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Horner	Neudorf	van Dijken
Hunter	Rowswell	Walker
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jean	Schow	

Totals: For – 7 Against – 26

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the main bill, Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity just to say a few brief words. As I mentioned earlier, I was looking forward to this legislation coming forward. It's been a long time coming. There are some very important things here for many communities I have spoken with in terms of addressing some long-standing issues and making some very important updates in how we approach policing in the province of Alberta.

It has been disappointing to see government members turn down every amendment we have brought forward, some reasonable amendments around providing more time for folks who are in particular situations such as having suffered sexual assault or are a minor or other things to add more time to be able to report, to making changes to the number of individuals the minister would be able to appoint to a commission, to ensuring that a police officer could not simply choose to move to a different jurisdiction to escape a disciplinary hearing.

Ultimately, other concerns have been raised by folks in the community. Indeed, I know that one Treaty 6 chief has spoken out saying that this bill would alter their relationship with law enforcement and that they had not been consulted by this government on that. So while there are elements of this bill that certainly I support, I feel that at this point in principle I cannot vote

in favour. Certainly, I recognize that this government has a majority and has the ability to move forward with those portions, so things like an independent investigatory body, despite the concerns I have, will still have the opportunity to move forward in the province of Alberta. But, again, on point of principle, I feel that I cannot vote in favour of this legislation. But should we have the opportunity to form government in the next election, I certainly would look forward to being able to make some of those changes and improve on this act.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to speak to Bill 6?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

## Bill 2

### Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Deputy Chair:** Anyone wishing to provide comments, questions, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise again in Committee of the Whole, this time to speak to Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. You know, I mentioned this in my comments in second reading, and I think it needs to be said again, because there is no doubt about it that this is one of the most pressing issues that Albertans have been speaking about, which is affordability. When we think about the rise in inflation – and this is not a surprise. We've seen this happening for well over a year now. There are lots of complex reasons for that. One of the things that, when I'm door-knocking in my constituency and, actually, many other constituencies across the province, I talk about: we need to be having thoughtful and more fulsome conversations about what exactly are the causes and sources of inflation as well as what we can do to address them. I always say that any provincial politician who's going to stand at your door and tell you that they're going to solve global inflation is not being honest with you. These are complex issues as a result of lots of geopolitical factors, including, obviously, the horrific war on Ukraine, the supply chain issues going back to the pandemic. There are lots of complex reasons.

9:40

But what provincial elected officials can do are two things, Mr. Chair. It's what I keep telling my constituents. One thing is that we can certainly ensure that we do not make things more expensive for Albertans. We do not increase the things that we have control over such as things like car insurance, things such as utility. Where we have the capacity to make things less expensive, we should also do that. The two things are: don't make things more expensive, and when you can make them less expensive, do so. Pretty simple. Put more money into the pockets of Albertans. That's what they care about right now. They are not seeing their wages and income go up the same way. We have to be really certain that we are focused on those issues right now because that's what Albertans are focused on.

Knowing those two things, you know, we have to look at the various choices that this government has made to date that have added costs on. They did not cause inflation – I'm not going to stand here and say that because that is not true – but this government has done a number of things to make things more expensive for Albertans, not just in this high inflationary period that we've seen over the last year but prior to that, in many, many ways that we've all spoken about quite often in this House.

You know, we saw, of course, the removal of the tuition cap freeze. We saw the removal of utility caps, of car insurance caps. I know Albertans and I know Edmontonians are feeling this right now and Calgarians are feeling this because of the massive underfunding and cuts to municipalities. Albertans across this province are seeing their municipal taxes go up because municipalities do not, and should not, have the ability to be able to carry debt. Because of that, they do not have enough revenue to provide services. Therefore, they are in many situations forced not only to increase property taxes but to now cover through their taxes things that the UCP are no longer funding. We've seen downloaded costs onto municipalities for so many things, including, you know, policing, which we were just speaking about in the previous bill debate, Mr. Chair.

We also know school fees have gone up. We had a limit on school fees when we were in government. We've seen all of these costs – oh, and tuition. Let's not even talk about tuition. Actually, let's talk about tuition because so many students are seeing their tuition astronomically increase over the last few years, Mr. Chair. Why is that? Because this government does not value and does not support and does not invest in our postsecondary system.

You know, this used to be a place where Alberta would have high-quality postsecondary institutions and they'd have low tuition. It was a perfect opportunity to really attract and draw people to Alberta postsecondaries for our outstanding programs. I myself am a proud graduate from the University of Alberta. It is heartbreaking for me to see not only the cuts that have been instituted by this government on the University of Alberta – I'm so proud to have graduated from there – but to see the effect that that has on so many of the staff who work at the University of Alberta and, of course, directly on students as well.

Affordability. I already think that this government has broken the first rule, which is: don't make things more expensive. They've done it in a number of ways. And then we said: let's bring down costs where we can. This is where I think Bill 2 comes into play, where it's clearly an attempt by the government to put some more money back into Albertans' pockets. Now, we've already indicated we support measures to do that, but it is our job to stand here and call to account how the government has chosen to deliver that. We see some serious challenges in the way that the affordability programs are proposed to be implemented and what's set out in Bill 2.

We have raised already in this House, and I will continue to do so, how many Albertans are excluded from these supports. So many Albertans, 2 million, don't receive the direct \$100 per month supports that are outlined in this bill. Now, some of those Albertans, of course, will be well over the \$180,000 income threshold. I think we can agree that that's probably not appropriate, to provide financial supports where it's not needed, but the problem is that there are a significant number of Albertans who are in need who do not qualify, who have single incomes but who don't have children. Maybe they even have double incomes but don't have children, so for some reason their struggles are not of value to this government. They're not seen. They're not even visible to this government. They're apparently told to make do. If they drive, because not all of them do – if we think about, for example, postsecondary students, they take transit – they may get some relief from fuel tax exemptions, but that's only if they drive. Many of them don't. That's not a direct

input into their bank account, which is what they need. They actually need to have some additional support.

I'll add, Mr. Chair, that we know that there are a number of seniors who do need this support, and that's fantastic, but there are some who don't, yet they're captured by this program. It is not responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars to be giving this money and this support to people who don't need it but excluding so many who do. So I will continue to raise those concerns about that issue.

Then, just as we saw with I believe it was Bill 4, which is before this House still – maybe it's passed. I'm not even sure. [interjection] It's still before this House. That's to reverse this government's terrible decision, which was, I would say, the first domino to really fall and have significant implications on the stability of our health care system during a pandemic and now in the worst pediatric health care crisis that we've seen in a long time in this province. That first domino was this government's decision under Bill 21 to unilaterally have the ability to terminate doctors' contracts. They're trying to reverse that now, but they've already exercised that authority. They've already unilaterally broken that contract. They were just trying to – well, I guess they've used it. They did what they wanted to do with it, and now they're expecting doctors to be happy that they've removed the ability to do that again.

So it is with Bill 2 as well, Mr. Chair. We're seeing once again that this government is trying to basically correct the mistakes that they made, but the mistake that they made by deindexing AISH wasn't just a mistake. It was cruel, it was heartless, and it was contrary to the stated position of a number of these UCP MLAs, who claimed that they had compassion and that they supported the idea of indexing AISH benefits. Let's remember that we're talking about a benefit that's just over \$1,600 a month. It is not a lot of money, yet they voted in favour three years ago of deindexing that support.

As my colleague the Member for St. Albert has said, you can't make up for that by doing what you're doing in Bill 2, because not only did those Albertans lose out on over \$3,000 in supports over the last couple of years while their supports were not indexed, but there is a more profound impact that it has on Albertans when you break their trust and you tell them that they're not valued. That is another consistency between this government's action when it broke the contract with doctors unilaterally and what they did to individuals on AISH: they broke the trust. They told severely disabled Albertans: "You are not valued. We will happily make your struggles worse to be able to crow about a balanced budget and to show that we're tough." The same government had no problem throwing away over a billion dollars on a pipeline that everybody knew was going to fail, with no apologies for that – no apologies for that – yet they looked to disabled Albertans and said: "Yeah, you're not worth it to us. You don't have the value of a pipeline that wasn't going anywhere."

What it says, as I mentioned, Mr. Chair, is that it is that broken trust. It means that when times are tough again, Albertans and those on AISH can be certain that this government will take from them again and will cut their supports again and that to try to balance a budget, they'll make terrible financial decisions on all fronts. But they'll look and they'll stand proudly and say, "I'm a fiscal conservative" when they cut supports for the most disabled Albertans. They will do it again. That is a trust that cannot be repaired.

9:50

When I spoke on Bill 4 and Bill 21, which was the bill that allowed for the UCP to unilaterally end doctors' contracts, I thought it was remarkable, when I went back and I looked at the debate on that bill, to see how many UCP members spoke out in favour of



being able to do that. I went through days and days and days of debate in *Hansard* on that bill, and I couldn't find a single time, other than the minister who introduced the bill at the three readings, where a UCP MLA actually spoke to the content of the bill. Not once.

It's not surprising, then, that when they want to try to fix their – it's not a mistake; they don't think it's a mistake. They did it. They used it for the doctors. They didn't really speak to that either, why they no longer think that was the right thing to do. I think that's the same here. We are not hearing any UCP MLA say: "I'm sorry. We got it wrong when we deindexed AISH. We actually did a cruel thing, and I voted in favour of it. I voted in favour of it because – I don't know – I didn't have the backbone or courage to stand up to a cabinet member or to the Premier or because I really, truly believed that the most vulnerable should pay for our poor political and economic decisions."

I don't know what that reason is, but it's not my job to give that explanation to Albertans. Every single UCP MLA who voted in favour of deindexing AISH: it is their responsibility to stand up and explain why they did that when they now try to, quote, fix their mistake. It can only be considered a mistake if they actually call it that and acknowledge that that's what it is. But if they don't and they say secretly, behind closed doors, "I expressed my concern about it" – how many leadership candidates do we hear whisper behind closed doors? Oh, what courage – what courage – to stand behind closed doors. We all hear the stories about what happens behind closed doors in UCP meetings. In fact, we used to know from the *Western Standard*. They used to live tweet it.

**An Hon. Member:** It's transparency.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, the *Western Standard* never captured any of those MLAs standing up and speaking out against deindexing AISH. So if there is transparency – maybe it never happened, Mr. Chair. Maybe they never did actually speak out behind closed doors. Maybe they just lost a couple of winks of sleep at night. In any event, that is not an apology, and that does nothing for the individuals who are on AISH who lost out on \$3,000 during a pandemic, an incredibly stressful, inflationary time, where their money was going less far every single month and this government chose to ignore them.

Again, I believe it is incumbent upon each UCP MLA to stand up – and they all voted in favour of it, Mr. Chair – and explain why they're now supporting indexing. As they say, you can't begin to move anywhere towards reconciliation or to atone unless it begins with a heartfelt and meaningful apology. On that note, I just have to say that an apology does not constitute saying: I apologize if someone misconstrued my comments. I think I heard that today. That is also not an apology. But we'd be happy to counsel or – I don't know – edit their prepared apologies although I'm not going to hold my breath that they're coming.

With that, Mr. Chair, I've spoken, and I could speak at length on Bill 2 and continue to speak at length. What I want to say to Albertans is that for over a year the NDP caucus has heard your concerns. We have put forward countless proposals to this government to either reverse cuts that they have made, to put caps back in place on things like utilities and car insurance, to do things to raise your income, to support your wage increases. We have put forward countless measures to ensure that you do have more money in your pockets, especially those who need it the most.

We will continue to do that advocacy. We will vote to support affordability measures, but we want to make sure that all Albertans see the support that they need when they need it. That is our commitment to Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to add questions, comments, or amendments to Bill 2? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, in committee. I truly appreciate the comments of my colleague. I think she captured some of the frustration that we are feeling. For the people watching at home – and I actually know there are some folks with disabilities that are watching and who know what we're debating right now, Bill 2. They understand what this is about, and let me tell friends that are watching online: I can tell you that this UCP government has continued to ignore any amendments that we've tried to bring forward to make these bills better. In particular, I think there was only one for Bill 2. I'll tell you: they aren't speaking to this bill. They aren't defending this bill, particularly as it relates to AISH and income support and those income replacement benefits. In fact, I'd say that they're hard-pressed to make eye contact. Not surprising, but that's the way that it is right now.

Now, let me paint a picture for you, Mr. Chair, and this is where we are. Let's start in 2019 . . . [interjections] If you have something to say, stand up and say it. I'll let you go.

Mr. Chair, let me paint a picture for you, and you know what? It's rarely this simple that you can draw lines between points in time to say: this happened, and then this happened, and this happened. I think that we can do that with this particular situation.

Let me tell you that in 2019 one of the first things that this government did was decide that belt-tightening was required, but they didn't do that to themselves. They didn't say: "Let's just put our plans aside for the war room, that we're going to direct \$120 million to over four years. Let's put that aside because people are having a hard time." No. One of the very first things they did was shove the income support, AISH, and seniors' benefit into a huge omnibus bill that did a whole bunch of other things that were very damaging, and they instantly deindexed these benefits.

Now, all of these benefits, all of these income replacement or income augmentation programs – all of these programs – are for some of the poorest people in this province and some of the most vulnerable people in this province. I'll tell you: if you've never looked at AISH eligibility or the process to apply for AISH, do yourself a favour and look at it. It is not easy. It is time-consuming, and you know what? In many cases people describe it as humiliating to go through those difficult assessments. In any event, these are people that are poor, that are struggling, and that have disabilities, and these are benefits that this government decided to cut. They spent the next few years saying that they didn't cut it, but we know it was a cut.

So they did that in 2019. Poof. We get a global pandemic, all of these unknowns, all of these things that we were learning as we went. And what did we learn? One of the first things that we learned about COVID was who was very vulnerable. And who was vulnerable? People with disabilities, people with pre-existing health conditions, comorbidities. These were the groups of people that were extremely vulnerable, and of course we know they always have extra expenses. They have medical expenses. Instantly people were frightened to go to the grocery store. There were extra fees for ordering food, for having it delivered. They had difficulty with transportation; sitting on a packed bus wasn't really an option. Instantly these expenses went up. Instantly. Tack onto that generational levels of inflation that drove the cost of everything up – we know this – not to mention the things that the UCP made

worse. But, you know, I'm not going to speak to insurance and things like that, because for the vast majority of folks that wasn't an issue that I was hearing.

But they were struggling with expenses, and all along the Official Opposition stood up. We did press conferences. We brought in people to talk about: "Look at what's happening. I'm going to lose my apartment. I'm going to get evicted. I can't pay the rent. I'm going to the food bank every single week now, and they won't let me come more. I can't feed myself and my family." These were things that we heard all the time.

You know, I did something a few years back that I wasn't, like, super excited to do, because it wasn't about me, but I thought: "You know what? It's probably a good reminder." So for one little month – and I have enormous privilege – I tried sort of keeping my expenses down to be in line with what somebody on AISH would live with, how much they were spending on groceries. I took the bus for a month because I couldn't afford . . .

**Mr. Nally:** You worked from home.

**Ms Renaud:** To the Member for Morinville-St. Albert: if you have something to say – I mean, honestly. You know, just taking swipes at people is not cool. If you have something to say, stand up. I'll acknowledge you.

What happened in 2019? We saw COVID, we saw inflation, and then – surprise – we find out that homeless counts are doubling in rural communities that are struggling with homelessness that did not struggle like that before. We saw that happening. Why? People are losing their homes. It makes sense.

**10:00**

We saw food bank usage explode. Explode. People cannot afford food. You've got over 70,000 people on AISH. You have over a hundred thousand seniors that rely on that extra money. You've got around 60,000 people that rely on income support products. That's a lot of people. When you make life difficult for that many people that already are on the edge, they're going to be driven to food banks. They're going to be driven into homelessness. They are going to be at risk, and that's exactly what we're seeing. What is the solution that this government has, Mr. Chair? Incredibly disappointing. More half measures because they just can't seem to get it right the first time. Well, they shouldn't have cut it in the beginning, but they can't seem to get it right the first time.

They did not undo all the damage. Had they done that, they would've reindexed this right to the point that they cut it. They would have made these folks whole. Not only that; they would've looked at the other cuts that they did so sneakily through the last few years. Not only did they cut income support by deindexing; they also started kicking people off supplemental benefits that made income support even viable. Now, that's under \$900 a month that these folks are living on. Sixty thousand people. They were living on that because they got little bits of extra money, like rent. They got another \$307 for rent, or they got an extra \$99 for medical transportation. Particularly for people who live outside of large urban areas, they need that for transportation to get to doctors, to get to AISH assessments, to get to places where they can start to look for work, any of those things. But those things were cut.

Once again this government makes a big cut and gives a little back and says: look at us; yeah, I was always a big advocate for not cutting. That is bunk. That is bunk. If anybody here had the courage to actually say, "No, I vote against this; I am not supporting this," they would've said so publicly. They're politicians. They wouldn't

hide it. None of them did. None of them did. So, yeah, that's bunk. I can't say bad words in here.

There are a number of things wrong with this legislation. Obviously, you can tell that I'm a little upset about this particular piece because for the last three and a half years that's what I hear from people almost every workday. When I go in on Monday, it piles up. When I tried that little experiment trying to keep my personal budget at under \$1,700 a month, I couldn't do it. And I thought I was, you know, pretty good. I have enormous privilege, and I have a lot of skill to be able to budget like that, and I couldn't do it. I could not do it. So imagine somebody trying to live on that. They can't live on that. That's why this time of year is so dangerous for them.

Next time you talk to a constituent with a disability or somebody on income support, ask them about their interaction with places like payday loans. That's where they go or they take out credit cards that they can't afford, and they never dig themselves out. Yet this government wants to tell you that, yeah, they're supporting people with disabilities and low-income people. Sure. You're giving them a little bit, but it's not sufficient. This is a group that is vulnerable and that continues to struggle.

In that period of time where I tried living on that limited income, I actually had a group that I was working with. We did a bit of a survey, and we heard from around – I did table it with the Legislature, so it is part of the record – actually I think about 1,100 or 1,200 Albertans from right across Alberta who shared some of their own struggles. At the time they weren't deindexed to the point they are now – that was a while ago – but they were struggling before; let's be honest. At \$1,685 they were struggling. Try to live on that; it's very difficult. They were already struggling.

We heard from people from all over. This isn't just a city problem. I would suggest that actually people that live outside of the large urban areas have far more stress and far more difficulty than people that live in the bigger cities that have access to better programming, more programming, easier access. They're just used to the volume. It's just a different situation. Some of the most heartbreaking stories – still to this day I hear from smaller communities. People are saying: "You know what? I'm about to lose my apartment, my apartment that, you know, I used to be able to afford but the rent has gone up." Let's say that it's \$1,100 or \$1,200. Imagine you're living on \$1,700 and your rent is that much, and then you have to factor in food, just the basics. Food. Maybe a phone. You just can't do it. It's not doable.

So for this government to be unwilling – and they've demonstrated this for years, but they've demonstrated in this particular session their unwillingness to hear from anybody but their own little bubble. You know – I don't know – step 2 of dome disease, when you only listen to friends and insiders, is that you don't actually hear the scope of the problem. Let me tell you: the scope of the problem, which is poverty, is huge, and it's getting bigger. If you don't think that the growth, the explosion of the need of food banks isn't a symptom – and, honestly, I know this government will say: well, you know, we're making a big commitment to food banks.

Let's be honest about that, Mr. Chair. It's a \$20 million commitment over three years. When is the election? Five months. Five months, and it's going through FCSS or something like that, so there's a matching component, when food banks need money now. There are over a hundred food banks in this province. There are two massive food banks that really act as feeder food banks for many, many smaller food banks. What are they going to get? I'm hearing, like – what? – under \$300,000 each. That's insufficient. That is not going to cut it. That's not enough. This government

created the problem. It began in 2019, and it continues to this day. So, sure, make yourself feel better, maybe sleep at night thinking: oh, yeah, we undid the damage. You did not. You did not undo the damage. There is enormous damage, and it will take more than this little effort or, you know, putting money in a food bank. It is going to take far more than this.

Let me just say, Mr. Chair, that I think that we had a pretty good sense about what an antipoverty plan would look like, what a comprehensive antipoverty plan would look like, and why that is a benefit to any province. You are making people whole so that they can participate in the economy. They can contribute. They can be all that they can be. You build a stronger province, and that is something that we will get done. That is something that this government has continuously failed to do. Sadly, every workday we have to see examples of that. So snicker, laugh, you know, roll your eyes all you like. Albertans see the damage that this government has done, and they will not forget it.

I'll take my seat. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to Bill 2?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? And that is carried.

I see the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report bills 6, 2, 5, and 7.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 5, Bill 7, Bill 6, and Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** And opposed? So ordered.

10:10

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 7

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

It's a good bill. I encourage all members to vote for it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 7 in third reading. This is a very straightforward piece of legislation, but I just want to make a couple of quick comments. The reason that this legislation has had to be put forward in this session is because our new Premier has made the decision to expand cabinet to such an extent that we now have 27 ministers, 11 parliamentary secretaries or associate ministers, and 24 ministries, changing a lot of the government structure.

Something I find very personally disturbing: removing the ministry of labour and instead trying to encapsulate that under the title of jobs, which I think completely misses the importance of workers and not just jobs. We need to be making sure that we've got that focus, which I think the government does not. My assumption that the government does not seem to be proven true when the OICs, the orders in council, to do the government reorganization came out and occupational health and safety and the Labour Relations Code were forgotten for many, many days. The importance of the ministry of labour and their files really slapped someone in the face, right off the bat, when I and stakeholders and people who find this ministry and their work critically important and valuable went to try to determine which of the two new ministers was responsible for what, and key pieces of that ministry had not been assigned. Fortunately, that information came out days later in a new OIC, but I think it proves the point that workers were forgotten in this cabinet shuffle.

Twenty-seven ministers, Mr. Speaker. To be very clear, the previous five Premiers have never had more than 20 ministers. Now we have 27 of them. Of course, having a minister comes with additional pay, additional benefits, additional staff. It certainly appears that this Premier has put about half of caucus into cabinet, has given themselves titles that no one in the public understands, and made it harder to know which minister to speak with.

I know political scientist Duane Bratt said, "When you need to satisfy two goals (party unity and rewarding loyalty) you get a large cabinet," and that's what we seem to see here. From a group who felt it was critically important that they all be called "honourable" for the rest of their lives, it strikes me – I would just simply like to quote, as Maximus said to Commodus in the Ridley Scott classic *Gladiator*: "Time for honoring yourself will soon be at an end."

I will conclude my remarks with that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Sure.

Hon. members, before the Assembly: third reading, Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). Are there others wishing to add comment?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. the Government House Leader to close debate. The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I rise to respond to members opposite with regard to Bill 7, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2). Striking that this is one of the most controversial misc stats bills this Legislature has ever seen. In response to the movie quote: solid movie quote, but the reality is that this cabinet was selected by the hon. Premier in response to the needs that she feels Alberta has. That is the job of this government, to respond, and I think we're doing exactly that, recognizing that we are facing a number of issues in this province, particularly an inflation crisis created by our friends in Ottawa. The members opposite and their federal leaders have chosen to take a path that is

contrary to our conservative principles, and we believe it's the wrong path. In response to that, the Premier has chosen individuals to be part of her cabinet who she thinks are best fit to address the issues facing Alberta today.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I do believe this is a good bill. I believe the members opposite are going to be supporting this bill. No need to grandstand and take opportunities to throw shots when the reality is that if you're going to be supporting it, might as well just get on with the people's business. With that, I will conclude my remarks and encourage all members of the Assembly to support Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

#### Bill 4

#### Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Copping]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has 16 minutes remaining.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We stand here at third reading of Bill 4, a bill whose sole existence – the sole existence of this bill is to undo this government's decision to award itself the extraordinary power to tear up the master agreement between the government of Alberta and physicians in our province. As I said when I spoke to this in second reading, this is an admission of the government's failure.

The Minister of Health has stood and he has attempted to mount a defence at multiple times during debate on this bill to say that this is a piece that is no longer required. As I said previously, Mr. Speaker, it was never required, because this government has achieved nothing for over two years of war on physicians, strife, Albertans not able to access care, creating chaos throughout the health care system, driving physicians out of practice and out of province. They have nothing to show for it. Every single piece that they insisted was absolutely essential has been walked back. Every principle that they said they absolutely had to stand on has been rescinded. There is nothing in the master agreement that was signed in September that could not have been signed at the negotiating table two years ago.

But, really, that is kind of the record, the history of this government on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker, coming in with incredible arrogance, buoyed by certainly a notable election win. Certainly, we'll give them credit for that. But based on that, having the idea that they could go ahead and bully and bulldoze their way through reform of the health care system with the idea that they could simply go in, tear things up by the roots, intimidate physicians, break their association, and somehow achieve savings on behalf of the people of Alberta, reform the health care system, again, they have failed.

They maintained this during the midst of a global pandemic. I won't go through the full history. I've already done that once on the record. I had a full 20 minutes to do so and needed most of it, because the number of petty decisions by this government, by the previous Minister of Health, who, I will say, showed incredibly disgraceful conduct repeatedly, a level of arrogance, entitlement, contempt from himself and staff in his office towards physicians in the province of Alberta – and we saw what the impact of that was.

The minister stands and talks. He says: "Well, you know, this is a situation we have in every province in Canada. Everybody is having challenges recruiting physicians right now. Everybody has an exhausted health care workforce." Mr. Speaker, you know, it's

true. Every jurisdiction is struggling right now. I will give this government credit: it didn't start the fire, but they sure heaped on the kindling and added fuel repeatedly. The situation in our province right now is worse in every way because of the decisions of this government. What we are now reversing in Bill 4 was the first and chief step of so many that they took that have done that damage to our public health care system in the province of Alberta.

10:20

Indeed, just today we saw a CTV article come out showing that emergency room wait times in Edmonton are at their highest level ever, Mr. Speaker. Ever. This is data that was obtained by a CTV reporter via FOIP because it is data that is not available from the government. Now, of course, we had a private member's bill from the Leader of the Opposition which would have made that data public, would have made it consistently public so we could track these issues in our public health care system. The government defeated that bill. They do not want that accountability. They do not want that transparency with Albertans because it would show, as this bill does before us today, the truth of the damage that they have done and continue to do to our public health care system in Alberta. They prefer to cherry-pick statistics.

When the minister stands and talks about "We have more doctors in Alberta than ever before," Mr. Speaker, well, we also have a larger population than we ever had before. We don't know exactly how many of those doctors are actually practising or where they're practising or what discipline they're practising in, so frankly it is a useless number when we know that we still have multiple rural sites across this province that have fully closed or partially closed emergency rooms – indeed, this government's own members stood and talked about it in question period today – because of a lack of physicians, when we still know that we have tens of thousands of Albertans in Lethbridge alone who do not have access to primary care, when we know – you know, this minister talked about recruitment and retention and he talked about how we're going to train more.

The fact is that because of what this government did in tearing up this master agreement and forcing through the physician funding framework, which they are now largely walking back, they undermined and did great damage to a number of our best rural training sites in the province of Alberta: in Sundre, in Pincher Creek, in Stettler. So we have less capacity now to train the doctors that we so badly need, again, because this government, starting with tearing up that master agreement, went to war with physicians and intentionally targeted family physicians, and of that we saw the greatest impact in rural health care and rural physicians.

The minister now is moving forward with some primary care task forces. That's good and important work and it's valuable, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, we could have been doing that two years ago. We could have been doing that collaborative work. We lost two years of time, two years of work that we could have been doing, and we are having to start over at the beginning because this government chose to adopt this aggressive posture against physicians and try to bully and bulldoze its way through to a reform of the health care system.

And what this government had in mind to replace it? Just a couple of days ago the Premier was at the opening of a new pharmacist-led clinic in Brooks, one of a few sites that are opening. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that pharmacists are an important part of the health care system. They play an important role in conjunction with physicians, with family doctors, with nurse practitioners, with a number of others. Indeed, there is some independent work that pharmacists can

do, but a pharmacist does not replace a family physician. They cannot. But what we have with this government – it was quite clear with Bill 30 that they brought forward, giving corporations the ability to bill in the same way that an individual doctor could, that what this government had in mind was the replacement of family physicians with corporate care. We saw that with their investment in Telus Babylon, who they were paying twice as much as people's actual individual family doctors for a number of weeks at the beginning of the pandemic.

The fact is that this government did not think through its actions. The same arrogance and entitlement that, frankly, bedevils them today and indeed seems to be coming back in spades under the new Premier made them think that all they had to do was just simply tear up that contract, force their will through and break the will of physicians, and they would just be on their way to setting up a whole new health care system in the province of Alberta.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, that they have not saved a single dollar. Not one. Now, let's be clear. They actually did underpay family physicians during the course of the two years of the pandemic, folks who were dependent on having to use virtual appointments to see their patients and were being paid for 15 minutes regardless of how much time they spent with those patients. If they were providing complex care for seniors or mental health support or other things, they still got paid for a 15-minute appointment if they spent 30 minutes or 40 minutes or 50 minutes with that patient. And doctors were putting care first, so they did.

So, yeah, actually, you know what? This government did save a whole lot of money on the backs of family physicians, forcing clinics to close, forcing staff to be laid off, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker: every single one of those dollars they saved on the backs of family physicians is being lost now as we pay for people to have to go to receive care in the emergency room because they can't access a family doctor or because they weren't able to during the pandemic and now their chronic condition is considerably worse or their cancer has advanced. We are paying for this government's pennies saved with pounds on the other end in acute and emergency care.

Again, an incredibly short-sighted strategy on behalf of this government and one on which, unfortunately, they continue to double down, as we see them attempting to take the same sort of grand gesture that they did in bringing forward the original changes under Bill 21 to tear up the contract and impose their will. They are doing the same thing now, as they have fired the board of AHS and appointed a single administrator, answerable to the Health minister and the Premier, to try to force through their changes in EMS, in emergency rooms, and in surgeries. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, this government is going to be any more successful with that approach.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, our health care system is functional, is successful because of the collaboration of thousands of Albertans who step up to provide care. We don't succeed by attacking or belittling or demeaning or blaming those individuals; we succeed by working collaboratively. I will again give, as I have previously, the current Health minister credit in that he has done that for the last year and a half, repairing the damage that was done by his predecessor and was supported by every member of this government, who sat quietly and looked the other way.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, that was a year and a half of effort just to get us back to zero. We are not ahead. We are still substantially behind because of this government's decision to tear up that master agreement, symbolic of the bullheaded, short-sighted approach this government has taken to

our health care system. Unfortunately, as I said, I do not see this improving under the current Premier, who achieved the position she has by, again, denigrating the folks who operate our health care system.

This is the government that fired Dr. Verna Yiu, the CEO of Alberta Health Services, who my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora awarded the Queen's platinum jubilee medal just this week. She was incredibly deserving of that, Mr. Speaker. This government fired her to set the course for their attempt to once again try to force their will on Alberta Health Services, much as the Premier has come in now having vilified then fired the board, having fired the chief medical officer of health, replaced her with a volunteer, and has lost now both the deputy chief medical officers of health. The chaos continues.

**10:30**

Bill 4: we will vote in support because it will undo that one piece of harm. The rest, Mr. Speaker, we will undo when we elect the next Alberta NDP government in 2023.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Bill 4 is before the Assembly. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gosh, it is always very difficult to follow the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and, of course, the Health critic as well. I'm not sure how I can possibly follow that and do this justice, but I will make my best effort.

It's good to see some support from the members opposite over there. Thank you for your attention, Calgary-Hays.

I am honoured to rise and to speak to Bill 4 not because I'm deeply appreciative of this government's record on health care but because I, too, like the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, can't say enough about the health care providers, the health care workers in this province who day in and day out have just – yeah, they truly are heroes. It takes me back to, you know, banging pots and pans and all the things we did to really show them that.

It seems to me like we've forgotten, and it seems to me like we've – you know, just like we seem to have forgotten that a pandemic is still going on, that we still have health care workers who are working in the most challenging of times and really have not seen the respect that they so deserve, and, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre pointed out, the incredible damage that was caused by previous members of this House who were in that role, the lack of willingness to work with those health care workers, the antagonistic approach that was taken instead of a collaborative one. To the health care workers out there – I know many of you are not able to watch tonight because you're working right now – thank you. Thank you for the work that you're doing.

While we will, perhaps somewhat begrudgingly, support Bill 4, I think my reflection tonight is that we didn't need to be here, right? It never needed to get to this place. I've got a lot I want to share in the time that I have, although I do have to acknowledge, as I seem to have acknowledged multiple times in this relatively short session, that it troubles me deeply that we're not hearing from UCP members about these bills because, as I've said in this House – and I know I'm a broken record – we're hearing about health care from our constituents. And – you know where this is going next – it's not just in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood where I'm hearing from my constituents. I'm hearing from your constituents, right?

I won't go walking down every single riding that I've door-knocked being held by UCP MLAs, but there are a lot. And I say that to point out that health care is a huge concern for your constituents. I know that. It comes up. I'll be back in some of your

ridings this weekend, and I guarantee you that health care will be one of the top issues because that's how – when I go to the doors, when you go to the doors, Member for St. Albert, you know, you ask people what's top of mind for them, right? Yeah. You're there to listen as their representative or as somebody who's supporting a candidate in their area. Health care comes up all the time.

So for government why I'm concerned is that: why wouldn't we hear other than from the minister, why wouldn't we be hearing from these UCP MLAs on – you know, in my three and a bit years of being an elected official, I've learned from this government that I'm not going to hear: I'm sorry. I'm not going to hear an apology for the damage that's been done to health care and health care workers, but what an opportunity for some of you to rise and just talk about the fact that: “You know what? Some mistakes were made, but we're here; we're trying to rebuild trust.” But you're not doing that, which shows me that either you truly don't care about health care and health care workers or you've been muzzled. I'm not sure. You've got an opportunity still.

One of the things that I wanted to do, because I have had a chance to speak to this bill multiple times, was share. Like my colleagues, we've all been inundated by stories from folks on the front lines, from health care workers. I committed to somebody that I would share briefly – and it is connected closely to Bill 4 as well – a letter that she wrote to her UCP MLA, who may or may not be in this Chamber. I would not want to refer to his presence or absence, but perhaps he will have read this e-mail. She's given me permission to share. I'm not going to share her name, but I can table it.

Once again I find myself sending an email because I feel like it's the only thing I can do. Yet it continues to feel futile because very little response is received. But I do it because I feel like I owe it to my colleagues and most importantly our patients.

I've been a Registered Nurse for almost 16 years. Currently I work in ER. And over the past year we are watching our healthcare system crumble and no one in your party [the UCP] seems to care. The UCP continues to turn a blind eye and more drastically chose to fire the entire AHS board... literally the people who have been managing the failing system through a global pandemic. I'd love for you to rationalize that decision...

More importantly I want you to understand the absolute suffering that is taking place within the walls of our hospital. Over the past several months we have seen patients waiting upwards of 7 hours, sometimes [more than 12] hours to be seen by a physician. These people are in pain, vomiting, absolutely suffering. And unfortunately dying. We have seen unprecedented numbers of cardiac arrests happening in our waiting rooms over the past several months. Imagine the distress of those other patients waiting to be seen, watching someone collapse and receive chest compressions. Or how about the adults or child that began seizing in the waiting room. Or how about the patient undergoing Chemotherapy that presents with a fever... no immune system, now febrile and surrounded in a cramped waiting room by other infectious people. Would you wish that upon your wife, sister, mother, friend? What about the gentleman that comes in, in obvious distress passing a kidney stone. No care space for him to be seen and given pain control? Is that something you believe to be acceptable? Because the inaction from your party leads me to believe that.

This past week we had 15 pediatric admissions in our 18 care spaces in the Stollery ER. 2 of the available care spaces are Mental Health beds and not equipped to safely manage the acutely medically ill child. That gives our physicians 1 bed to see ER patients. I wonder how you would pick who gets that precious space at any given time. Would you choose the 2 week old who has feeding trouble, the 5 year old fighting cancer that is now febrile, or the 12 year old with appendicitis? Can you answer that

for me? I don't think you can, because you're not a trained medical professional. It's time to start listening to the people who are.

It's also not unheard of to have 60 adult admissions in ER with no place to go upstairs. Not to mention the pressure put on inpatient units upstairs getting pressure to discharge patients way too early. Or the fact that this causes EMS to be stuck in hospitals waiting to offload their patients so they can get back on the road. How would you respond if you called 911 for your child or wife and was told there was no ambulance in the area to respond?

We are trained medical professionals with years of experience assigned to sit at triage for hours, watching people suffer before our eyes. Knowing their condition is serious and they need to see a physician and yet knowing we have no place to put them. It is absolutely morally distressing and our mental health is suffering. [But] we continue to show up for Albertans each day because we know you and your party won't... There is no wonder nurses are quitting and leaving the profession. Eventually you... can't do it anymore...

As she closes, she would like both her MLA and the minister to help her understand

how you all think this is ok for our province. In the meantime, myself and my colleagues would welcome you to come sit in the waiting room for 8 hours to witness the suffering yourself.

She concludes by saying:

Over the past several weeks I have heard so many people say, “I've never voted anything but conservative, but I can't vote for them anymore”. I pray this province turns Orange because the UCP continue to fail every Albertan day in and day out.

Those are the words from a registered nurse here in Alberta.

**10:40**

**Ms Renaud:** That's a great letter.

**Member Irwin:** It is a really great letter. It was a hard one to read. I can tell you that myself and my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre, all of us, get letters like that. We get messages like that all the time. All the time. You might say: well, okay; is that member getting off track here from Bill 4? No. Think about what she says in her message there. It's time to start listening to the health care professionals, and we're not seeing that. We're seeing it too late with Bill 4. We didn't need to be here.

She touches on the crisis in pediatric health care. Crisis is almost an understatement. I think back to last Monday – it was two Fridays ago – when we learned of the discharging of pediatric respite patients from the Rotary Flames House in Calgary. I heard from nurses who work there, who aren't allowed to speak publicly for fear of reprimand, just how – and they even shared that, you know, it's even worse than what's being reported, right? It never needed to be there. It never needed to get to that place. What kind of province are we in where we're accepting the fact that we have to limit services for palliative children? How did we get here? We know how we got here. Bill 4 attempts to try to address some of that.

I think about the family doctors and the nurses that we've heard from who are also leaving this province in large numbers. We've seen, I believe it was in May – I pulled it up earlier. Earlier in the year they shared that as many doctors left Alberta in 2021 as in the prior two years combined. We saw government and the ministers start to realize that, like, their choices were having a tangible effect on physicians. It wasn't just the NDP fear and smear. The data was showing...

**Mr. McIver:** Oh, yes, it is.

**Member Irwin:** ... that doctors were leaving; 140 doctors left the province in 2021.

I don't know if the Member for Calgary-Hays, who's heckling right now, knocks on doors or talks to constituents. [interjection] But I guarantee you – I don't know. I don't know because he doesn't join debate. But I guarantee you that his constituents . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Fear and smear.

**Member Irwin:** . . . are concerned about health care. They absolutely are.

For folks watching at home who can't hear, he's saying "fear and smear." This kind of rhetoric does nothing to address health care in this province.

We are. The numbers are clear. The data is clear. We've lost physicians. We've lost nurses. We've lost health care providers.

One of the things that I think about is the loss of health care services as well, so not just the workers, but it's tied into that. For instance, the loss of obstetric services. We've seen obstetric services close across this province. My hometown of Barrhead – I'm pointing to the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock – is one example, Fort Saskatchewan, Bonnyville, Cold Lake – I don't have the list in front of me, but it is an extensive one – Rimbe, Rocky Mountain House. And hardly a peep from this government. When a family can't deliver a child in an area close to where they live, it's incredibly stressful.

**Ms Renaud:** In the winter.

**Member Irwin:** In the winter, exactly. At a time when you're already experiencing a great deal of stress and having to add on those extra layers of anxiety, it's simply not acceptable. Again, it didn't need to be there. Most of the times when releases were put out about the reason why: staffing issues, unable to staff some of those rural hospitals because people have left. Health care providers have left.

**Ms Renaud:** Fact.

**Member Irwin:** And that is a fact. I just wish that this government would start – and that's perhaps some of my closing comments here – not only listening to their constituents, to the experts, public health experts, to health care workers but not get us into a place where you're having to fix the mistakes of the past.

You know what? I won't conclude as eloquently as my colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, but I think it's a clear, clear reminder that Albertans have seen a lot. It's hard to remember everything. It's hard to remember all the many attacks on health care in this province by this UCP government, but there's one thing that you can remember. That thing that you can remember is that a better future, a strong public health care system is in sight, and you'll get there through voting for the Alberta NDP.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

### Bill 5

#### Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Minister of Justice and move third reading of Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2).

This proposed bill, piece of legislation, changes six laws: the Legislative Assembly Act, the Provincial Court Act, the

Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, the Referendum Act, the Sale of Goods Act, and the Trustee Act.

Mr. Speaker, changes to the Legislative Assembly Act will allow Legislative Assembly security to be considered peace officers. As a result, they would have the legislative authority to carry firearms. Before they are armed, they would receive necessary training to handle the use of firearms. This change will bring Alberta in line with many other jurisdictions.

Next of the proposed changes: the Provincial Court Act. Mr. Speaker, we are advocating to increase the civil claims limit of matters that can be filed through the Provincial Court. To be clear, what we are proposing today doesn't actually increase the limit; this is just about making sure the government has the ability to do so if it decides that the amount should increase. Currently the limit for small claims court is \$50,000. Changes will let the government adjust the limit up to \$200,000. This would give Albertans the option of resolving more civil legal disputes by filing their claim with the Provincial Court. This means that more Albertans could choose to represent themselves. At the same time, this would free up time and resources in the Court of King's Bench to focus on more complex matters.

To make it easier for Albertans to collect child and youth spousal support, Bill 5 includes recommended changes to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act. This would help families receive financial support they are owed from ex-partners and -spouses when they live in different parts of the country. This would also reduce the time needed to collect, exchange, and process information.

Bill 5 also proposes changes to the Referendum Act, specifically clarifying that only constitutional questions require a resolution to be made in the Legislature.

This will also be amending the Sale of Goods Act to acquire a good title to grain. Right now a buyer must keep a record of the kind of vehicle delivering the grain and its licence number. These changes were requested by the agriculture stakeholders. Changes will eliminate redundant record-keeping requirements for buyers when grain is sold and delivered to a grain elevator. The Sale of Goods Act dates back to 1919 – that's a while ago – and this provision regarding grain sales originated in English common law which was carried over into provincial legislation when Alberta became a province in 1905. This need is now met by other such records as the bill of sale.

The final change proposed to this legislation would amend the new Trustee Act, that comes into force next year. The proposed changes will make it clear that a trust will not fail if there is temporarily no trustee. We've removed the transfer of trust properties to the court, allowing the trust property to move directly to the new trustee once appointed.

Mr. Speaker, all these changes mean that Albertans will now have more choices and an improved experience when dealing with legal or court process, and you can look forward to a more safe and positive experience when visiting the Legislature. I'd also like to give a shout-out to the security officers here as they do a tremendous amount of work on our behalf. Thank you for them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask for support of third reading of Bill 5, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act.

10:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak to Bill 5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief in my remarks this evening. Although I plan to support the bill, I do have reservations with elements of it, including, of course, the Referendum

Act portions of the legislation whereby it no longer will require . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. There's lots of opportunity for private conversations in either of the lounges or in the hallways. I encourage members to keep them to a minimum.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that the part of the act that I do not feel comfortable with is the part that deals with the Referendum Act whereby, under the new changes to the Referendum Act brought upon by Bill 5, there would be no longer a requirement to have nonconstitutional referendums requiring a motion to be passed by the Assembly first. This, I think, is a mistake. Anything that is important enough to be decided by a referendum in the province I think needs to be formulated via the Legislature. I think that the Legislature should be formulating that question or at least speak to the issue of the referendum question at hand. Of course, the government will still have its majority, but indeed anything that's important enough to go before the province in a referendum question should be run through this House first. I really will be watching that carefully.

Of course, we've only seen two referendums in the time frame that I've been a member of this Legislature: a constitutional referendum on equalization, for which an order in council was issued on August 9, 2021, and then the daylight saving time referendum, a nonconstitutional referendum. Both of those were important. The daylight saving time was very, very controversial and engaged a lot of Albertans. Anything that is important enough to go to a referendum in our representative form of democracy should be run through this Legislature first. We don't have a direct democracy, and that is what a referendum is, an element of direct democracy. It's a bit of a clash with our representative system. Therefore, I think that when we do depart from a representative system and go towards the tool of a referendum, it's incumbent on us to make sure that the Legislature speaks to it by having it run through the Legislature first.

I'll end my remarks there. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 5, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2), on behalf of my constituents and all those Albertans who came forward and shared their griefs or challenges in dealing with the justice system.

This bill amends six pieces of legislation and has some good changes. You know, I will acknowledge that. Certainly, some of the questions are around a few of the changes put forward in this bill. The bill amends the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act and also the Provincial Court Act and the Referendum Act, as my colleague said, and the Trustee Act.

I do support changes to the Trustee Act as I have personally experienced some of the process going through the Trustee Act and the process to establish a trust and then also the provision of losing the trust due to the trustee retires or has passed away. The changes help to re-establish or appoint new trustees in this case.

Not going too much into detail, I do have questions around the Referendum Act as well as the Provincial Court Act. This act just increases the limit from \$50,000 to \$200,000 on civil court rulings, but there are questions like: what kind of support are they providing and resources are they providing to improve the capacity of the law court to handle these cases?

Interestingly – I really wanted to say this for the record – for the past almost four years, like more than three and a half years, under this UCP government and two Premiers we have discussed the justice act many times, but it's just surprising to see that every time what we're discussing is just the tip of the iceberg. It was not something, really, that Albertans are looking at the government to make changes to, particularly for those folks or Albertans who feel the pain and experience, fell through the cracks, or they're looking at the government to make changes to improve access to the justice system. Not only this; I remember those moments when the Justice minister himself was discussing the findings of this government, how the justice system requires improvements by investing into it, hiring more judges and Crown prosecutors. Furthermore, there's a lot more to do in the justice system by expanding the services into different languages or hiring more interpreters, hiring more translators. There's a lot more to do, but it was very discouraging to see the complete exhibits on this government's lack of understanding or, you know, lack of commitment or lack of humility to address the people's many issues, that they're aware of, I will say.

What I want to say on the record: we as Alberta's NDP conducted consultations for 10 months from 2020 to 2021 and heard from mostly the racialized and marginalized communities and business leaders. I want to say that we are determined to raise their voices and address their issues. If we can't do it and can't work with this government, then we're determined to do it given we form government in 2023.

With that, I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others?

If not, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

## Bill 2

### Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

**The Speaker:** Hon. members – oh, I'm sorry. Didn't see you there. The hon. the Minister of Children's Services to move third reading.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is both an honour and a privilege to rise this evening on behalf of the Minister of Affordability and Utilities to move third reading of Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

This legislation will ultimately help millions of Albertans deal with the affordability crisis. Rising inflation is impacting all sectors of society, and I know that each and every member of this Legislature genuinely recognizes that we need to help make life more affordable. Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill and the supporting regulations will allow this government to provide quick and effective relief supports. This means that it will help cut the costs of fuel, reduce taxes, protect Albertans from price spikes and increases, and increase supports to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

11:00

There has been a lot of good debate in this Chamber from all members of this House, and I appreciate the input that we've already received. Because of that input, we are already working on regulations and online systems to help facilitate and deliver those financial payments, but the passage of this legislation is absolutely critical and necessary to providing help right away. This bill and the \$2.8 billion in affordability measures will help enable and make real differences for hard-working individuals, families, and businesses



all across this province. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to urge all members to support moving third reading of Bill 2 as quickly as possible.

However, at this time I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 6 Police Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be here today on behalf of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services to move third reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022, the first substantial changes to Alberta's policing legislation in 34 years.

One aspect, establishing the police review commission, replaces the system of police investigating police, which invites a perception of bias, with an independent body that will be responsible for receiving complaints, investigating them, and conducting any resulting disciplinary hearings. This would make the complaints process totally independent by changing these functions from being handled in-house by police services and putting them under the authority of an arm's-length organization.

Communities policed by the RCMP currently have the option of forming policing committees, but during the stakeholder engagement that informed this legislation, we learned that most communities have not done so. This legislation will help make them a reality. We also heard from many communities that the existing requirements to establish a policing committee in the Police Act were too onerous and came with too high a price tag for smaller municipalities. These amendments will fix that by eliminating the requirement to hire specific staff for the committee and by allowing smaller communities to share these administrative costs through regional committees.

This legislation will require diversity and inclusion plans that outline steps police are taking to reflect their communities and to educate officers about the distinct cultural needs of the people that they work with. We believe that improving those ties will result in better outcomes between police and the people they serve.

The provincial government has a legislative responsibility to ensure adequate policing in Alberta, and this is a logical extension of that mandate. The key proposals in this legislation are a product of listening to a broad range of Albertans from all corners of the province from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. It's important, if this legislation is passed, that we continue to listen to stakeholders as we move to implement it. For Alberta this bill is a fundamental shift that reimagines police as an extension of the community and provides a variety of practical and realistic reforms aimed at getting us there.

I hope that all members on both sides of this House will be able to support this legislation, which will ensure police are more accountable to the public and more responsive to its needs. Ultimately, police services that are more in tune with the people they serve will help build safer communities for everyone in Alberta, no matter where they live.

I ask that we move third reading of Bill 6, and with that I would also like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## **Government Motions**

### **Statutes Repeal**

17. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS 19.3, the following statutes appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed which was tabled in the Assembly by the Clerk of the Assembly on behalf of the then Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on March 14, 2022 (Sessional Paper 24/2022), not be repealed:
1. An Act to End Predatory Lending (2016 cE-9.5) s5(2);
  2. Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (2016 c26) ss2(b), 11(a), 31, 41.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18. Is there anyone wishing to add questions or comments prior to calling the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

### **Office of the Child and Youth Advocate**

18. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- (a) the 2021-2022 annual report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for review;
  - (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  - (c) in accordance with section 21(4) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(i). Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the Government House Leader to close debate.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

### **Alberta Property Rights Advocate**

19. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- (a) the 2019-2021 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review;
  - (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  - (c) in accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Government Motion 19 is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(i). Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waived.

[Government Motion 19 carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of good work was done tonight, and I think it's time that we all decide to leave this Chamber. You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here because I am moving that we adjourn the Assembly until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, December 15, 2022, the ides of December.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:10 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 15, 2022

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier

Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
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Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	



### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 15, 2022

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Chair of Committees is entirely out of control this afternoon.

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Hon. members, we will be now led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Ms Brooklyn Elhard.

### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the privilege of meeting with a very special guest who's joining us now in the Speaker's gallery. Please welcome the consul general of the Portuguese Republic, Mr. Costa, and he is accompanied by the honorary consul of Portugal in Edmonton, Mr. Fernandes. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you Chief Leonard Standingontheroad, Councillor Eric Shirt, and Chief Billy Morin from Treaty 6 nations. I am honoured by all the incredible work they do surrounding mental health and addiction supports, health centres, and the continuous work improving the lives of Indigenous peoples in Alberta. I am pleased to have continuous engagement with our First Nations partners, and I look forward to a bright and strong future relationship between us. I am honoured by their presence and very pleased that they are actually in the Speaker's gallery today. May you rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek also has a visitor.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members in the Chamber a visitor who is no stranger to this Assembly. Ken Allred is a seasoned and experienced Alberta land surveyor and the former MLA for St. Albert, having served our great province from 2008 to 2012. He currently resides in the beautiful Crowsnest Pass. Ken was an incredible resource to this Assembly and to me personally, a mentor to me given his research and topical discourse around adverse possession leading up to the recent passage and imminent royal assent of Bill 3. His research encompassed every adverse possession file since the first Alberta case in the early

1900s. Despite being retired, Ken remains active in the Crowsnest Pass, serving on various municipal and other volunteer boards as well as continuing a small practice in arbitrating land and boundary issues inside and outside the court system. May I ask former MLA Allred to please rise in the Speaker's gallery and to receive the warm appreciation and welcome from this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three members of my family visiting the Legislature today. Seated in the Speaker's gallery are my father, Brian Glubish; my aunt Bev Lozinik; and my uncle Fred Lozinik. Family is so important to me and, I'm sure, to everyone in this Assembly, and it's so special to have them here today. I wouldn't be here without all the mentorship and counsel from my dad, and I want to thank him for all he's done for me. I invite them to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I too have some guests visiting from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. They are Councillor Faye McGhee of Kneehill county, county councillor; her husband, Todd; and their son Mike. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the Edmonton home-school ARPA club. Accompanying them today is the leader of the club, Andrea Veldkamp, and many of the parents are with them as well. Could the Edmonton home-school ARPA club please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod and Deputy Chair of Committees.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House today and introduce to you and through you friends from Livingstone school in Lundbreck. I'd also like to highlight that among this group are Kathy Rast, Paige Rast, and Sophie Lynch-Staunton, granddaughter and great-grandchildren of Alberta's 11th Lieutenant Governor, Frank Lynch-Staunton. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Alberta Malcolm, Sandra Sutter, Candice Calliou, and Raelene Young from the Métis Women's Economic Security Council. I was pleased to meet with these ladies this morning and support their work to improve the lives of Métis women in Alberta. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier has an introduction.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituents whom I had the honour of awarding Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medals: first, former Member of Parliament Peter Goldring, Jeremy Hamelin, Dr. Jennifer Njenga, Chinaemerem Ogbonna, Imam Bassam Fares, Janice Krissa-Moore, Sheri Doyle, and Jorgia Moore. May I please ask you to all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce Maria Vicente, Shannon Berry, and Joe Hak. They hail all the way from Edmonton-Castle Downs, but I have adopted these folks in God's country, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. They're amazing volunteers that help out all over the place. Please, members, if we can give these folks a warm round of applause. Please rise to accept that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose has an introduction.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you members of the rodeo community. Please welcome Muriel Hill from the Cloverlodge Stampede in Viking, Dave and Trudy Berrecloth from the Tofield Ag Society, Brooke Busenius and her grandparents May and Don Korobko. Brooke is an international rodeo competitor, and I'm so glad that they are here today. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

## Members' Statements

### Job Creation and Economic Development

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, a real plan to create good-paying jobs, drive investment, and spur competitiveness: that's exactly what our Official Opposition rolled out yesterday, and I encourage everyone to read it at [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca). No, it doesn't include a job-killing, undemocratic sovereignty act. Instead, it does include actual consultation with Indigenous communities about expanding opportunities for First Nations partnerships on critical economic projects. It includes a new tax credit, the Alberta's Future tax credit, which will support innovation in new spaces, lead to \$10 million in new investments, and create an estimated 20,000 jobs.

It also includes a move to supercharge the petrochemical incentive program started under our government. Additional support for this program will lead to another \$10 billion in new investment and create another 27,000 good-paying jobs. It also includes a performance fast pass, a NEXUS-type support for businesses with good track records to get their projects off the ground faster. These are game-changing proposals from Alberta's NDP, Mr. Speaker. What does it mean for Albertans? It means good-paying jobs, more diversification, more investment opportunities, more opportunities for everyone.

We're also going to support our future leaders with a new campus in downtown Calgary and by restoring funding cut by this government at the worst possible time. We're going to support workers by restoring their rights. We're going to protect the retirement security of those who have worked their entire lives and who will rely on the CPP, and we're going to support families with affordable child care. We're going to connect communities with an actual plan for rural broadband. We're going to build an economic future for all.

There's an exciting conversation happening at [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca) that everyone is invited to. Coming together to solve major challenges and ensure economic prosperity for all: that's how we build a better future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

1:40

### NDP Government Record

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are spending a lot of time these days claiming they know what's best for Alberta, but let's take a look back, shall we? Under the NDP average weekly earnings grew 1.7 per cent over four years. Under this government average weekly earnings have increased 11 per cent. The NDP raised taxes,

fees, and fines 97 times, amounting to \$3.4 billion in tax hikes, including the carbon tax, the largest tax hike in history.

Let's look at venture capital, Mr. Speaker. Under the NDP: 2016, \$34 million; '18, \$58 million. In 2017 Calgary wasn't even in the top 10 country-wide. Under this government for the third year in a row Alberta is on track to shatter venture capital records. Under the NDP there were hits to investment across the board. Overall, investment dropped 38.1 per cent, with a 46.5 per cent decline in construction, 40.2 per cent in utilities, 18.6 per cent in transportation and warehousing, and a 14.1 per cent decline in wholesale and retail trade. The NDP even promised a budget surplus of \$586 million, but in 2019 they created a \$7.9 billion deficit. NDP government spending was out of control, with a path that would have cost every Alberta taxpayer \$2,400 more in taxes every year. Their only success was making Alberta a high-cost, high-regulation market that drove \$45 billion of investment out of our province.

Today our government is leading the country, with a forecasted \$57 billion of investment this year alone. Alberta beat the national average in real GDP growth this year, at just under 5 per cent, higher than any year the NDP was in government. Mr. Speaker, these numbers speak for themselves. Albertans can't afford another four years of the NDP. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I've watched the federal Parliament. I've seen lots of standing ovations. I feel like we're all heading on a bad path with standing ovations.

### Official Opposition and 2022 Fall Sitting

**Ms Rosin:**

Well, 'twas the day before Christmas, and all through the House

MLAs were stirring for session was almost out.

Our families had hung our Christmas stockings with care  
In hopes that eventually we'd get back there.

Albertans were watching from their nice, warm  
homesteads,

Feeling hope for jobs, affordability, finally getting  
ahead.

Conservatives gave rebates, supports, and cheap gas,  
Lowered tax, help for parents, and all in one act.

When out of the Chamber there arose such a clatter,  
I looked across the aisle to see what was the matter.

The NDP cried, "Job killers, dictators, destroying  
'Berta,"

Forgetting their leader – well, he lives in Ottawa.

They opposed all we did without reading the bills,  
Showing a pettiness that should probably send their  
support for the hills.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear,

A new 338 poll; they must now think: oh, dear.

On Jagmeet, on Trudeau, on Liberal appointee.

Those were their top sources, now can't you see?

To the top of the party, to the ends of the Earth,

Albertans know that they'll never ever put Alberta first.

They scoffed and called our sovereignty act  
undemocratic,

But if you didn't read the bill, then how can you be mad  
at it?

If the NDP had their way, it's clear they'd do nothing.

They say they have solutions, but we know they're just  
bluffing.

All session long our government acted in good faith.

We listened, proposed amendments, and participated in  
debate.

Unfortunately, for them, the same can't be said,

Which leaves me here just scratching my head.  
 Because they claim we're the problem, that Alberta  
 won't fare.  
 But deep down they know that their record is quite bare.  
 So if you listen closely, then you'll hear the truth.  
 Today Alberta is better, and we have the proof.  
 We have grown the economy and diversified, too,  
 Giving hope to new grads that their dreams can come  
 true.  
 We fought for our province and defended its right  
 To develop its resources and package beef more polite.  
 So in next year's election people don't want false fear.  
 They want a vision to bring hope to the year.  
 So to all who are watching this afternoon bright,  
 Merry Christmas to all, and keep up the good fight.

[interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Misericordia Community Hospital

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be the MLA representing the Misericordia hospital, which opened in 1900 and has been in its current location since 1969. I'm proud to be able to stand here and advocate for this hospital, the people who access it, and the front-line health care workers, who work hard to protect Albertans' health.

During the pandemic we saw the lengths that health care workers would go to protect the lives of their patients. They worked themselves to exhaustion and risked burnout to ensure that those who needed their help were supported, and they did this while at the same time dealing with a government that was focused on fighting with front-line workers.

We owe our hospital front lines more than we can possibly pay back. The Misericordia hospital urgently needs two new CT scanners, one to replace an aging CT scanner which can be out of service for long periods of time, impacting health care across the region, and another one primarily for emergency room use in a soon to be open emergency room funded by the previous NDP government. As I'm sure all members of this House know, CT scanners are fundamental to emergency treatment and diagnosis. They are as essential to hospitals as stethoscopes. This is a simple investment that will help with diagnostics in their emergency room and for the rest of the hospital. The return on investment is almost incalculable for the hospital, for the community, and for the entire region served by the Misericordia.

I urge this government to look at the needs of our hospitals and ensure that they are supported, because when we invest in health care, we're investing in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. An Alberta NDP government will always stand with our front-line health care workers and the patients they serve.

### Small Business, Job Creation, and Affordability

**Ms Pon:** Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of Alberta. Particularly in my riding, Calgary-Beddington, there are so many amazing small businesses that I'm proud to support, small businesses like Brixton Pub, owned by Becky, in the neighbourhood of MacEwan, who started her business during the height of COVID-19 and worked through the many challenges that the pandemic presented. This place had many challenges, but Becky never gave up on her business. She made it through thanks to the support of community and the support of this UCP government, like our small-business grant.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has it all despite the NDP attempts to stifle our economy while they were in power. The UCP has invested

in growing it, and this government's work has paid off enormously. We have gained over 100,000 jobs in the last year; we now have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, which is tremendously different from when the NDP was the government. Edmonton and Calgary have two of the top three unemployment rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we know that a strong economy makes a strong Alberta, and when we have a strong Alberta, we all share in the prosperity, especially those that need it most. This includes offering the most generous social programs of any province, programs that have only gotten stronger. This is including the indexing of AISH, income supports, the seniors' benefit, and the Alberta child and family benefit. This includes the \$2 billion in affordability packages that will benefit all Albertans, including small-business owners.

I'm so proud to call Alberta my home and to be Albertan. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod and the Deputy Chair of Committees.

### Agricultural Environmental Stewardship

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes when I look at the news, I'm stunned and I cannot believe the headlines that I read. It's not always just on the CBC. One such report states that the Dutch government is planning to purchase over 3,000 farms only to shut them down soon after. They are claiming that this is an effort to comply with European Union environmental mandates to slash nitrogen emissions. The Netherlands is not the only place where attacks are taking place on farming. Here in our own country we are seeing similar intentions. The federal government wants to increase the carbon tax, which would cost Canadian farmers upwards of \$100,000 annually. These plans will jeopardize the sustainability and the viability of the Canadian family farm.

Some farmers have voiced opposition to the new rules, and how could they not, Mr. Speaker? Farming is the livelihood of many people and the backbone of this province, and these rules have put these livelihoods at stake. Our ag producers have a long history of environmental stewardship. In fact, I'd even say it's in their DNA. I know this because I'm proud to say that I'm the fifth generation raised on our family farm.

I watched my dad and grandfather year after year work the land with respect, knowing that if they took care of the land, the land would take care of them. This was so important to them that following the Depression, my grandpa Reid and my great-grandpa Reynolds ran part of their operation as an experimental farm, looking for ways to develop farming techniques and seed that would better the environment. That work played a large role in developing innovative farming hardware, just like the Noble blade.

Because of the roots and the heritage that I have in the farming sector, I must stand up for our ag producers. I truly believe that farmers and ranchers are stewards of the land, yet all over the world they're being devalued and attacked. The federal Liberals pick on farmers financially over and over. The rules the Trudeau government has put into place defy common sense and practice. Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with food insecurity across the globe, so why are we attacking the very people that put food on our tables?

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

### Official Opposition and Government Policies

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, before the House rises, let's look at who was really focused on Albertans this session. Our party brought forward legislation to protect and improve health care, we introduced a framework for jobs growth and investment attraction, we released a plan to freeze insurance premiums and lower costs for families, but what did the UCP do? They rammed through a job-killing sovereignty act dividing Canadians and setting Indigenous relations back a generation. Does the Premier understand why no one trusts her government to act on what really matters to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I've observed about the NDP plan is it seems to be a continuation of all of the policies of the UCP. So if they're just going to continue the policies of the UCP, they may as well just vote us in again. One of the other things I would also note is that they are trying to rewrite history. Many people in the province, and certainly everyone on this side, are not going to forget the NDP job-killing record. When you look at what we have done: increasing the amount of venture capital, increasing the amount of capital investment, we've got oil sands companies increasing again. Alberta's seen a net increase of over 100,000 jobs since last year.

**Ms Hoffman:** The most pressing concern of this session was the health of Alberta's children, who are fighting RSV, COVID, and influenza. We saw overwhelmed emergency rooms at our pediatric hospitals. Waits of 20 hours. In Calgary there are so many sick children waiting, they had to put a trailer outside to keep them in. The Health minister said that help was coming soon, but it never arrived. The government voted against addressing the child health care crisis three separate times. So why does the Premier care more about paper straws than she does about sick children in Alberta?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was very concerned about the 20-hour waits, which is why we put Dr. John Cowell in place, and as I've been monitoring the wait times, they've never exceeded that level since he came in. So the system's working. But I know that the members opposite are already trying to change the channel because they are forgetting, and Albertans won't, that the NDP hiked taxes by \$3.4 billion in their four years of government. They raised taxes and fines 97 times. That includes the carbon tax, the largest tax hike in Alberta history. That is the record of the job-killing NDP, and people are not going to forget that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Another story this session is all of the UCP members who lost their moral compasses. They spoke against the sovereignty act, but when it came time to stand up for Albertans, they sold out for power and a promotion. They backed the Premier issuing clarifications for things like her defence of Vladimir Putin or claiming that the unvaccinated were the most discriminated against or her attacks on cancer patients or her refusal to support vaccines, her insulting comments about Indigenous people. Is there anyone left over there who's got a spine, and if so, will they stand up and say the Premier was wrong?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do recall that when the NDP were in power and we saw a decline in our economy, the former NDP Energy minister said this: certainly, there are always ways to talk about mobility of jobs between provinces, so maybe they can go work in B.C. until it gets better and then come back home. That

was their job-creating strategy, to chase people out of this province, and we saw six consecutive quarters of people leaving this province. That's turned around. We now have net in-migration that is the highest that we have ever seen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the second set of questions.

### Health Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention Vaccination Policies

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the former president and CEO of AHS, Dr. Verna Yiu, gave a presentation at the University of Alberta. It was on health care and Alberta's workforce. She warned that demand for nurses and other health care workers in Canada is going up at a time when all-time vacancies are the highest they've ever been, yet the UCP government continues to attack and blame front-line workers instead of working with them to attract more people to the profession and keep those who are working in it today, so to the Premier. You've spent a lot of time firing people, but that doesn't fix health care. When will you actually start hiring?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to remember that we had to rescind a policy that had been put in place by AHS that was chasing workers out of the profession and out of the province. We now welcome anyone, regardless of the medical choice that they make, to work in our system in Alberta Health Services. That's reaching out a hand to other provinces where they still have those restrictions in place. That's what we're going to be doing. We're also working, through our Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions, to ensure that we are doing recruitment internationally. We are also making sure that we reduce the . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the chaos caused by the UCP in our health care system is driving workers away. Dr. Yiu's presentation showed that the health care worker vacancy rate in Alberta has gone up 50 per cent under the UCP. The voluntary termination rate – that's people quitting in our province in health care – has gone up 50 per cent. The number of workers quitting in their first year under this government has doubled. More health care workers are working overtime, and they're getting sick, so why won't the Premier start listening to the front lines, listen to the workers, take action before things get even worse?

**Ms Smith:** I don't know why the member opposite keeps on standing up for administration and management, because what we are hearing is that it's the front line that continues to be ignored by layers . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Why do you hate health professionals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will know that unparliamentary language on or off the record still remains unparliamentary. [interjections]

The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** We are the party that sticks up for the little guy. They are the party that sticks up for the managers. That is why we are working with our front-line workers to identify their issues to make sure that we are addressing them on the ground to push decision-making down so that we've got more money for the front line. We're going to continue that process that we started, and it only started because we took the bold decision to put Dr. John Cowell in place.

**Ms Hoffman:** According to documents released today by CTV News, ER wait times at Edmonton hospitals are the longest they've been since 2015. AHS data shows that four hospitals either matched their longest monthly wait times or surpassed them in September. That is driven by the triple whammy of RSV, COVID, and influenza, of which Alberta has the highest rates of spread in Canada. Why won't the Premier show some leadership, stand up with the chief medical officer of health publicly, tell Albertans that vaccines work, and answer questions about the growing health care crisis in Alberta?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is important for people to talk to their family doctor about the medical choices that are best for them. Obviously, the influenza vaccine is important for those who are most vulnerable and can help reduce the risk. That is the message that has been put out there by Dr. Joffe. He has put it out in press releases. He has put it out on Twitter. He has written letters to parents, advising them of their options. The other thing that they can do, of course, is stay home if they are sick – I commend parents for doing exactly that – and to make sure that they're taking measures to protect themselves. That's just common sense. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

#### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Mr. Sabir:** In 2019 the UCP did a favour for their buddies in the insurance industry. They removed the rate cap on car insurance; right away premiums soared. For Albertans in my riding this meant thousands of dollars in extra costs on top of the worst cost of living in 40 years. Meanwhile insurance companies are making record profits. The Premier says that she knows we need a solution. Will she admit that the problem was caused by her Finance minister picking his friends in the insurance industry over Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that insurance rates have been going up for a long time. They went up all the way through the NDP's time in office, 5 per cent per year, for a total of 20 per cent. We now know that we're in a position where Alberta has some of the highest insurance rates in the country. That's why I've asked my Finance minister and my Affordability and Utilities minister to meet with the insurance industry so that we can talk about ways that we can address this in the long run. Part of the problem with the approach taken by the members opposite is that it resulted in people having to pay their insurance premiums up front. People were deinsured. People had to bundle their insurance, and it became unaffordable. We need better solutions.

**Mr. Sabir:** According to a recent report by Ernst & Young Albertans are forced to buy the most expensive car insurance in Canada. An Alberta driver could pay more than double what their twin brother pays, having an identical car, in British Columbia. These premiums have soared since the UCP Finance minister removed the rate cap. That's fact. Will the Premier accept responsibility for Albertans paying the most expensive car insurance in the country after her government gave the green light to massive increases?

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Most of the increase that took place, took place in the 2015 to 2019 period, under the former government, so will they apologize to Albertans for the fact that it increased under them? In fact, when we released the cap, we ended up seeing a lower average

increase year over year. Now, what we are hearing is that there are a certain number of our insured . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** What we are hearing is that there is a certain percentage of the insured that are seeing double and triple the increases, and we need to understand why that is. We are hearing stories of people who have a clean driving record and they're seeing an increase. We need to understand why that is. To act as if it's a hundred per cent across the board is not true.

**Mr. Sabir:** On Tuesday, like today, the Premier said that she's concerned by the cost of car insurance and she hopes to find a solution sometime. My challenge to the UCP is: why wait? My private member's bill will be introduced today, and it will freeze insurance rates for one year. We can pass this bill in a day. Last night I invited the UCP to join us in getting this done before we leave and giving all Alberta drivers some holiday cheer. To the Premier: will she join us in freezing car insurance rates today so that we can find solutions? Yes or no?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe in consulting with industry and identifying areas where we can work together to solve the problem. I think it's pretty well understood that we've got some issues that are . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** It is well understood, with the Ernst & Young report, that we have seen an escalation in rates that began in 2015 and has continued. The bulk of that increase happened under the NDP time in office, and that's why we've got to go and we've got to address this. We've got to identify the issues, and then we've got to work over the next number of months to find short-term, mid-term, and long-term solutions. What they put forward simply didn't work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, my apologies. A point of order was called at 1:57, that I failed to note, by the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

#### Seniors' Issues

**Ms Sigurdson:** Since 2019 we've turned away about 300 seniors a year because we didn't have a bed when they needed a bed: those were the words of Larry Mathieson, the CEO of Calgary's Kerby Centre, which runs the lone elder abuse shelter in the city. This news is horrifying. Ensuring that no one is turned away when fleeing from abuse is critical, and I worry about the health and safety of those 300 seniors who were turned away. Will the minister commit to fixing this problem immediately?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question and, of course, for her advocacy. Of course we want to make sure we're working with our not-for-profit providers, our shelter providers, to make sure that especially our seniors are not turned away. I'm more than happy to continue to work with these folks that provide these excellent services in our community to make sure that we have excellence in support and services for seniors in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Seniors built this province, and we owe them respect, dignity, and support to live their best lives. Seniors need a voice, especially when dealing with a government that has no compassion, like the UCP. We have proposed the creation of an independent seniors advocate, someone to stand up for seniors and bring their concerns to government. This government threw seniors off their benefit plans. They cut their income support programs and attacked our health system. Given the legacy of cruel UCP policy decisions impacting seniors, will the minister agree it's time to bring back the seniors advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for her question and her advocacy. This government is taking action to help address affordability challenges for seniors in our community. I, like her, have been out hitting doors, and I've heard from seniors first-hand about the challenges around affordability. That's why we reindexed seniors' benefits. That's why we have come with a hundred dollars a month starting in January for seniors in this province to help address affordability issues. Of course, there's also the money that's been put towards food banks to make sure that there's food available for all Albertans.

In regard to the seniors advocate we did consolidate the seniors advocate. There is a seniors advocate under Health. A lot of the issues . . .

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** The pain, suffering, and stress Alberta seniors experience under this government continues to deepen. The UCP is planning to pull seniors off the Canada pension plan. They're throwing the retirement security of hundreds of thousands into complete chaos. Seniors shouldn't have to worry about the Premier and Finance minister blowing their retirements on a police force no one wants or a revenue agency that no one wants. Will the Premier please stop scaring seniors and stop threatening their retirement by pulling out of CPP right here and right now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am disappointed by that hon. member continuing to scare seniors. This government is taking real action to help seniors during this very difficult time. Of course, seniors' pension is not at risk. We . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, seniors' pensions are not at risk, and we will continue to make sure that our seniors are cared for, that we have supports in our community. We, obviously, are so thankful for seniors for building our province and giving us the legacy that we have here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a question.

#### Federal Firearms Act Prosecution Protocol

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 1, 2020, the federal government arbitrarily banned more than 1,500 types of firearms. After the amnesty expires in October 2023, law-abiding Albertans could face jail time under the Criminal Code for simply possessing

property that they legally purchased. To the Minister of Justice: how will taking back constitutional jurisdiction for handling charges under the federal Firearms Act help protect Alberta's law-abiding firearms owners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Look, we know that Public Safety Canada doesn't have the capacity, they don't have the wherewithal, they don't have the resources to confiscate hundreds of thousands of firearms across Canada, but that doesn't mean we're willing to take any risks. This is a federal government which is making a habit of making life more difficult for folks. The federal government – if they don't extend the amnesty, any person who owns a firearm listed in the 2020 ban will be criminalized by the federal government in October of '23. That's less than a year from now, and that's why we're taking action now.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for the response. Given that Alberta is taking back constitutional jurisdiction for handling the charges under the Firearms Act and given that Alberta's Crown prosecutors will now determine whether to pursue charges or not and further given that this new protocol provides prosecutors with guidance in respect to public interest when determining the charges, to the same minister: how will the newly issued protocol to Alberta's Crown prosecutors help protect Alberta's law-abiding firearms owners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, while respecting the operational independence on individual cases, the new protocol provides prosecutors with guidance on figuring out when something is or is not in the public interest and whether or not to pursue charges. The protocol states that it will not be in the public interest to proceed with a charge of possession of a banned firearm where the following factors exist: first, that the accused lawfully obtained the firearm before May 1, 2020; second, that the firearm was reclassified as prohibited on May 1, 2020; and, third, that the accused has not been charged with any other offence in relation to the possession or use of that firearm.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Thank you for your work on this file. Given that the federal government handles cases involving the federal Firearms Act and given that the provinces have the constitutional authority to handle federal criminal law charges, including the charges related to the federal Firearms Act, to the Minister of Justice: how will these steps you've taken today help protect Albertans who own firearms that could be banned under the proposed amendments in Bill C-21?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Over the past month or so we've seen the federal government continue to push further than we could've ever imagined with the proposed amendments to Bill C-21. These amendments arbitrarily ban hundreds of new models of legally owned shotguns and rifles. This is now legislation which is proposed to target hunters, farmers, sport shooters, who collectively own hundreds of thousands of firearms that could soon be prohibited. If these amendments are successful, C-21 will be the most sweeping and arbitrary ban in Canadian history. The ban



will not only be unenforceable but will criminalize hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

### Cost-of-living Indexing of Benefits Programs

**Ms Renaud:** In 2018 our government tied the value of benefits for AISH recipients and low-income seniors to inflation finally. In 2019 one of the first things the UCP government did was to attack the vulnerable and disabled Albertans in our province by cutting the vital benefits. The UCP justified the cruel decision by saying that they couldn't afford the increased costs and running deficits, yet they paid for their ridiculous war room and gave away handouts to wealthy corporations. That was three years ago, and still the UCP has failed to apologize for the harm that they've done. In fact, they'd rather run around patting themselves on the back. Will the minister stand up today and apologize for making life unbearable for vulnerable and disabled Albertans?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the history lesson. I remember three and a half years ago the previous government left us in a fiscal mess, deficit after deficit after deficit, on the path to over \$100 billion of debt. That's \$5 billion a year at the current tax rate in just financing cost, money that could have gone to the people that need it in our community. This government took real action on getting our financial house in order so that we could be at a place in time now, today, so that we can help our most vulnerable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the UCP government thinks so little of vulnerable people that they'd like to make life even more difficult for them by cutting vital benefits and given the public pressure finally forced the UCP to reverse their devastating decision and reindex benefits and given that the UCP is doing this on a go-forward basis only and ignoring the fact that they'll be responsible for people impacted in society with three years' worth of cuts, will the minister just admit that they've only done the bare minimum and it won't actually undo the harm that they've caused over the last three years? Just apologize and do better.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I've stated this before in this House, but it bears repeating. We inherited a fiscal train wreck from the members opposite, and we brought our fiscal house in order for the sustainability of programs going forward. No longer . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** No longer will we borrow from our grandchildren. No longer will we jeopardize programing for the most vulnerable in the future, Mr. Speaker. We brought responsible government to Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that we're all living through the worst affordability crisis in 40 years and given that for many of us it means just, you know, cutting costs at the grocery store, putting vacations on hold, but for the most vulnerable and disabled it can be the difference between having a home and being forced onto the street; it can be a matter of life or death. I still hear from people every day who can't make ends meet. This inflationary crisis is crushing them, and what this government is proposing to do is not

enough. You need to make them whole. You need to undo the damage you have created.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share that member's deep concern for our most vulnerable in our community, and that's why this government is taking action, has taken action, will continue to take real action to make sure that we address the affordability challenges that our most vulnerable are facing in our community.

But, Mr. Speaker, again, we have to revisit the track record from three and a half years ago . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for St. Albert had her opportunity to ask the question. The minister . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**The Speaker:** Order. I don't need help from the folks on this side doing the job either.

The minister has the opportunity to answer the question, just as you've had to ask it.

The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, let's revisit the track record from three and a half years ago and the financial disaster that we found ourselves in when we took over government. This government got our financial house back in order, not only protecting these programs today but also into the future to make sure that we can support vulnerable people long . . .

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

### Diabetes Supports

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over six months ago the UCP government created fear and anxiety by cruelly attempting to take coverage for insulin pumps away from 4,000 Albertans who rely on the insulin pump therapy program. Now, thankfully, Albertans organized their rallies against this, and the UCP backed down. The Minister of Health rightly apologized and in July promised there would be meaningful, ongoing conversations on future policy with the diabetes working group, but as of today the membership of the group is still not known and, from what I've seen, hasn't even met. So will the Minister of Health please explain why he's yet to follow through on his commitment to the type 1 diabetes community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We understand that diabetes is a significant issue. We were very pleased to be able to announce the two co-chairs of the diabetes working group, and they are working. We are identifying the other individuals on that working group to continue to be able to identify how we can address this chronic disease, better support Albertans, you know, who have it, and also prevent other Albertans from getting diabetes. This is a significant issue. We have set up the diabetes working group, and I'm looking forward to making more announcements on this in the future.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that a group with no members is not set up and given that after the UCP promised not to cancel the program, they also committed that new pumps with updated

technology would be added to the program as early as possible this year and given that that was exciting news for Albertans who would benefit from that technology, to hear it would happen this year, but given that there is not much time left in 2022 and I'm hearing from many Albertans that when they ask this government, their questions are going unanswered about when they'll have access to those new pumps, will the Minister of Health please tell type 1 diabetics when he will actually do what he promised and make more insulin pumps available under this program this year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the hon. member is quite correct. We made a commitment that we would make new pumps available, and I'm very pleased that work is being done right now between Alberta Health and manufacturers to actually make those available. I'm looking forward to being able to make an announcement on that in the very near future.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that the UCP's initial plans to cancel the insulin pump therapy program created anxiety in the type 1 diabetic community because it looked to cancel full public coverage and force them to potentially pay more out of pocket and given that when a type 1 diabetic asked the Premier about coverage for new pumps on her radio show, she talked about her plan for health savings accounts, which she previously suggested were intended to help Albertans get used to paying out of pocket for care, will the Minister of Health confirm here and now that any changes to the IPTP, including access to new pumps, will never require Albertans to pay out of pocket for life-saving technology?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we talked about the potential changes to the insulin pump program, we indicated, you know, at that point in time when we actually made the change that we were going to maintain the program as it stands. We will be maintaining the program as it stands. Again, we're working through negotiations with other insulin pump manufacturers. We'll be able to provide the new pumps to those under the program, and I look forward to making that announcement in the near future.

#### Pharmacists' Walk-in Clinics and Health Care Access

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend the opening of the Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacist walk-in clinic in Fort Saskatchewan. This location is one of a few that recently opened. The pharmacist walk-in clinic is a new and innovative concept serving to offer basic health care services to patients with common ailments and injuries by expanding the roles of prescribing pharmacists. Can the Minister of Health please inform this House how this innovative idea actually works?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the excellent question. Albertans need better access to primary care, and this pilot project uses the skills of pharmacy teams to improve access safely and appropriately with the same regulatory oversight as all other health care providers. These clinics will enable Albertans to get help quickly and easily for minor health problems and the management of chronic conditions. Pharmacists work within their defined scope of practice. They're key assets in

delivering quality primary care and can help address many health concerns that may otherwise go untreated.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that wait times are a major issue within the health care system in Alberta and the rest of Canada and that patients are often left waiting for far too long for simple yet critical treatment and diagnosis and given that prescribing pharmacists are front-line health care staff, which many Albertans count on for a variety of services, can the same minister please explain how this new concept of pharmacists' walk-in clinics will help reduce wait times for Albertans seeking health care?

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks once again to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, pharmacists in Alberta have the broadest scope of practice in Canada. By leveraging their extensive training, this pilot offers Albertans another health care option, which can ease pressures on other parts of our health care system. Through better management of chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure, pharmacists can help to take pressure off family doctors and emergency rooms. With the knowledge gained from the pilot project, we can improve health care delivery, and Alberta can continue to be a leader in pharmacy practice across the country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that pharmacists' walk-in clinics are simply one step closer to shortening wait times and that many of my constituents have contacted me over the years with concerns and suggestions regarding the state of our health care system and given that our government is committed to improving the health care system for all Albertans, can the minister please share with this House the government strategy to reduce wait times and improve accessibility of health care for all Albertans? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

2:20

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks once again to the member for the excellent question. Mr. Speaker, we know our health care system is under strain, and we're taking action to address it. Last month the Premier and I appointed Dr. John Cowell as the official administrator for AHS in order to provide efficient, effective, and decisive leadership that we need right now. Dr. Cowell's mandate is specifically targeted to reducing wait times for surgeries, emergency rooms, and ambulances. We are confident he'll be able to make the necessary changes, and Albertans will have better access to the care that they need when they need it.

#### Homelessness in Edmonton

**Member Irwin:** Another task force from the UCP. Unhoused folks dying on our streets can't wait for a task force. The evidence is clear. We know what's needed – housing, investments in harm reduction, preventative health care – not a task force consisting of mostly White, privileged politicians who've never experienced homelessness or known what it's like to struggle with addiction. To the Premier. Now is your chance to set a new direction. Stop with the committees, the panels, the task forces and instead roll up your sleeves, make the investments we all know are needed, and support our communities today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues are impacting every community in Alberta.

That is why we are taking extreme action with regard to this fantastic task force. I kind of actually already feel like I answered some of these questions yesterday, so maybe I'll just give a couple of quotes here. I'd like to quote the Edmonton police chief, Dale McFee, who said: this is the first time that I've seen the right ministers take the right approach, in my opinion, and actually drive change. He called what we are doing on this issue real leadership.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** The tragic murder of two men in Chinatown this year highlighted the need for greater support for community safety. Multiple ministers from this government met with leaders from the Chinese community and promised to support the healthy streets operation centre, which the city has funded for two years as part of the safety plan demanded by the Justice minister, yet that same minister hasn't even responded to the city's request for provincial support. Will the minister commit today to follow through on his government's promise to help fund this key ask from the Chinese community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This now falls to the new Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services. He's very happy to continue to work with the city of Edmonton, as he has been since he's entered into the role and as I did before, making sure that Edmonton has the resources that it needs to be able to respond to the safety concerns that all Edmontonians have had in their city, the concerns that they've had in the lack of response from the city of Edmonton and their council and the proposals previously about reducing funding for the Edmonton Police Service. We're very happy to have received the community safety plan from Edmonton and to work with the city.

**Member Irwin:** Given that residents, business owners, and leaders in the communities that I represent want to see compassionate support for those who use drugs, including investments in harm reduction, transitional supports, and pathways to recovery, and one of the biggest asks that we're all hearing is the need for investment in transitional housing and shelter options to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing, to the minister, any of the ministers: why do you refuse to invest in supportive housing? It saves money. It saves lives. Do the right thing.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government is taking action. We have been taking action. We've been investing in affordable housing for the last three and a half years.

**Member Irwin:** Supportive.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** It's supportive housing and all types of housing: seniors' housing, transitional housing.

We will continue to invest in affordable housing. Actually, I just did a big announcement the other day. Again, they obviously missed the announcement; \$55 million was just announced the other day here in Edmonton. We are building housing. We are taking real action to address these very, very real challenges on the street. Mr. Speaker, it's more than just a budget line item for us; we're actually building these houses.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is next.

#### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's rural municipalities are under increased financial pressure as they prepare to go yet another

year without collecting unpaid taxes from the energy sector. According to the RMA these unpaid taxes have grown from \$173 million in 2020 to now more than \$253 million in 2022. Losing those revenues means that more municipalities are forced to cut services and eliminate positions. In November the Municipal Affairs minister promised the RMA that this issue was her top priority, yet they're still waiting. When will they get their unpaid taxes?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I was happy to have an announcement yesterday where both the presidents of RMA and AM were in attendance, a great announcement on our economic development in rural Alberta plan. This question came up from the press gallery. Paul McLauchlin, the president of RMA, stood with this government with full confidence that we are getting to the root of this problem. There have been changes that have been discussed by both Energy, Municipal Affairs, and Environment. We're going to do it and not just on municipal taxes but for landowners, too.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year's Bill 77 clearly failed to get the payments flowing to municipalities and given that the reeve of Vulcan county has said that he expects the number to increase, saying that oil and gas companies with active wells actually use this law as a loophole to get out of paying their back taxes, and given that Vulcan county has already had to lay off staff because of the UCP failure, will the minister admit that they don't have a plan or a strategy and that it was actually a failure under Bill 77 and they should be paying rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm from a part of the world where there's tons of legacy oil activity, where the orphan well issue is a big thing. I work closely with my municipalities, and that bill did help. Did it fix the problem? No. We have a few bad actors that are giving the industry a bad name, frankly, and we're going to continue to work with municipalities. We talk about municipalities – I have 26 municipalities in my riding. We talk about everything. We're not planning bike lanes on the weekend. We're talking about real problems, and we'll continue to do that.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition rolled out a new performance fast pass as part of our plan for job creation in Alberta and given that this pass acts like Nexus but for economic project approvals, allowing companies with good track records to get shovels in the ground quicker, and given that this fast pass could act as an incentive for companies with outstanding taxes owed to hurting municipalities to pay them off, will the minister stand today and offer support for our performance fast pass? It's a good idea, Minister. Let's just get on board with it.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds very much like something we've already done and municipalities are using. I know that even in my department of agriculture we work with municipalities in a concierge service style, bringing in business, working through problems, whether it be rail or water. I will promise that member and all the opposition that if they do ever find themselves in possession of a good idea, we'll look at it.

#### Calgary Economic Development

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, recently I was on a private visit to my family in India, the first time in three years. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont is the only one with the call.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, recently I was on a private visit to my family in India, the first time in three years. During that time I also met with CEOs of major companies in various sectors. I was pleased to find that many of these business leaders were excited about investing in Canada and especially in Calgary's booming economy. Can the minister of jobs and economy please explain why there is such an excitement about the opportunities in Calgary?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the hard-working Member for Calgary-Edgemont. I will tell you that Calgary's economy is booming. People can't wait to set up shop in Alberta and especially Calgary. Here's the proof. Calgary right now is one of the most livable cities in the world. It's a rating, and it is. In fact, 75 per cent worth of the venture capital deals have happened right in Calgary. That's almost a half a billion dollars this year, and that's a record. That's going to be a record here. A thousand jobs by Mphasis, a global tech firm opening a new office in Calgary; \$24 million invested by Sidetrade, another major global tech company: there are so many success stories in Calgary. Calgary welcomes the world.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that I have also spoken to entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley who are interested in expanding to Calgary, creating more jobs for Calgarians and Albertans, and given that these companies require a labour force with job-specific skills, can the minister of jobs please share with this Assembly what programs Alberta has to train Calgarians to fill these skilled jobs?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we all remember the four years under the NDP where tens of thousands of businesses left Alberta and fled to other jurisdictions. It's not like that now. Record numbers of people are coming to live here in Alberta. We're investing in helping them get new skills to succeed: \$600 million through the Alberta at work program so that Albertans can find well-paid jobs, \$171 million being invested to create over 10,000 new postsecondary seats in high-demand programs. We have a huge demand in almost every single industry, all sorts of jobs. Alberta's calling. If you want a job, if you want an opportunity, come to Alberta.

2:30

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that there is tremendous excitement regarding the economic opportunities in Calgary and Alberta and given that this government has been talking about the renewed Alberta advantage, can the same minister please inform this Assembly what the renewed Alberta advantage will mean for my constituents in Calgary?

Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all my colleagues and constituents: Merry Christmas.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it will be a merry Christmas if they come out to Alberta. That's because they'll save \$14.8 billion compared to other jurisdictions in Canada just on taxes. We have low taxes, but there's so much more. We have low taxes, no sales tax, a business-friendly government, and the renewed Alberta advantage is so much more. It's livable, affordable, vibrant cities like Calgary and Edmonton. It's a booming tech sector. It's world-class universities. It's over 100,000 job opportunities right now here in Alberta. If you want a job, if you want an opportunity, this is the place. Come on out to Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

## Student Enrolment and School Construction

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, schools in my community are using libraries, staff rooms, and hallways as makeshift classrooms: 60 students packed into one room divided by pylons; students in classrooms so large they don't even know each other's names by the end of the year. Both Bishop David Motiuk and David Thomas King are way over their capacity. BDM has 1,400 students when it was built for 940. DTK is in a similar situation. Kids in my neighbourhood are being forced to take 40-minute bus rides twice a day. Minister, this is your legacy. Are you proud?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. You know, we're addressing school classroom enrolment growth by providing additional funding. The members opposite continue to raise fear, but what we're actually doing is increasing the number of schools we have. We have actually built more schools in three years than they built in four. We are addressing those issues. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Given that the Rosenthal K to 6 school is a year 1 priority for the Edmonton public school board and Hawks Ridge K to 6 is a year 2 priority and given that these schools would have alleviated the massive pressures our community is seeing and in many cases would have removed the need for students as young as four years old to be bused out of their communities and given that the minister repeatedly uses the talking point that Edmonton public didn't have a priority list, which is simply not true – if the minister even attempted to provide adequate funding, these schools could have been built already. Minister, west Edmonton families need and deserve new schools. Why does the minister continue to play political games with the future of our students?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. The members opposite know that we have a gated process that all school divisions go through. It is very detailed. It goes on the priorities of the school divisions, but I cannot help it . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** I can't help it, Mr. Speaker, if the school divisions themselves don't prioritize schools in growing areas. I can tell the members opposite that I have spoken with Edmonton public school division, and they're happy now that they understand the process more fully. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that under the NDP government we saw 60 schools a year built compared to the dismal record of this UCP government, 60 schools over four years – I saw the building of David Thomas King, Bishop David Motiuk, Michael Phair, just to name a few in my community – but given that this minister can't even be bothered to properly fund the schools that are already built, let alone fund the desperately needed schools across my community and across the province, forcing these projects back a minimum four to six years, to the minister. Thousands of families who have listened to your rhetoric for nearly four years are tired, but I promise that an NDP government will get the job done. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member LaGrange:** You know what, Mr. Speaker? The members opposite are not telling the truth. This is not factual. They only built 60 schools over four years. We built over 66 over three, and we're building more. You know what . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. I might just warn members that me standing and then sitting down isn't another opportunity to shout down another member of the Assembly.

The hon. the minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? The NDP has failed on so many fronts: they failed on delivering curriculum, they failed on addressing class size, they failed francophones by cutting the Francophone Secretariat, and they failed choice in education. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Government Policies and Red Tape Reduction

**Mr. Nielsen:** I've decided to help my friend the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction fulfill the terms of the Premier's mandate letter. The Premier recently imposed the job-killing sovereignty act on Albertans, opposed by the Calgary Chamber of commerce, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and so many more, which means the act will be bound in litigation and force this government to use regulation to compel compliance with their decrees. Can the minister of red tape explain how using extra regulations to carry out the Premier's demand is not red tape, and will he do his job and remove this red tape, that's harmful to Alberta's economy?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate a question from the opposition. Unfortunately, in this case they're using it to disguise the fact that in 2011 the Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote: sometimes public interest is better served by limiting the profitability of that business. Unquote. Then the Leader of the Opposition has the audacity in 2015 to support that by raising taxes on everything that moved, including corporations, and proceeded to chase \$100 billion worth of investment out of this province. Shame on them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that the next step of this Premier's agenda is a massive expansion of bureaucracy, spending, regulation, and red tape that comes with hijacking the pension plans of Albertans against their wills and given that the Premier plans to use pensions of Albertans to purchase herself a police force that Albertans also oppose, which will result in another massive expansion of bureaucracy, costs, and red tape, and given in addition to being overwhelmingly opposed by Albertans, an Alberta pension plan and Alberta police force will impose countless layers of red tape on Albertans, will the minister do his job and shut these down?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, you have to forgive the hon. member because they've only got two tools in their tool box; one is taxes, and the other is regulation. We saw that in 2015, when companies like Shell and ConocoPhillips fled the province because of the socialist ideologies. I'm proud to report that our plan is working. We cut taxes, reduced red tape, and jobs and investment are coming back to the province, just like we said it would. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that the trifecta of bad ideas generated by this Premier is the idea of an Alberta revenue agency that will cost millions, massively expand the bureaucracy, with the only benefit being that Albertans will now get to fill out two tax forms, but given that asking Albertans to fill out their taxes twice is the very definition of harmful red tape, surely the minister of red tape can stand in this place and confirm that it will not go ahead on his watch. Or can he alert this House when his position was renamed from minister of service Alberta to the minister of carrying water for the Premier's bad ideas? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have two case studies here in this House. The members opposite, when they were in government, raised taxes on everything that moved. They added regulatory burden and red tape, sent tens of thousands of jobs packing, and perpetual deficits. We have deregulated, we've cut taxes . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have trimmed regulations. We've reduced taxes, created a competitive business environment. We're leading the nation in economic growth, creating tens of thousands of jobs, and we have a balanced budget. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Infrastructure Project Prioritization and Management

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, provincial road construction projects are crucial to allow our economy to grow and to help Albertans drive to work and to get home safely. My riding in northern Alberta is home to hard-working families, difficult terrain, and trillions of dollars worth of resource wealth. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors comment on his commitment to build highway 686 and other economic corridors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

2:40

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great question from the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. We are working with industry and created a ministerial steering committee to expand economic corridors, especially in northern Alberta. We'll be developing an economic corridor along 686 between Fort McMurray and the northeastern part of the province. Obviously, that's an important region, Alberta having the third-largest oil reserves in the world and the fifth-largest natural gas reserves in the world. Help growing economic corridors within this province not only helps grow our economy, but it also helps protect families and communities when natural disasters strike.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you to the minister. Mr. Speaker, given that provincial construction projects support jobs, improve our quality of life, and build assets that last generations, can the same minister comment on how he plans to prioritize needed projects across our province, especially since the NDP neglected so much of Alberta during their disastrous four years in government?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP were disastrous for Alberta, and a sequel for another four years would be even worse

than the original. In the first year of the NDP Alberta lost nearly 17,000 jobs. But the NDP could actually help Albertans. There's talk that the NDP is starting to buck against their Liberal coalition deal in Ottawa, so I do have a Christmas wish for the NDP: break your 2025 agreement with the Trudeau Liberals, help Albertans, call a federal election. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, given that failed NDP restrictive contract arrangements in B.C. have seen a work stoppage at the Cowichan district hospital in Duncan, B.C. and given that it was after an Indigenous contracting company said it was denied a permit to continue work due to an NDP rule over union membership and given that my riding in Lesser Slave Lake has the highest Indigenous population out of any constituency in Alberta, can the same minister assure Albertans that NDP-style, pro big union boss policies won't delay projects here in Alberta?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP cares more about their big union bosses than Alberta families and Alberta workers, and we all know the NDP would bring in socialist procurement for provincial construction projects, creating labour unrest, increasing delays and cost overruns. The NDP, as the member mentioned, has already used it to kick out Indigenous workers from the Cowichan regional hospital project in B.C., but we will always stand up against NDP labour wars. To paraphrase a TV show, *Yellowstone*: we are the opposite of socialist procurement; we are the wall that it bashes up against, and we will not break.

**The Speaker:** All members will be sad to know that that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine. Merry Christmas and safe travels if you're heading home this afternoon.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has a statement to make.

### Victim Services

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our criminal justice system there are those who are often left voiceless: the victims of crime, the very people who have experienced unspeakable harm and trauma, the ones who need our support the most. Victims' services agencies have stepped in, advocating for and supporting the needs of victims of crime, yet this government is planning to remove the voices of victims of crime. It is another folly in this government's approach to the justice system.

The UCP government also already funnelled money out of the victims of crime fund and failed to keep funding for legal aid in step with inflation. Just last night the government quashed an amendment to the Police Act which would have enshrined a trauma-informed perspective in policing principles in our province, helping to protect the dignity and well-being of victims. Now they're going to centralize victims' support services without consulting municipalities or victims' support service organizations.

We have already seen the devastating failure of centralized EMS dispatch. Now they want to introduce a new model of victim services which fails to take into consideration local interests or established relationships.

My colleagues and I have heard from victim services across the province opposing these changes. To them we say: we hear you. An

NDP government believes in the fundamental importance of victim services. We will support the existing service providers and expand their competencies. To the victims of crime: we stand with you.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting to you a vital petition coming from my constituency, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright. Ty Thiessen, a high school student in Lloydminster, started and managed to get 192 signatures from other students in my constituency. Within this petition is a remedy being sought to amend the sixth schedule of the Constitution Act, 1982, and fight the federal carbon tax.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 205

#### Official Sport of Alberta Act

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 205, Official Sport of Alberta Act.

Our team has been laying the necessary groundwork to recognize rodeo in its rightful place as the official sport for Alberta. I believe including chuckwagon races is essential for rodeo, and chuckwagon races are quality family entertainment. These activities are wholesome, family oriented, and an important pillar of our cultural foundation in rural Alberta. I believe all Alberta families should have the opportunity to attend Alberta rodeos and create these special memories that will last forever. Yee-haw.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

#### Bill 206

#### Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill being Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022.

If passed, this act will freeze auto insurance premiums for one year upon proclamation. During this time Albertans will be protected. It will give the government time to develop changes to make premiums more sustainable, more affordable for Albertans. Given the changing views of the Premier, at the appropriate time we will seek unanimous consent to pass this legislation today and freeze auto insurance premiums for one year from today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of jobs, the economy, and innovation has a tabling.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the Northern Alberta Development Council Act I am pleased to table five copies of the council's 2021-2022 annual report. This annual report highlights the outstanding work the council undertook during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. This council champions the cause of Alberta's northern communities and our economy, and this work helps foster the economic

and social development opportunities in northern Alberta. Thank you for their work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a tabling.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In question period today I referred to AHS workforce numbers around, specifically, the number of people quitting or retiring early and the number that are doing it in the first year. I noted that it has doubled under the UCP's leadership.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a petition along with letters of support in regard to the Whitecourt health care centre. I'd like to thank everyone involved in getting this put together, in particular Don and Lynne Connell and Elaine Gunderson for their efforts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud I'm tabling five copies of a letter from a mom whose son has severe combined immunodeficiency writing because of the Alberta government's passing of Bill 32, which has limited union support to social causes and organizations, and delaying donations to charities is having a negative impact on her family.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this brings us to points of order. At 1:57 the hon. Member for Taber-Warner called a point of order, and I see the hon. the Government House Leader will rise on his behalf.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives Addressing the Chair

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order on behalf of the Member for Taber-Warner under 23(h), (i), and (j), where (h) reads, "makes allegations against [the] Member"; (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another"; (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At the time noted when the point of order was called, it was clearly heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford the following: why do you hate health care workers?

Mr. Speaker, making such an allegation at the Premier while she was answering a question in question period, doing what her job is here, responding to the concerns of the members opposite: that kind of language is unnecessary, it's unparliamentary, and, frankly, it's totally disrespectful. You cannot make those kinds of allegations against another member in this Chamber. I would ask that that member himself apologize for using such language. It's not the first time that this member has used such language in this Chamber. He habitually likes to walk the line of what is and what is not parliamentary. These outbursts are, frankly, disrespectful to this Chamber and should not be accepted.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Government House Leader was arguing this point of order, he also used the words that the member habitually walks and makes those kinds of comments. I think it's a matter of debate. The reason it's a matter of debate is that we do know the Premier's own record for saying that AHS health care workers have manufactured some of these crises. Based on those

comments, I think it's clearly a matter of debate that we don't see that health care workers are liked much by that government side or the Premier. It's in that context. It's a matter of debate; it's not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I am prepared to rule unless there are any other meaningful submissions.

I'd like to make two points this afternoon. First and foremost, during that particular exchange the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was called to order, and the Speaker noted that unparliamentary language, either on or off the record, was still unparliamentary. I'd also like to point to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, while he's doing some Christmas reading this weekend, that he might take out rules of order and decorum, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 610, chapter 13:

Members are less apt to engage in heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed to the Chair rather than to another Member. If a Member directs remarks toward another Member and not the Speaker, the Member will be called to order and may be asked to rephrase the remarks.

On this occasion he's going to be asked to apologize, and I'm sure you'll be happy to do it on his behalf.

**Mr. Sabir:** I will retract and apologize. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(2) and Standing Order 9(1) in order to revert to private members' business so that the Assembly may debate third reading of Bill 202, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022, moved by the hon. Member for Peace River and mensch, my good friend behind me here.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

#### Bill 202 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Chamber for unanimous consent. I rise to move third reading of Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

It's an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. It is probably one of the most impactful pieces of private member's legislation that I have seen. I'm very, very proud to be working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I'm very proud to be working with a number of different charities. I visited food banks; the Salvation Army; the Kids Cancer Care Foundation; the Alberta Cancer Foundation; Fear Is Not Love, an emergency centre amongst other services in Calgary

for vulnerable women; the Alberta Children's hospital; the Stollery hospital; the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; the Canadian Islamic Centre and a number of different mosques; a number of different church and religious organizations; the Calgary Health Foundation; the Calgary volunteer organization; the Edmonton volunteer organization; upon hundreds of others that I have yet to speak to that I know are interested.

The support for this bill is broad, widespread, and deep within the charitable sector. It's deep outside of the charitable sector with anyone who donates, which is disproportionately a high number of Albertans compared to other provinces, and we're incredibly proud of our charitable history and heritage in Alberta. I'm very proud that this piece of legislation will get passed, God willing, by the end of this very short debate with unanimous consent, again, as it's been through the first readings and the Committee of the Whole. So, with that, and underscoring the importance of supporting the charitable sector, giving a break to average families in their donations towards those charities, I ask every member to support this and to move forward in Alberta's great tradition of charitable giving and philanthropy.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 202, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few final words on Bill 202, and I thank the hon. Member for Peace River for following this bill through. As a token of co-operation we, of course, are moving it into this last day, with the Official Opposition giving you a hand.

Again, I just wanted to say a few comments that I had put forward on this bill previously, just to remind all members in the government in particular and then whoever happens to be the government afterwards – right? – to make sure that this is not used as an excuse to in any way cut the government of Alberta's responsibilities to charities and nonprofits in the form of grants and other supports that they require to function. As you are registered as a charity, this is a stream of income, but it's not the only stream of income, by any means, for any number of the hundreds – there are really thousands – of nonprofits and charities here in the province.

By passing this, it'll be a way by which they can enhance one element of their fundraising stream, which is charitable donations, but it should in no way somehow allow or think that the government has licence to cut any other grants or benefits that nonprofits and charities need to survive and provide essential service to Albertans. So that was my first caveat. You know, I think the government promised to do that, so that's good.

The second issue that I had brought forward before was to ensure that with this bill, if passed – I've got a good feeling about it – there is an education, public awareness element that accompanies this bill so that people know that the terms of charity and income tax returns have been enhanced, right? I know that when we follow the patterns of donations, donations have dropped off, and we need to get those people back, because once you are in the habit of donating to a particular charity, chances are you will continue to do so, sometimes for the rest of your life. So by just pointing out to people just how much better it is, the return for income tax, based on this bill if it passes and if we get that information into people's hands, then I think we'll really help the charitable sector a lot. An education program that will accompany Bill 202: that would be my

strong suggestion. Yeah. You know what? I've got a feeling maybe the government will do that, too.

The third thing is to again encourage other jurisdictions, especially the federal government, to look to increasing or changing the tax return for a charitable donation and increasing like we are doing here in the province of Alberta. I think we're setting a good example for other jurisdictions, and certainly it would benefit Albertans and Canadians in general if the federal government looked at reforming charitable donations and enhancing the return that a donor could enjoy if they donate to a charity. Those are my three things that I would like to see, and I'm certainly happy to support this bill.

3:00

And don't forget – let's all remember what we just did here, which was to give unanimous consent for a bill to move forward. We're going to do that again in just a few minutes. You know, in the spirit of giving and in the spirit of looking at our unsustainable car insurance rates, maybe we could try that again here in just a few more minutes.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 202?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

The hon. member for – oh.

**Mr. Williams:** To close debate. Waived.

**The Acting Speaker:** Close debate waived. Sorry about that, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a third time]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since there is a very collaborative environment going on in this House – we're in the spirit of collaboration; good bills, good ideas are getting passed – I would also like to seek unanimous consent of the Legislature to waive Standing Order 8(2) and Standing Order 9(1) to proceed to private members' business in order to consider Bill 206, Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022, at second reading. I hope that government members and all Members of this Legislative Assembly will consider this unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 2

#### Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

[Adjourned debate December 14: Mr. Amery]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to third reading for Bill 2, the Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise to Bill 2. You know, I'm going to try to keep my comments short just because I recognize we have some things, that there may be other people that would like to speak to this. But one of the concerns that I do primarily have with Bill 2 is the piece within the legislation that speaks to RROs and this direction that is happening by the government to cap the rate at 13.5 cents but only for a short period



of time between January and March, until March 31, and then what we will see is that the rate will then go back to the market rate of whatever that may be, whether it be less than the 13.5 or over the 13.5, but the consumer that is actually going to be receiving that service from the retailer will have to pay that adjustment back.

For example, for those that find RROs a little complicated, if it's capped at 13.5 cents for a consumer on an RRO and it goes up to, let's say, even 15 cents – that's a 2 cent difference on your kilowatts – then you're looking at all of that having to be accumulated over a period of time. Now, I appreciate what the government is doing is trying to bring down the costs for Albertans over the winter peak, when typically the rates may be high – however, we've seen higher rates in the summer when we hit severe heat waves – but the issue that I have is that I don't know if consumers are going to be aware of this cap and then this need to have to pay it back.

What we typically see on a bill – let's think about, like, if you have a cable bill and you only pay a percentage of your cable. You will always see on your bill your outstanding balance. So if your bill was \$100 for cable, you only pay \$50, your bill tells you that you owe \$50 on your next upcoming bill. I don't see anything in this piece of legislation that is ensuring that the consumer is aware that they're going to have to pay the difference back.

What concerns me about the fact that that's not in the legislation and that there isn't a requirement under this cap to notify the consumer is, one, the government has a responsibility for consumer protection, and they should be making sure that any consumer that is accessing an RRO through a retailer is aware that this is the agreement, and, two, we know that primarily the Albertans that are accessing the RRO agreements or contracts tend to be living either in low income or have bad credit and aren't able to access a fixed rate, so they have a higher probability of not necessarily understanding that there may be an adjustment on their bills. I really struggle with this piece on Bill 2 because I want to make sure that Albertans that are accessing it, who are going to be impacted by the cap and then the need to have to pay it back, know what that looks like.

I would've really appreciated the minister being able to speak to the fact that there is going to be a requirement or a mechanism in talking to these retailers, that they're willing to create some form of mechanism that ensures Albertans are aware what they're actually accumulating to have to pay back, right? You know, maybe it's \$10 a month, so over those three months they're going to have to pay \$30 back come April 1, and this is how it will be.

The question also around the payback would be – let's say that's \$10 a month for the month of January, February, and March. Do they then have to pay that \$30 back on their April bill, or is it going to be over a period of time? Will the payments – all of a sudden is it going to be a huge payment in April? How will it look to ensure that those Albertans that are going to be on this payment program, I would say, are not actually going to be in more financial crisis come April than they would be if they were having to have to pay a higher rate over the next three months?

There is some accountability that I would like to hear from the minister about to ensure that Albertans do have the notification, that they are educated on how the system will work, that they know they're going to have to pay this percentage back and that it's accumulated over a period of time and their bills reflect that accumulation. If they don't, then one day there's a surprise bill in the mail that says that you owe this amount of money.

It's no different than people with cellphones when all of a sudden they go over their data, and then they get this huge bill at the end of the month where they're like: oh, my goodness, I now have a \$100 phone bill when my bill should only be \$50, because I did this huge overage on my data. Well, this is the same thing. All of a sudden

my utility bill I thought was only 13.5 cents is all of a sudden now worth 16.5 cents, but now I have to pay it in April.

So what is the notification? How are Albertans going to know what they owe? How is it going to be reported? Is it going to be communicated? The retailer will be communicating to the government to tell them what it looks like. They will know what their costs are because, of course, there's the loan program that these retailers can access if they need to be able to carry the balance. Albertans should have that same transparency when it comes to this piece of legislation. They should be aware of how much they're going to end up carrying over on their bills.

3:10

Again, I would encourage one of the ministers to stand up and to explain how Albertans are going to know and be aware and how that's going to be reported to them so that they're able to make sure they can budget effectively to pay those bills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and address Bill 2. Of course, many of the members on this side of the House have gotten up and actually described some of the flaws with this particular bill, but, you know, let's go back down memory lane. I remember being in this House last March, last February, I believe it was, and at that point all Albertans, including ourselves, were finding that we were all paying much higher on the utilities. Some people's utilities – I remember people contacting my office and them saying that when they were used to paying \$200 a month, now they were having to pay \$700.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, I got up in this House and I asked the current Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, who was the minister of natural gas at the time: what are you going to do about this? His answer was: absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. That's what he said. We're not going to do anything, right?

**Mr. Nally:** Tell them what you really asked.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member has the floor.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the record is there. The *Hansard* is there. The question was asked, and the minister at the time said: we're not going to do anything about this.

**Mr. Nally:** You wanted to experiment with price controls.

**Member Loyola:** You know why? Because the members on the other side of the House refuse . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Just a general reminder, hon. members, that all comments and questions should come through the chair. Thank you.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It seems we have a very lively, lively session going on here today. Lots of people want to get their voice in and their opinion in, right? I welcome the minister of service Alberta to get up and actually speak to this bill, you know, instead of just chiming from the sideline over there. Maybe he should get up and actually speak to it.

At that time the minister said that he was going to do absolutely nothing. We have it on the *Hansard*, right? We have it on *Hansard*.

Now, months, months later come, and they recognize that something has to be done because it's just not acceptable that Albertans have to pay the amounts, the utility bills that are being demanded of them. So then now we have this deeply flawed bill in front of us that's been put together by this government in their attempts to address the affordability crisis as it relates to utilities here in the province of Alberta, and I can honestly say that it's a miss.

First, they've introduced this utility payday loan scheme. It's a scheme. It's a scheme. They've created an enormous incentive for people to leave the regulated rate option after the cap ends in March . . . [interjection] Is this an intervention? I'll gladly accept it.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for accepting my intervention. I would like to clarify the record only because he was talking schemes. You know what? One of the greatest schemes that has been perpetrated on the Alberta public was when the NDP spent \$7.5 billion on transmission fees. Now, allow me to put that in perspective. In 2020 we spent \$100 million on transmission, and in 2021 we spent zero dollars on transmission. Compare that to the 7 and a half billion dollars they spent on four years. You want to know why electricity prices are high? Just look at the NDP. The best thing that we can do to keep electricity prices low is to keep them away from the electricity grid and make sure that they never get into government again. That's the best thing we can do for cheap electricity prices.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, full of hot air. You know, I understand that the minister of natural gas is going to be full of hot air, not addressing the actual piece of legislation that we have in front of us, going back into the history of decisions that were made by previous Progressive Conservative governments that actually got us in that mess in the first place. The minister doesn't talk about how it was Conservative policy that led us down the road of having to make those bad decisions, yet the minister can't address the actual bill that we have in front of us when I give him the opportunity to actually give an intervention. There we go. That shows the track record of this UCP government and its ministers, where they have a very skewed view of our history. [interjection] Please, go ahead.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you to my colleague for giving me the opportunity to correct the record. I was surprised how ill informed the minister is. Transmission was a hot issue in 2009, and at that time the leader of the NDP, Hon. Brian Mason, told them that if they will invest like that, at the request of their friends and insiders, coming generations of Albertans will pay for these costs. The last transmission line they approved was around 2012-13. Then Prime Minister Harper closed down 12 out of 18 coal-fired plants without giving them any money whatsoever. All those bad decisions of Conservatives in Alberta and in the federal government are making electricity costs unaffordable, and here we have a government that refuses to act at all.

Thank you.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall for his intervention. Of course, I agree with him that these are Conservative policies that have led us to the point where, at the end of the day, they end up making Albertans pay more.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these Conservatives believe in this outdated perspective that competition is going to lead to lower prices, but Albertans can't see it. Albertans can't see it. They get in here and they're like, "Okay; less regulation, less government," and what ends up happening? Albertans have to pay more, at the end of the day, because there's a flaw in the way that they approach it. They get up and they talk about how, yeah, they're in the best interests

of Albertans, yet Albertans have to pay 30 per cent more, 40 per cent more.

The decisions of this particular government now bring us to this payday loan scheme that we have in front of us, and this scheme will result in what University of Calgary economist Blake Shaffer called a "death spiral." A death spiral, Mr. Speaker. That's not me saying it. Again I'll share with you all that it's University of Calgary economist Blake Shaffer who called this payday loan scheme a "death spiral." It would leave a group of Albertans holding the bag on a group of potentially toxic loans.

The members on the other side of the House desperately – desperately – need to take this bill back. Take it back, please. I'm begging you on behalf of Albertans to take this payday loan scheme back to the cabinet and make them revisit it and make sure that they come back with something that's actually going to help Albertans, because this thing is a death spiral. My goodness. My goodness.

3:20

To be clear, not all Albertans can get off the regulated rate option. You need to have a certain personal credit quality, like a good credit score, to get on that option. [interjection] You know, Mr. Speaker, I would accept the intervention on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, but after his last intervention, which added absolutely nothing to the debate, I'm not going to accept another intervention on his behalf.

Those holding these toxic loans will pay more, more, and more at the end of the month, and of course people will flee, and they are most likely to leave Albertans in a less beneficial place than they were before. [interjections] You know, the members on the other side of the House are gladly welcome to get up and speak to this particular bill if they would like to instead of heckling me from the other side over there while I contribute to the debate, Mr. Speaker. They're welcome to get up and speak to it if they like, but I would appreciate having my opportunity to actually speak to it.

Second, this government's signature affordability measure, the \$100-a-month payments, actually leaves out 2 million Albertans. It's deeply unfair that someone working full-time on minimum wage gets nothing. You know, a lot of the talk on that side of the House – they're talking about affordability. Okay. And we've already seen in question period, Mr. Speaker, that when addressing the whole issue of affordability, they have impacted the most vulnerable people in our . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader.

#### Point of Order Interrupting a Member

**Mr. Sabir:** I rise under Standing Order 23. I'm just trying to get the right section that says that the member speaking in the House who has the floor, given by you, has the right to speak uninterrupted. What I'm seeing here is so much interruption coming from that side, so I ask you to intervene and make sure that the member can speak what he wants to share and contribute to this debate. If any member on the other side wants to speak, they have every right to do so. They can speak at their turn.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Standing Order 23(h), (i), or (j) refers to a particular member. The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader has not stated with any particularity any member to

which this point of order should apply, and therefore it is not a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

We are so close to getting some good work done here this afternoon, and I do enjoy the lively debate. I would encourage all members that if they have something to add to debate, to please take the time to stand, add to the debate so we can all hear and enjoy the wisdom that you choose to share. I do not find this a point of order at this time, but I do caution all members that we do want to encourage lively, hearty debate and respect in this House.

The floor is back to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Debate Continued

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. As I was saying, it's deeply unfair that someone who is working full-time on minimum wage gets absolutely nothing by the passing of this particular bill. A student who is paying higher tuition fees, high student loan costs, again, gets absolutely nothing from this here government, right? They like to get up, especially during question period, and, you know, scream from the top of their lungs how they're the best thing since sliced bread, but of course nothing could be further from the truth. [interjections] Nothing could be – definitely not white bread.

Here we have two examples, Mr. Speaker – someone working full-time and students who are paying higher tuition fees and higher student loan costs – yet they're not going to see any benefit from this particular bill. We all know tons of Albertans who were deeply disappointed, and they deserve an answer for why they were left out. A lot of Albertans are going to be asking themselves why they were left out.

Number 3. For years this government weaponized inflation to attack the most vulnerable, like people on AISH. You know, first of all, they changed the actual payment date – they changed the payment date – which actually led to people not being able to make it to the end of the month. We're talking about the most vulnerable people. A bad decision, Mr. Speaker, a bad decision that they have yet to apologize for. They have yet to apologize for this very bad decision that had drastic effects on the lives of many people here in the province of Alberta.

You know, the Member for St. Albert has gotten up multiple times and demonstrated with e-mails and letters that she's received personally. I've also received them. Many members – I suspect that members on the other side of the House also were receiving e-mails and letters from constituents that were actually complaining about the fact that they changed the date. Then they refused to index the AISH payments to inflation for three years. Three years.

Now what we have is – you know, the fact that they decided to do that, Mr. Speaker, was absolutely cruel. It didn't need to be done. It didn't need to be done. It was the most vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta. You know, to me, it's heartbreaking – it's heartbreaking – to see the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board get up in this House day after day and defend that poor decision made by him and the rest of the cabinet. You know what? I understand that it's important to be fiscally responsible – I get it; it's important – but you don't do it on the backs of the most vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta. That is absolutely shameful.

Here we are. Now we have this new legislation which tries to rectify so many of the past mistakes made by this government. But even with every measure included in this legislation and what this government tells us will come with the regulations, an AISH recipient would be \$3,000 better off if we had operated under the

policies of the previous NDP government. For a person living on AISH, \$3,000 is an absolutely enormous amount of money.

Mr. Speaker, there's still time. There's still time for this government, this cabinet to go back to the drawing table and address all of the issues that we have highlighted as being problematic under this particular bill and to get it right. That's all we're asking.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I know that, from your perspective, you get to see it each and every day. [interjection] Member, I'm going to finish in, like, a couple of minutes, so you're welcome to have the floor after me if you like.

Mr. Speaker, you see it from a different perspective being the deputy chair. Of course, you see the partisanship and how it is actually deteriorating our democracy here in this House. Last night we put four amendments forward – four amendments forward – not one of them accepted by this government. One was so desperately needed, that had to do with intersectionality, antiracism, and trauma-informed practice, which made so much sense. You know, last night I had dinner with a few constituents, told them all about it, and they just couldn't believe that the UCP would all vote against an amendment that would actually contribute . . .

3:30

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

### Point of Order Items Previously Decided

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one wants to relive last night more than I do, to be clear. Nonetheless, this place operates under a set of rules called Standing Orders, and one of those standing orders is 23(f), which says:

A Member [shall] be called to order by the Speaker, if in the Speaker's opinion, that Member debates any previous vote of the Assembly . . .

which he was just doing,

. . . unless it is that Member's intention to move that it be rescinded.

Now, if the member is planning on moving to take back the decision of last night, then I'm all ears. Otherwise, I respectfully request you to direct him to today's business rather than the previous vote of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member was referring to last night's amendments in the context of how co-operation has so much decreased in this Legislature. I think the intention of the context of the member's comments is not that he falls in the purview of the rule that the member cited. I don't think it's a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm willing to give the hon. member a little bit of latitude because I think I can see where he's going with this. But I do want to encourage the members to stay on debate on the matter at hand, which is Bill 2.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Debate Continued

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The point that I was getting at – and thank you for the latitude – is the fact that here we are, as the Opposition, providing an opportunity for this government to address the limits, the flaws that this particular bill has. But blind partisanship doesn't let them get past the fact that they just do not want

to address the flaws – they're your flaws, they're your flaws – to actually get them right.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be very brief, but I'd just like to respond to the member, seeing as he didn't let me stand up and do an intervention. He spoke about apologies and the difficulties that AISH recipients have, so I'd just like to, through you – the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader and Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, when he was a minister back in 2019, sent out a tweet that upset AISH people considerably, resulting in one of them coming and throwing a rock through the window of my office. To this day, that member has never apologized to my staff or to that AISH recipient, that now has a criminal record for the first time in his life. So I'd like to give that member the opportunity to stand up and apologize.

**The Acting Speaker:** Again, hon. members, I just want to extend a little bit of caution or invitation to maybe remain focused on the business at hand today. We are on Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, so at this point I'd like to ask if any members would like to speak to the bill.

**Mr. Sabir:** I rise to speak to Bill 2, Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022. Certainly, I will address the comments that were raised by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. This act is designed to help address the cost-of-living crisis facing Alberta. That's the intention of this act. In order to address a problem, we need to know what went wrong, where it went wrong. Let me start with a few things that added to the cost-of-living crisis in the province and that should be fixed.

The first thing that this government did was give \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations on the back of disabled Albertans, on the back of seniors, on the back of those unemployed and getting benefits from this government. They deindexed AISH. That's why people with disabilities, that's why the unemployed, that's why seniors are facing such a crisis. In 2018, when we were still in government, we said that this government – the then opposition, the UCP, if they become government, will cut AISH: that's what I said. That's exactly what this government did. As soon as they became government, they cut AISH, so I have nothing to apologize for. That's their record. They should apologize for cutting AISH benefits at a time when inflation was at its 40-year high. They should be ashamed of that, every single one of them who supported cutting AISH benefits, deindexing AISH benefits. They should be ashamed of that, and they should be apologizing for it.

The second thing: what's adding to the cost of living? I think there are many things I can point to, but when I talk to my constituents in Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, I will relate what they tell me is adding to their cost of living: insurance. When we were in government, we had a 5 per cent premium increase cap on insurance. This government, as soon as they came into government, this UCP, what did they do? They handed the pen to the insurance industry, removed the cap, and now we are seeing 30, 40, 50 and in some cases 100 per cent increase in Alberta's insurance premiums. That's what is causing a cost-of-living crisis in this province.

When we were in government, we had a rate cap on utilities, 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. As soon as they became government, they removed that rate, and that's causing this cost-of-living crisis in our province.

We had a tuition freeze on postsecondary education. As soon as they became government, they removed that freeze and made postsecondary education one of the most expensive across this country, a 30 per cent to 40 per cent, in some cases 100 per cent

increase. They cut \$700 million from the postsecondary education budget, resulting in skyrocketing fees in our institutions. That's causing the cost-of-living crisis in our province. That's the direct result of this government's policies.

Then they talk about inflation, and then they blame the federal government, that during the pandemic the federal government was handing out money and that money handed out by the federal government is the primary cause of inflation. You are doing exactly that. Then find solutions that work for Albertans. Put the rate cap back on insurance; make it affordable for Albertans. Put a cap back on utilities; make utilities affordable for Albertans. Investigate why grocery prices are going 100, in some cases 200 per cent higher than what inflation is at. Investigate those corporations. That will make life more affordable.

Just six months before an election, handing Albertans \$100 up until the election will not address the cost-of-living crisis. A hundred dollars for those on fixed income may still go a long way, but that's not the permanent solution. The permanent solution will be: cap the insurance rate, cap the utility rate, lower tuition fees, investigate grocery prices. That will help us lower and address the cost-of-living crisis.

This bill may help some, but it's leaving out 2 million Albertans. We need systemic changes to address this crisis that is caused by this UCP government. In six months there is an election coming up, and Albertans will have a say. They will have a lot more to say about this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to third reading?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

### **Bill 6 Police Amendment Act, 2022**

[Adjourned debate December 14: Mr. Neudorf]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, looking for those who would like to speak to third reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022, I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has risen.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to third reading of Bill 6, Police Amendment Act, 2022. I will be speaking against this bill, and I will give my reasons to do so. Basically, there are four primary reasons that we will be speaking against this bill.

Since the murder of George Floyd, the conversation around policing has changed. The murder of George Floyd was not the last one. Since then we have seen more incidents, such as one in Calgary. A person named Latjor from the South Sudanese community, who had a history of mental health, was also shot dead by Calgary police. Indigenous communities across this province, Black communities, person-of-colour communities have raised serious, serious concerns about bias in policing across this province, across this country. When we look at our institutions, we still see Indigenous communities overrepresented in our justice system. We see Black, person-of-colour communities overrepresented in our justice system.

The number one ask that you will hear from these communities is that we should be looking at policing from a lens of intersectionality, from a perspective of trauma-informed practice, and from an antiracism lens. What we did: we tried to make this bill a bit better. We tried to enshrine those principles in policing because that's what communities need from policing, because that's what Indigenous people are demanding from this government and every government,

that our policing should be done from a lens of intersectionality, from a perspective of antiracism and trauma-informed practice. We have a history of colonization here, so our policing response needs to be well informed. I think this government refused to enshrine such principles in this legislation, so that's a concern.

The second thing. This bill makes sweeping changes: how police commissions will have now members from the government, how there will be new policing committees. A couple of concerns with that approach. The government did not consult with municipalities on these changes. They did not consult existing commission members on these changes. They think they know best.

They said that they will put 1 member for every 3 members on police commissions, and then they thought that that might not be enough, so the minister should have the ability to appoint up to 49 per cent. That's called stacking the deck, and it's in particular from a government whose Justice minister was caught interfering in the administration of justice. We can't let this government politicize policing in this province. We do not know how those members will be picked. There is just this much, that the minister will appoint them. Will there be any public process? Will all Albertans be invited to be able to participate on those commissions? Will it be about what they know or who they know? This government's record is such on these appointments that they cannot be trusted. There are few to no details about these appointments. That's why we think that this bill needs more work.

The third thing is that this bill will have a significant impact on how policing is done in our province, and Indigenous communities are concerned about it. The day prior to yesterday I was also at the meeting with Treaty 6 chiefs. You didn't hear from them – they didn't issue any press release – after we left because we were there to listen to them. We were respectful. One of the concerns raised by one chief was around policing, around how this Bill 6 changes the policing in this province and for our communities.

They shared that they were not consulted on this piece of legislation. No wonder that after the Premier went to see Treaty 6, they released a statement, which I'm sure all members of the government must have seen, that they did not consult. They did not consult on their job-killing sovereignty act. They don't even know what consultation means. They don't respect treaties. Those meetings, according to them, don't constitute consultation. Consultation is a constitutional obligation. It has its own requirements. It's not a check box. There are huge concerns that the government, as usual, failed to consult Indigenous communities on this bill.

Other concerns raised around this bill are that they are creating an advisory body which will have 15 members again appointed by the minister. They said that they will have one Indigenous person, one Métis person on that advisory board. Mr. Speaker, there are 48 distinct First Nations in this province. There are eight different Métis settlements in this province. Then we have a huge population of Indigenous people living in urban centres, Métis people living in our cities. There is no process whatsoever how they will pick that one person. Again, they did not consult with First Nations. Is that enough representation of First Nation people who have concerns about policing in this province, who have shared those concerns, who have a vested interest in making policing better in this province? It's not only that they were not consulted; I think that representation is not enough on that advisory board.

3:50

Then another concern is that they are creating a commission that will act as a civilian oversight body. On this side of the House we a hundred per cent support the intention behind that move. There should be civilian oversight of our police. That will improve Albertans' trust and confidence in their law enforcement. That will

help us improve in general our law enforcement in this province. We a hundred per cent support civilian oversight, but again the problem is that there is next to nothing in this act that tells you what it will look like.

After reading this legislation more than a few times, there are three things about that. There will be a CEO and registrar that will be appointed by the minister, and then what their duties will be, what their power will be, what their function will be: every single thing is left to the regulations. What we should vote on: we don't have the details. There was absolutely no engagement from the government side to help address these concerns, help address these questions. All we know from this is that there will be a body that will have a CEO and registrar appointed by the minister, and then everything is left to regulations. There is no timeline. When will we have that? There are no costing details. How much will it cost?

Again, there were some obvious flaws in that, too. That's why we tried to make some changes to those provisions as well, that once there's a complaint about an officer from the time he or she was an officer, the commission should have jurisdiction over that complaint. That will help us deal with cases like the one in Calgary of Councillor Sean Chu. And not only before, when we were asking the then Minister of Municipal Affairs to act, they refused; they even refused to make that change so that people like Sean Chu can be held accountable in front of this civilian oversight body. They refused that. That's a huge flaw in this piece of legislation.

With so many glaring shortcomings, despite being well intentioned in terms of civilian oversight, I don't think that as members of the Legislature we have enough detail to pass this legislation. This piece of legislation fails to consult municipalities, Indigenous communities, those who have a vested interest in the implementation of this piece of legislation. With so many flaws I don't think that we are able to support this legislation, but I do want to say that we absolutely support civilian oversight. Should we become the next government, we will do better. We will bring forward a body, a process that will help us breed trust and confidence in our law enforcement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 6, the Police Amendment Act, 2022?

Would the hon. minister and Deputy Premier like to close debate?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

### Royal Assent

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

**The Acting Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, and the Premier entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

**Her Honour:** Please be seated.

**The Acting Speaker:** May it please Her Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sitting passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

4:00

**The Acting Clerk:** Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 1 Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act
- 2 Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022
- 3 Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022
- 4 Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022
- 5 Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)
- 6 Police Amendment Act, 2022
- 7 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2)
- 202 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated her assent]

**The Acting Clerk:** In His Majesty's name Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

**Her Honour:** Hello to everyone in the Assembly here today. I want to just keep my remarks brief and thank you once again for all that you do. Please, when you return to your constituencies, thank all the community leaders and the volunteers who keep moving our province forward with all that they do. I hope that each one of you is going to enjoy some well-deserved time, warm time, peaceful time, with your family and loved ones. Please convey to them as well my best wishes for the holiday season.

One last thought that I'd like to leave you with is that I hope each one of you finds time to relax, recharge, and reflect. With that, I'd like to wish all of you happy holidays, Merry Christmas, all the best for 2023. Thank you again on behalf of all Albertans for what you do here. Thank you. I hope to see you all at the New Year's Day levee. We haven't had a levee for two years, right? I hope some of you can make it to that.

Thank you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Assembly would indulge me for a moment, I'd like to take a minute and thank all the members for their participation this fall session at the Legislature. I believe we had a lot of good work done on behalf of Albertans, and Albertans are well represented in this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year, a Merry Christmas. I'd like to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 4 the business of the 2022 fall sitting is now concluded.

**The Acting Speaker:** Prior to voting on the motion, I also want to take a moment to say thank you to the members of this Assembly for your hard work and the opportunity to serve you in this capacity as Deputy Chair of Committees. On behalf of the Speaker and on behalf of all the members I wish to extend our thanks to the table officers and their staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Sergeant-at-Arms staff, the LASS, the pages, and *Hansard* for all the hard work that they do behind the scenes to help keep this place functioning. I also wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and safe travels.

You know, I'm going to have to relearn all this in two months when we come back.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:05 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 4]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 15, 2022**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft.*), 342-49 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 361-72 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve.*), 421-25 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 430-31 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 446-50 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 325-29 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 375-78 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 321-25 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 372-75 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 392 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 426-29 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 314-21 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 392-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 429-30 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

**Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 309-14 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 349-54 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 399-408 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 409-21 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 431 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 450-51 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

**Bill 7 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No.2) (Schow)**

First Reading — 329 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 378-79 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 398-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 425-26 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

**Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft.*), 354-60 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 289-97 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 445-46 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*)

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-303 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205 — Official Sport of Alberta Act (Lovely)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 206 — Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sabir)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)



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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, February 28, 2023

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)	Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Deputy Government House Leader	Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)	Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)	Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)	Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC), Premier
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
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Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
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Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
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Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we'll now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Timothy Noel. I'd invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
 True patriot love in all of us command.  
 With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
 The True North strong and free!  
 From far and wide, O Canada,  
 We stand on guard for thee.  
 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.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we would traditionally pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. However, I hope that you'll provide me some forgiveness as I have decided to postpone the tribute for former member Mike Cardinal until Monday, March 6, when his family is in attendance.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, for your awareness I have a number of introductions today, which will not take away from any of the time allotted for members to introduce other guests. However, I did have the privilege this morning of hosting a very special guest, who is joining me in the Speaker's gallery. We had a wonderful opportunity to debate the merits of *Beauchesne's over House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and other parliamentary discussions. The hon. Anthony Rota, the Speaker of the federal House of Commons, is joined by his wife, Chantal Piché-Rota, and his chief of staff, Alexandre. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a couple of other guests who are joining us in the Speaker's gallery today, including the best Schow of this place, the hon. the Government House Leader's spouse, Nicole Schow. Also joining us in the Speaker's gallery today is a former Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, Mr. Bruce McAllister. If you both would like to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Last but certainly not least, I think we can all agree that today's rendition of *O Canada* was something special as it was led by Mr. Timothy Noel. Mr. Noel, in his assistance to help us honour and mark Black History Month, the month of February, joined us today to lead us in the national anthem. His father emigrated from Grenada in 1973. Here he is today leading the Assembly in the singing of *O Canada* as the first Afro-Caribbean Albertan to lead

this House in the singing of our national anthem. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has a school group to introduce.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you a grade 6 class from Sister Alphonse Academy, with teacher Sean Brass and a special guest, Kristi Rouse, who is a mom and helper today but also a trustee for the St. Albert public school board. If they could all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 34 brilliant students from Belvedere elementary school. They are joined by their amazing teacher, Bonnie Clydesdale. I've had numerous opportunities of speaking to Belvedere school during Read In Week. I ask that all the students rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you it is my distinct pleasure to welcome one of my constituents. She is a grandma, a musician, and a true leader within the freedom movement. She gave hope to all of Alberta, Canada, and the world. She was proud to stand strong and free in the face of the worst government overreach in a generation: Tamara Lich. Tens of thousands of Canadians supported and helped Tamara. This includes a constitutional lawyer from Alberta who held the Prime Minister to account during the Emergencies Act inquiry. Please welcome Eva Chipiuk and Tamara Lich. Ladies, please stand and accept a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to this House Linette Soldan, who is the executive director of Rowan House Society in High River, an organization I have had a chance to brag about often in this House. Please rise and receive the warm, traditional greeting of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has an introduction.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you from Lesser Slave River Deputy Reeve Lana Spencer and also from the same Lesser Slave River Reeve Murray Kerik. Both of them work tirelessly in order to help fulfill the dreams of their constituents.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Allard:** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and through you two guests to the Assembly. First, I have Mr. Ken Drysdale. Mr. Drysdale is an innovator and entrepreneur with deep ties in the community, and he is working tirelessly to reform health care for the residents of Grande Prairie. I'd like to thank him for his efforts. Beside him I have Owen Lewis, a lawyer and managing partner at KMSC Law. Gentlemen, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, do you have an introduction today?

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a former Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly as well as of the Senate of Canada, a former Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, and my good friend, Gordon Barnhart. I'd like to welcome Gordon to our Legislature as a recently new resident of Alberta.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple of amazing constituents of West Yellowhead: the mayor of Jasper, Richard Ireland, and Joehn Torres, a student at MacEwan and resident of Hinton. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Primary Health Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Primary care is the foundation of our health care system. At its best it's one of the most personal, powerful connections we have with one of life's most personal things, our health, but over the last few years the UCP have attacked that foundation with every tool they had. When they launched their war on doctors in February 2020, they took particular aim at family doctors, cutting their pay, withholding resources, harassing them online and in person, and forcing them to deal with mountains of new paperwork just as the pandemic slammed into Alberta. Many were forced to close clinics or lay off staff; others retired early, left the profession or the province. Fast-forward to today: hundreds of thousands of Albertans have no access to primary care and are forced, instead, to go to emergency rooms or go without care, more victims of the health care chaos created by the UCP.

1:40

But, Mr. Speaker, unlike the UCP, we have a plan to repair and strengthen primary care, to restore the foundation of our health care system with family health teams, a plan that the former chair of the University of Alberta's department of family medicine, Dr. Rick Spooner, calls a pathway to the evolution of primary care in Alberta. A family health team can include family doctors as well as a wide diversity of other health care professionals working collaboratively to provide care, one location to get help for health concerns. We'll invest \$600 million over four years to help existing clinics, practices, and PCNs expand their teams, and we'll invest to build and staff 10 new health clinics in communities of greatest need across the province.

The UCP: they've just got plans to make more plans. This May Albertans will have a choice: Danielle Smith and the UCP, who have created chaos in primary care and now want applause for simply revoking their own disastrous . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Welcome back to the Assembly. The hon. member knows that the use of proper names is wildly inappropriate, and the hon. members know that the interruption of members' statements is wildly inappropriate.

Hon. member, you have 20 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Shepherd:** The Premier and the UCP, who created chaos in primary care and now want applause for simply revoking their own disastrous policies and bad decisions, or Rachel Notley and the Alberta NDP, who are ready to move forward with a bold plan that will ensure 1 million more . . . [interjections] Oh, sorry. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps you can try again tomorrow.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has a statement to make.

### Federal Energy Transition Plan

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we learned that before she claimed to be against the just transition plan to shut down energy jobs in Alberta, the Leader of the Official Opposition was for it. Now, this doesn't surprise anyone on this side of the House. We know the opposition leader and her party eliminated jobs in Alberta, 183,000 of them to be exact. Albertans know it, too. It's one of the reasons why they fired the members across the aisle in 2019 and chose our government to lead Alberta into better days. Today we can confidently say that Albertans made the right choice.

Thanks to the policies of our government, Alberta is leading the nation in economic growth. We've kept taxes low. We've balanced the budget, which has brought our credit rating back up. We've created hundreds of thousands of new jobs for Albertans, and we've welcomed tens of billions of dollars in new investment from major international companies like Amazon, HBO, Walmart, Air Products, Dow, De Havilland, and more. We've diversified the economy, and now new industries like film and television, agrifood processing, and technology are booming in Alberta and setting records for investment.

We've welcomed a record number of new families who want to participate in the Alberta advantage. We're providing direct affordability supports to Albertans who need them and broad supports that will benefit everyone. We're tackling long-standing issues in health care, and as we learned yesterday, we're starting to see improvements in the system. We're standing up for our province against hostility and interference from Ottawa. Albertans should visit [puttingalbertansfirst.ca](http://puttingalbertansfirst.ca) to learn more about the work we've done to renew the Alberta advantage.

But later today, Mr. Speaker, we will all see a new budget, and I believe this will be one of the best budgets our province has ever produced. We didn't get to this enviable place by accident either. We got here because our government put the right policies in place, and now we're getting the right results. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

### Job Creation and Affordability Plan

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy is recovering strongly, and it continues to gain momentum through steady job creation and diversification. Alberta has created a vast number of jobs in a short period of time, thus replacing all of the job losses during the pandemic. Along with stellar job growth numbers, Alberta's labour force has also steadily increased. More and more Canadians continue to come to this great province because there are opportunities available for everyone.

Alberta is diversifying the economy by creating opportunities in technology, in innovation, as well as our film and television industry. The brand new HBO series *The Last of Us* is a prime example of how impressive and experienced Alberta's film crews are. Our government's incentives enabled many high-profile companies like Amazon, IT companies, and manufacturers to come to Alberta, creating hundreds of permanent jobs. To assist Albertans with high inflation, Mr. Speaker, our government put a pause on collecting the provincial fuel tax of 13.6 cents per litre, thus allowing Alberta to have the lowest fuel price in Canada.

Along with reindexing the provincial tax brackets for inflation, we are also providing substantial rebates on electricity bills. Mr. Speaker, more than 1 million Albertans have enrolled and are scheduled to receive their affordability payments of \$600. Albertans are receiving real, tangible support during these times of high inflation.



Year 2022 was about celebrating a huge budget surplus, paying down our debts, growing industry, supporting businesses, enhancing trade infrastructures, improving health care deliveries, and providing inflation relief. I am so excited, Mr. Speaker, to see what Budget 2023 has in store for all of us here in Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Official Opposition and Government Policies

**Ms Renaud:** As we approach a spring election, there are clear differences that separate us from the UCP government. The Alberta NDP is focused on things that matter to Albertans. We will make sure that every Albertan has access to a family doctor. That's why we released a comprehensive plan to get 1 million more Albertans access to a doctor. We're also focused on addressing the inflation crisis, helping Alberta families manage, including guaranteeing that nobody will ever pay out of pocket to see a doctor.

But this Premier has the wrong priorities. She's obsessed with reckless and extreme ideas that will increase the cost to Alberta families. She wants to fire the RCMP, making your community less safe and downloading additional costs to municipalities. Despite massive backlash the Premier is pushing forward with her plan to get rid of the RCMP to create a new provincial police force, to the cost of \$366 million in start-up, with \$735 million a year in operating. Her plan fails to deliver any additional services, and Albertans will be on the hook to pay more in property taxes.

The Premier also wants to gamble with Canada pension, making your future less secure. She is continuing to move forward with the plan to pull Albertans out of the Canada pension plan despite the lack of public support. She's risking retirement savings of Alberta workers while hitting taxpayers with more costs.

In 90 days Albertans have a choice to continue with the UCP government that prioritizes reckless ideological ideas for their fringe extremists, that will continue to hurt Albertans, or move forward with an Alberta NDP government that is focused on what matters to you. The choice could not be clearer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### Maskwa Medical Centre in Grande Prairie

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A common concern in Grande Prairie is the shortage of family doctors for our young and growing community, which leads to an array of challenges and delays for my constituents in seeking care or diagnosis. Ideally, increasing efficiency, accessibility, and service within the region is the goal, with all reforms centred around better outcomes.

Thanks to the innovative work of the Maskwa Medical Centre board, that is exactly what we are working towards in Grande Prairie today. As I mentioned earlier, in introductions, I'm pleased to be joined in the gallery this afternoon by Mr. Ken Drysdale, the chair of the Maskwa board and the driving force for this initiative.

The Maskwa Medical Centre will be a multispecialty, patient-centred diagnostics facility based on the Mayo Clinic model and is close to being a reality, Mr. Speaker. Pending approval from Alberta Health, Maskwa will be publicly funded and accessible to all, run as a nonprofit, and will provide life-saving care for our people in the northern region.

By implementing a patient-centred, collaborative diagnostic practice, the Maskwa Medical Centre will connect patients and their physicians with the right specialists to provide an early, quick, and accurate diagnosis.

Maskwa is already fully engaged in striking a detailed partnership with the University of Alberta that will provide clinical access to over 450 specialists, and Maskwa is actively collaborating with Northwestern Polytechnic to lease adjacent land and integrate with existing medical training programs in the region. This medical home approach to health care will expand the capacity for medical residents to train in Grande Prairie and will increase the number of family physicians in our community over time, addressing this critical shortage.

This type of thought leadership coupled with the can-do culture in our region is exactly what is required to transform health care, Mr. Speaker. Too many families in our region have been adversely impacted due to delays in acquiring diagnostic and specialist care, which is why the vision for this clinic resonates so deeply within my community.

I believe Maskwa is one large step forward in improving health care and health outcomes for the good people of the Peace Country. It is way past time for Grande Prairie and area residents to have access to health diagnoses and the timely treatment available to others in other parts of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has question 1.

### Health Care System Capacity

**Mr. Shepherd:** Barbara Ross, a 91-year-old Albertan, called 911. She was experiencing chest pains that left her barely able to stand. She needed an ambulance but was transferred to 811 and eventually told to go to a clinic. Her daughter eventually took her to the Misericordia, where Barbara spent an entire day waiting to be admitted, sitting in agony in a chair. Things like this happen every day. Barbara's is just one horror story in an endless list.

Health care is in crisis. It's been in crisis for years as a result of this government's horrible, incompetent, and cruel decisions. Is the Premier really going to stand here today and claim that the crisis in our health care system is over?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all have our heart broken when we hear stories like that, which is why we made the decision very early on to put in Dr. John Cowell as the head and official administrator of Alberta Health Services, so we could accelerate changes in the system, and I am so pleased to report that we are seeing year-over-year increase in ambulance response time. What we saw last year, last January, is that there were over a thousand incidents of code red in Edmonton, meaning there wasn't an ambulance available when it was needed. That's gone down to 82. That's a 92 per cent reduction. We've seen a 60 per cent reduction in Calgary as well.

**Mr. Shepherd:** There was no ambulance for Barbara Ross.

Mona Koch was forced to play the lottery to keep her family doctor, and she lost. She's on a list of patients dropped by her local clinic and far from alone there: 40,000 people in Lethbridge without a doctor. Mothers living in communities an hour from here are being forced to drive into the city while in the middle of giving birth. Surgeries are being delayed. Specialists are meeting with cancer patients months after it could be too late to do anything. Again, will this Premier explain to all Albertans how she can stand here and claim that this is not a system in crisis?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I accepted when I got elected in October that the system was in crisis, which is why I appointed an official administrator, and all of the measures are moving in the right direction. As I mentioned, a 92 per cent decrease in code reds in Edmonton, 60 per cent decrease in code reds in Calgary. We've also seen since November of '22 that the number of patients waiting longer than the clinically recommended time has gone down 9.4 per cent. A wait in an emergency room is down 10 per cent. We intend to spend \$158 million on physician recruitment and health professional recruitment. Things are moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier fired the board of AHS for a political vendetta, not to help Albertans. And speaking of specialists, days ago my colleague stood with a St. Albert nurse named Sheila Ethier, whose partner was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer and facing an eight-week delay to see an oncologist. Stage 4 cancer, a two-month wait; the longest two months of this person's life. These people aren't being heard. They're clearly being ignored by this Premier. So will she stand today and apologize for trying to tell Albertans that what they see in front of their eyes, what they experience every day in this health care crisis isn't real?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, one of the advisers that I have is Dr. Raj Sherman, who was working every day in an emergency room, and one of the things that he told me was that patients were showing up in emergency room sicker because of the fearmongering from people like those on the other side that the system could not take care of them. What we want to do is instill some calm, instill some confidence that the system is going to be there for them. All the measures are going in the right place. I certainly wouldn't want anybody to resist getting the medically necessary care they need because of the fearmongering that they hear on the other side.

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

### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, before the Premier took on her current role, she worked as a lobbyist, and in that role she supported a program that was designed to give \$20 billion in royalty credits to companies to clean up wells they are already obligated to clean up as a condition of their drilling licence; \$20 billion to incent profitable corporations not to fulfill their legal obligations but, instead, to wait for taxpayer cash to do it. Why is the Premier putting the interests of her friends and insiders, the people who worked on her leadership campaigns, ahead of the people of Alberta?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not true. What we have done as a government is that we have put in place a process where each energy company has a mandatory amount of money that they have to spend on liability cleanup. That's going to amount to over \$700 million this year, escalating 9 per cent per year as we go forward. We have a \$30 billion liability problem. This is a problem that I have known about since 1997, when I started landowner advocacy. The members opposite had an opportunity to address it; they failed. It is up to us to make sure we're standing up for landowners, municipalities, and First Nations. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Ganley:** The UCP's proposed \$20 billion royalty handout was originally proposed by an organization called SAEN. SAEN's cofounder Kris Kinnear now works in the Premier's office, but the

Premier has been extremely reluctant to answer questions about what he does or what special project he's supposedly working on. Despite the potential for this \$20 billion handout to tarnish the reputation of good actors in the energy sector who clean up after themselves, the project is suddenly proceeding to pilot. So, Premier, connect the dots for us. Is Mr. Kinnear working on anything besides handing out \$20 billion?

**Ms Smith:** Once again what the NDP is saying is just simply untrue. There is a pilot program that the Energy minister is consulting on at the moment, and what it is is that it's focused on the worst wells. We have tried many different ways of trying to ensure that wells that have been inactive since before 1980 and been inactive for more than 20 years get priority to clean up. Under the NDP they just kept on getting transferred forward again and again to a new company. We have to make sure that we're cleaning these sites up. It's important for municipalities, it's important for First Nations, and it's important for landowners.

**Ms Ganley:** It gets worse. There are even members of the UCP's own cabinet who don't support the Premier's \$20 billion giveaway. When the current Premier was still working as a lobbyist, she wrote to the UCP Energy minister asking her to consider, but the minister wrote back saying that she didn't support the handout because it was, quote, a violation of the polluter-pay principle. The current Premier won the leadership, removed the then Energy minister – now environment minister – replaced her with the current Energy minister, a vocal supporter of the handout. Can the Premier explain why she thinks polluter-pay should be replaced with Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a targeted program, that may be \$100 million, that is focused on making sure that the worst wells in Alberta . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** . . . are taken care of. These are wells that have been around since the '40s and '50s and '60s. They had an opportunity to put a program in place that would have incentivized the cleanup of those sites; they failed at that. We cannot allow for this problem to continue to be passed forward to future generations. We owe it to future generations to make sure that these sites get returned to their natural condition as quickly as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Coutts Border Crossing Protester Conspiracy Charges

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year our border was held hostage by an illegal blockade which cost Alberta's economy over \$200 million. Some of the people involved stockpiled weapons and planned to kill RCMP officers. When the Premier took over, she prioritized to get amnesty for those arrested at this blockade. The Premier even claimed that she called Crown prosecutors to get them to reconsider the charges. Why did this Premier spend her time to get allegedly violent criminals off the hook? Is that really what the Premier should be prioritizing?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there may be a point of privilege in here, but let me just say that the CBC published a false story. They published a story that my office staff had been calling Crown prosecutors. They had not seen e-mails. They were not in possession of e-mails. They made false allegations. We've put in a request to the Ombudsman to investigate this. We've asked for a

retraction, and we have asked for an apology, and we are still waiting.

I would advise the member opposite not to repeat false claims, because they have absolutely no evidence at the CBC for the claims they made. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Sabir:** Premier, you admitted twice to having talked to Crown prosecutors. That's on record.

Not only did the Premier admit that she was calling Crown prosecutors to get amnesty for those who broke the law, but according to Artur Pawlowski, who was arrested at Coutts for encouraging the blockade to continue, she promised to get him amnesty. This was a major theme of the Premier's leadership campaign. She, again, twice claimed publicly that she was speaking to Crown prosecutors. To the Premier: what did she promise those arrested for holding southern Alberta hostage and those threatening the lives of law enforcement?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, rather than call another point of privilege, let me also correct the record from what is being said across the aisle, which is simply not the case. I have always said that any communication that I had about the issue of amnesty would be done through the proper channels, which is my Justice minister. There is no question that I campaigned for seven months saying that I would look into that, and I can tell you what my Justice minister told me: one, that a Premier does not have the power of amnesty and, two, that we are waiting for the result of the Ingram decision. I accepted what my Justice minister told me, and that is what I've communicated.

2:00

**Mr. Sabir:** While the Premier prioritized trying to get lawbreakers amnesty for breaking the law, Albertans have suffered through a health care crisis, an affordability crisis, and a government that was slow to act to either. Our team put together a jobs plan, supported by the Industrial Heartland, a health care plan that will get 1 million Albertans access to a family doctor, supported by many in the medical profession. Mr. Speaker, it is clear what we are focused on. Will this Premier admit that her decision to call Crown prosecutors, which she admitted twice publicly, and seeking amnesty for lawbreakers was the wrong choice?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they're focused on fake stories; we're focused on addressing issues for Albertans. My very first action when I became Premier was to focus on fixing the health care system. That was the number one priority. They continue to talk down the front-line workers in the health care system. We're supporting them because we have confidence in them that they're going to be able to address the issues of Albertans with our support, and that's part of what we're doing.

The other part of what we're doing is an affordability plan, which even Trevor Tombe has said has counteracted the federal inflation crisis caused by the NDP coalition.

### Canada Pension Plan

**Mr. Dach:** The Alberta pension plan is, quite frankly, one of the worst ideas this government has put forward. Respected economists, academics, and workers' representatives have all been adamantly opposed to the idea. Mr. Speaker, they are right. Seniors fear for their retirement security. Those considering retirement worry about their futures. Albertans want to keep their pension investments within the CPP, period, full stop. Why doesn't the Premier understand this?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we had a Fair Deal Panel that did widespread consultations across the province, and one of the things they asked us to do was to look at the feasibility of an Alberta pension plan, and if there was any decision to be made, it would be made through a public referendum of Albertans. We've had an initial report done, and we need more work done, quite frankly. It looks promising, but we want to make sure that Albertans have the most up-to-date information. That will be available, we've been told, sometime in May. When the final report is available, we will put it out into the public and Albertans will decide.

**Mr. Dach:** Albertans do not want this Premier anywhere near their pensions. They've made it abundantly clear, yet this government is refusing to listen to the very people they represent. They talk of a referendum, but they know already where Albertans stand. Thankfully, there's a vote coming. I suspect Albertans will have the final say on protecting their pensions, and that's how it should be. Will the Premier agree with me that the fate of Alberta's pensions is on the line in the coming spring election?

**Ms Smith:** Well, no, I won't agree to that because there's a process we'd have to go through. We'd have to issue the report, we'd have to do public consultations, and we'd have to see whether or not Albertans even want to have a referendum on the issue of a change in the pension plan. So there are many, many months of work ahead of us, but I will agree with the member opposite on this: this is Alberta's pension. It will be Alberta's choice. We listened to what Albertans said when they wanted us to investigate. It sounds to me like the members opposite would ignore what they heard from the Fair Deal Panel, ignore what Albertans told them. We think it's our responsibility to put the information on the table and let Albertans decide.

**Mr. Dach:** Moving from the CPP to the Alberta pension plan is so unpopular, more than 60,000 Albertans signed a petition telling this government not to do it. Let me say that again: 60,000 and counting. Albertans work their whole adult lives building their retirement savings, and the UCP wants to gamble them away. It's shameful. Pension plans are not political games, and treating them as such is dangerous. I want to send a message to all Albertans. An Alberta NDP government will never treat Albertans' pensions like their fun money, as the UCP have. We could never be that careless. For the last time, can the Premier explain why she wants to gamble?

**Ms Smith:** Well, I wish the members opposite would stop fear-mongering. I suppose it doesn't surprise me that they don't want to see the results of the report. They didn't want to see what Bill 1 looked like before they voted against it as well. We believe that Albertans want to see this information. They asked for us to do the report. We have done the report. We will release it when it becomes available. We're hoping that'll be in the next few months, and we look forward to having a robust discussion. We have always said – and this was the recommendation from the Fair Deal Panel – that if there is any decision to be made, it has to be through public referendum by Albertans, and that's what we've committed to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Health Care Wait Times

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the best front-line health care workers in the world, and this government is making meaningful changes to our health care system to improve outcomes for Albertans all across the province. Yesterday the Minister of Health, along with the Premier and Dr. Cowell, released a 90-day

report to provide us with a status update on this very important work. To the Minister of Health: can you please inform the members what results we've seen in EMS response times over the past three months?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question on this important issue. We've seen significant progress over the past three months. During that time, since November, EMS added 39 front-line staff, including paramedics and emergency communications officers. EMS response in urban areas has improved by 22.1 per cent, and remote areas have improved by 10 per cent. EMS response times for most urgent calls improved across the province as well. That's in metro, urban, rural, and remote areas: 17 minutes in metro and urban areas, down from 21.8; 19.2 minutes in communities over 3,000, down from 21.5; and further improvements.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the effectiveness of our health care system is an issue that impacts all Albertans and given that Albertans deserve to have confidence that they will receive high-quality care with minimal wait times, can the Minister of Health please share how we're working to reduce wait times in emergency rooms and for surgeries and what progress we're seeing so far?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're working with Dr. Cowell, our official administrator, and working with AHS, and I want to thank all of our health care workers on the front line for doing significant work over the last three months. We are making progress. The ED wait time to see a doctor went down by nearly 10 per cent since November. The number of patients waiting longer than the clinically recommended time has decreased by 9.4 per cent. By March 31, 2023, AHS and the chartered surgical facilities anticipate that they will complete 290,000 surgeries. That's a 4 per cent increase over next year, and progress in lowering ED wait times has been seen in all three measures. We're going to keep working and bring those times . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: given that a strong team of health care workers is critical to our system running smoothly and given that the Premier committed to empowering our health care workers to make more decisions about the running of the system, can the Minister of Health please share how this will be achieved and his overall impression of these first 90 days of health care reform?

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks once again to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as you know, on November 17 we announced our health care action plan and promised Albertans that help is on the way. Wait times are trending down, and we are seeing a decrease in provincial averages for ambulances, surgeries, and emergency room waits over the last 90 days. We will continue to put in place the structure for both immediate and long-term reforms and changes. I know that Dr. Cowell has been meeting with AHS employees across the entire province and getting their input. We'll keep driving changes until we get these times down.

## Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion

**Member Loyola:** Red Deer is Alberta's third-largest city, and it currently has no doctors accepting new patients. On top of an already grim situation, the vital Red Deer hospital expansion project continues to be delayed. Mr. Speaker, all of this is unacceptable. The people of Red Deer deserve timely, high-quality public health care. The UCP promised that construction would begin in 2021, but now in 2023 nothing is started. Can the minister please explain why they have chosen to delay this critical project every chance that they've had? Clearly, a strong public health care system isn't a value of the UCP. It is of the NDP, and I can't wait to deliver for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier has the call.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. This project is proceeding. In fact, the RFP for design is out, and we expect it to be completed and returned by the end of March. At that point we can carry on with the design. Unlike the NDP, we believe in planning first, so we're going to do a good plan so we can do a good build so we can meet the needs of people in central Alberta and Red Deer, giving them the health care they need in a good-designed building, meeting the needs of all citizens within central Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Loyola:** Given that walk-in clinics in Red Deer are overrun and this government has continued to delay the Red Deer hospital expansion despite it being critical to the service of the central zone and given that when pressed about the delays, the Minister of Infrastructure insultingly said, quote, that there are complexities that most of the general public doesn't understand, and it's difficult to explain to them because it's tedious and very time consuming, will this minister apologize for this arrogant comment and admit to the people of Red Deer that their hospital was not a priority for this government over the last four years? If it was, construction would have started already.

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's ironic hearing from the NDP, who removed the Red Deer hospital from the priority capital list, that it's not a priority. We have put it back there. In fact, what I did when I made those comments was – when I went to Red Deer to talk face to face to the citizens of central Alberta to answer their primary question: why does it take so long to build a hospital? We're trying to be very transparent. We had plans there. We had officials from my Department of Infrastructure, officials from the Department of Health, and we had AHS members all there to answer people's questions and help explain: why does it take so long?

**Member Loyola:** Given that there are zero doctors accepting new patients in Red Deer, which leaves thousands of Albertans without any form of primary care, and given that the lack of primary care leads to more costs and more burden on our hospitals because far too many Albertans have nowhere else to go other than an emergency room and given that the UCP have no plan to get Albertans a doctor and the Alberta NDP have a comprehensive plan to get a million Albertans more doctors, which includes building a family health clinic in the new Red Deer hospital, can the minister stand in this House and admit that we will deliver health care for Red Deer after four years of this government failing so badly?

**Mr. Neudorf:** All the NDP will continue to do is make promises that they can't fulfill, so we're going to keep moving forward with good planning and good building, with all kinds of community consultation to make sure that they get the building that they need, the hospital care that they need, the services they need planned well, delivered well, and in good time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Ms Pancholi:** Recently my colleagues and I went to visit the site of the south Edmonton hospital, you know, the hospital that the Alberta NDP announced in 2017 and construction was supposed to begin in 2020, but, Mr. Speaker, that construction site was just an empty field. The UCP, without saying anything to the people of south Edmonton, has delayed this project countless times and now indefinitely. The UCP clearly do not care about ensuring that my constituents have access to health care, but I can promise Albertans that an NDP government will get this project done. Can the minister explain why the UCP has failed to get even one single shovel in the ground for the south Edmonton hospital in four years?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the capital plan from 2022 has over \$371 million provided for this project. That money is already being put to use. There is site work happening; there is servicing work happening. We are in the middle of a functional design plan because, again, we need to know what design to do before we can build it. That's the order of construction, and that's what we're looking forward to working on, and that's what we're doing, making sure that we have a plan to meet the needs of all Edmontonians, especially those in south Edmonton, and build them a facility that works.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, the minister should visit the site; nothing is happening.

Given that Edmonton is currently short over 400 hospital beds and that number is projected to more than triple in the next three years and given that some Edmontonians have to drive nearly an hour to get to a hospital that will no doubt be over full with long wait times and staff who are stretched too thin and given that this government has thrown public health care into a crisis, making the need for a new south Edmonton hospital even more critical, to the minister: can he explain to my constituents why the UCP has abandoned the health care needs of Edmontonians, of those living in communities around the city, and all Albertans, as a matter of fact?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are doing the work that the NDP failed to do. We are developing a plan. We are making sure that we meet the needs. The first thing you have to do when you do a good building is have a good plan. What are we providing for the services for those in Edmonton? Is it ambulatory care? Is it emergency rooms? Is it surgery suites? We need to answer these questions through our service providers, Alberta Health Services, work with the Ministry of Health. Once we have that, then we can go to design and building. We look forward to doing that. We continue to invest money in the capital budget from 2022 and beyond, and we will provide health care services . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, given that south Edmonton is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada and given that the last hospital in the city was built in 1988, when Edmonton's population was almost half of what it is today, which is why the Alberta NDP committed to building the south Edmonton hospital, and given that my constituents are tired of asking why the UCP keeps delaying this project, I think they're ready for a change, so this is our commitment. The Alberta NDP will get the south Edmonton hospital built, and we will deliver public health care for all. They can count on it. Is the minister getting used to the idea that we will finish what he can't even start?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Yeah. A great example of what the NDP didn't do is the Grande Prairie hospital. How come that took 14 years to deliver? Again, the NDP makes promises they can't deliver on. Where you start with building is with a good plan. We are continuing to work with the residents of Edmonton and south Edmonton, and we have an obligation to all taxpayers in the province to manage their finances well and appropriately. We need to build a building that will serve the needs not only today but into the future, and we're developing that plan, something the NDP failed to do in their four years in office.

### Energy Company Liability

*(continued)*

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are hearing conflicting reports concerning the Premier's proposed liability management incentive program. The Premier argued that this thinly veiled corporate welfare scheme somehow doesn't undermine the polluter-pay principle. She stated that the projects to be cleaned up were – and I quote – left with somebody holding the bag who may have not been responsible for the initial liability. Given that the oil and gas under our feet is owned by all Albertans, to the Premier: why should Albertans be left holding the bag for private companies who pumped every last cent out of these wells before they abandoned them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is just getting a little ahead of his skis here. You know, as with any government we're looking at a variety of ideas and programs. One we're exploring in the Department of Energy is the liability management incentive program, but it's a program that's still under development. It requires further stakeholder engagement and consultation. I would just ask the member to have a little bit of patience, and we will release the information and details in due course.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this Energy minister have very different ideas of how this program may actually work. Given that this minister has indicated that projects belonging to active, financially responsible oil and gas companies may be considered under this revised R-star program and given that the Premier has been more adamant that the pilot project will be reserved only for abandoned and orphaned wells, will the Premier actively commit right now that if all Albertans must pay for this, at least it'll be limited to orphan wells that have no current owner?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, the basic premise of the liability management incentive program is to encourage further well site cleanup. We want to focus on some of the most challenging sites

that are out there, some that have been around the longest, say, inactive for greater than 20 years, so those from the '60s and the '70s. We know that industry is a good steward of the environment, and we want to support those efforts while encouraging new investment and creating jobs while we're at it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that there is a long history in Alberta of major projects being used to feather the nests of lobbyists and companies close to this government – sometimes, like the case of the massive overbuild of Alberta's electrical transmission system, these companies hail from eastern Canada – and given that the Premier has personally lobbied for a similar program in the past and given that orphan well cleanup is being billed as a job-creation project for Albertans, will the Premier commit to ensuring that if the polluter-pay principle is abandoned, at least all of the out-of-province companies will be banned from participating in any facets of this cleanup?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, the details of the program haven't been released yet, so I think the member is just jumping to conclusions here. You know, I can say that the program does not change anything around the new liability framework or with directive 088 and the mandatory spend requirements. Those will remain in place. The liability incentive program is meant to be a supplementary thing and very targeted to some of the oldest liabilities. Consultation is ongoing. It's early days. It still has to go to caucus, committee, cabinet, Treasury Board . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning and Deputy Opposition House Leader.

### Provincial Policing

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite overwhelming public objection, this Premier still plans to fire the RCMP and saddle communities across this province with a new provincial police force, all with new bills and new bureaucracy that will come with it. Now, while the minister ignores the feedback that we're getting from councillors, municipalities, the RMA, and more, we've been listening, and we can't find one municipal partner that supports this bad policy. Can the minister tell us who exactly supports this failed policy that is being forced on Albertans, and why are their opinions more important than those of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of public safety and emergency preparedness.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. As I've indicated before, there's no decision that has been made regarding the Alberta police service, and we continue to consult with municipalities and First Nations communities. I guess my question, though – I mean, we have nations such as Siksika that are interested in doing their own police service, you know, and we have had other municipalities, we've had other First Nations that are interested in doing their own policing service. So I guess the message coming from the NDP to the First Nations communities is: we don't care what your opinion is; we don't care what you have to say. They're going to impose whatever they want on the First Nations communities.

2:20

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that the government might want to go back and look at their sovereignty act and given that all across this province communities are struggling with the rising cost of

everything and given that the city of Red Deer already explored the idea of leaving the RCMP and abandoned it over a decade ago and that it's clear that this minister isn't a fan of common sense and given that the minister had his chance to listen and he chose to put the Premier's demands over what Albertans are asking for – Albertan communities don't want the UCP to impose \$735 million per year for a provincial police force, period – why isn't the UCP listening?

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, I mean, contrary to the NDP's belief, many people, including the federal government themselves, have been talking about reviewing and moving away from contract policing for years. A 2019 briefing note provided by the federal Minister of Public Safety – and let me just give you a bit of a quote here. It says, "It has been the Government of Canada's objective since the 1960s to decrease" – let me say it again: to decrease – "its contract policing financial liability." We are listening to municipalities, we are empowering municipalities, and we're . . .

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that this government likes to say that there will be cost savings with their new police idea but that is based off a report that was paid for by this government and given that other reports not commissioned by this government show the opposite, including what's going on in Surrey, and that Alberta municipalities can't afford to gamble millions of dollars and loss of services on hypotheticals or reports bought and paid for by the government and given that this minister refused to listen to what people are telling and insists even as recently as last week on standing behind this awful plan, I'm just going to be clear, Mr. Speaker: the Alberta NDP government will keep the RCMP and invest in community safety.

**Mr. Ellis:** Again, I'm hearing the NDP say to First Nations communities: we do not care what you have to say; we do not care what your opinion is; we will force the RCMP on you. They have no respect . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will come to order. You may not like the answer, but he's entitled to give it.

**Mr. Ellis:** On this side of the House we're trying to empower municipalities. We are . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** You're making this stuff up.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will come to order.

**Mr. Ellis:** On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to empower municipalities, we are trying to empower our First Nations communities, and we are trying to listen and do what is best for them. We want to hear from them. We are listening to members like Siksika. We are listening to First Nation communities like Enoch, and they are giving clear direction, and it is not towards the NDP.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted.

### COVID-19 Outbreaks in Seniors' Care Facilities

**Ms Sigurdson:** The office of the Auditor General released reports on long-term care and COVID-19 in continuing care facilities. The

reports make it clear that long-term care and continuing care facilities were poorly resourced during the pandemic. Shortfalls in staffing, resources, and procedures were known. They were noted in previous audits, raised by those living and working in these homes. The UCP government failed to make the homes of seniors and the workplaces of our front-line heroes safe. To the Minister of Health: why has this government failed at supporting Albertans living in continuing care?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, and thank you to the hon. member for the question on this important issue. Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, we are investing in our continuing care system and supporting seniors. We accepted all of the recommendations made by the Auditor General, and a number of those recommendations we have already acted on. As part of Budget 2022 we invested over \$200 million in capital to be able to expand our continuing care system, including to ensure that we had enough spaces for seniors so they didn't need to double up. We're going to continue to invest.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the report highlights that paid sick leave would have halted outbreaks in long-term care facilities and given that mitigating outbreaks could have saved lives and given that the Official Opposition proposed paid sick leave and drafted a bill that the government could have introduced during the pandemic but they ignored it and failed Albertans, to the minister: why ignore real measures like paid sick leave that could have improved the care and saved the lives of Albertans?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the facility-based continuing care review identified staffing as a significant issue in regard to the continuing care sector. That same review identified that we also need to actually transfer our approach from congregate care settings to home-care settings. We started that process in Budget 2022 with an additional million hours in home care, and I'm looking forward to the budget that's going to be released today. We'll talk more about the investment that we are making to improve continuing care for seniors and for all Albertans.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that continuing care residents accounted for 65 per cent of COVID-19 deaths in the province and given that while they were dying, the now Premier was spouting conspiracy theories about the pandemic – even now she seems more focused on getting the people who undermined the public health response out of their criminal charges than improving care – can someone explain to the surviving relatives of thousands of Albertans who died in the continuing care system during the COVID-19 pandemic why they didn't implement life-saving policies?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we invested significantly during the COVID crisis to support those most vulnerable. I appreciate, again, the report being done by the Auditor General. We accepted all of the recommendations in principle. I just want to be clear. We invested hundreds of millions of dollars, both from a staffing standpoint and to provide PPE for those who were the most vulnerable in the continuing care setting. We learned from waves 1 and 2 that we needed to only have single rooms, and we're investing to make sure that we can ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has the call.

### Calgary Crime Rate

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister of public safety. According to the latest statistics crime

rates in Calgary have been on the rise for the past two years, with significant increases in property and violent crimes. Can the minister please inform the House what measures the government is taking to address this concerning trend?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course I thank the member very much for the question. Of course, public safety is very important in our large municipalities, Edmonton and Calgary. You know, people have a right to feel safe in their homes, children have a right to play outside, and these sorts of rights are being infringed upon right now. That's why we created the Calgary public safety task force. We've been working with multiple levels of government, and we've deployed several initiatives that we believe are going to be in place – and, believe me, several more will be coming – to ensure that families, that people that live and work and play in Calgary can feel safe within their communities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has the call.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that the recent reports have highlighted the growing concerns among Calgary residents, particularly in high-crime neighbourhoods, about their safety and well-being, can the minister elaborate on how the government is working with local communities, leaders in law enforcement agencies to address these concerning concerns and ensure that residents feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of emergency services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and thank you again to the member for that very important question, especially to his residents, many of whom do not feel safe in their homes with the gunfire that has been going on with the gang-related activity. I can tell you that, of course, through the department we've been in touch with the Calgary Police Service to make sure that they have the necessary resources to go after those gang members, because I can tell you that in this province we are not going to tolerate gang members instilling fear in our community members. Let me be very clear on that.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic pressures have contributed to the increase in crime rates in Calgary, can the minister provide details on any specific programs or initiatives being implemented by the government to support vulnerable populations and how this has improved public safety in Calgary?

Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sure. Thank you very much. Yes, Mr. Speaker, absolutely, of course, we work very closely with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction to make sure that those officers that are being deployed, whether it be through the Calgary Police Service or the sheriffs, have the necessary resources to provide support for people, especially vulnerable people. To be honest with you, I can tell you that it's not about moving people along; it's about ensuring that they have the resources, including the HealthIM app, to make sure that those individuals are actually getting the help they need and a pathway to recovery and treatment.

### 2:30 Support for Victims of Gender-based Violence

**Member Irwin:** Violence against women, girls, and gender-diverse people has created a shadow pandemic over the last three years. Overwhelming demand for support services compounded with high inflation and inadequate government funding have left shelters overwhelmed and survivors struggling. This government has completely turned their backs on survivors. This is disgraceful. Will the Premier commit today to addressing the funding crisis that women's shelters are facing? Stakeholders are here today. They're listening. Tell them your plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of seniors and community services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I share her deep concern for women that are fleeing domestic violence, and I want to assure her and anybody that's finding themselves in a situation where they're in a domestic violence situation that this government is there for them, this province is there for them. We continue to work with not-for-profits across this province to make sure that there's a safe place and there's support for people in that situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** Given that nearly 1 in 2 Albertans has experienced sexual violence in their lifetime – and in the last few years survivors are reaching out and they're asking for help at record rates, which is a good thing, but because of lack of government funding survivors are waiting months, even years to access counselling – and given that the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services has made it clear that funding is desperately needed to shorten wait times, address the complex needs of survivors, access justice, and offer prevention programs, do the right thing today, Premier. Show your government cares. Fund the organizations doing the critical work to support survivors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of seniors and community services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question and her concern. I'm pleased to report that I've been working very closely with our parliamentary secretary for the status of women. We have been going across the province meeting with front-line service providers, not-for-profits, and working to understand what the challenges are to make sure that we do have the funding in place to meet the needs that are there. Again, I continue to look forward to working with our amazing parliamentary secretary for the status of women as well as our fantastic not-for-profits to work towards addressing these challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** Given that the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters said it best, "Survivors deserve better; Alberta deserves better," yet crickets from this government – this is your legacy, Premier, one that eliminated the status of women ministry, one that abandoned survivors of violence, one that continually attacked women-dominated sectors like health care and education, one that purposely denied nonprofits essential funding, all while having billions in surplus to give away to your corporate buddies. That's the legacy you're leaving, Premier, and you should be ashamed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what the question was there, but I'm happy to address what's being said here.

This government has demonstrated compassion, and we will continue to work with not-for-profits across this province in all sectors, especially for women fleeing domestic violence. We have increased funding for shelters by 10 per cent. We have increased funding for folks that work in the disability sector by 10 per cent. We fund women's shelters, \$51.3 million a year. Anybody who is in a domestic violence situation will get help in this province. You have my commitment to that. We will continue to work with our not-for-profits.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's postsecondary students and the schools in which they learn are crucial to Alberta's economic recovery. Unfortunately, students are struggling because of decisions made by this UCP government. The Premier and this minister have approved hikes of anywhere between 16 to 104 per cent in tuition, more than \$10,000 in additional fees, removed access to grants, underspent student aid, slashed funding to postsecondary at record levels. So it begs the question: why would the postsecondary minister make it so hard for students to get a postsecondary education?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member is curious about why it's so difficult, he should ask his boss in Ottawa, Jagmeet Singh, who is working with Trudeau to jack up the carbon tax. Reckless spending is driving up inflation. One of the reasons that postsecondary students are struggling is because of a cost-of-living crisis created by the Trudeau Liberal and Jagmeet Singh alliance through reckless spending. We are taking action. A couple of weeks ago I announced a series of affordability measures to help our students while the NDP sits there and does nothing.

**Mr. Eggen:** Really, Mr. Speaker. I mean, given that tuition in this province was amongst the lowest in Canada in 2019 – now it's the highest; students report increases of more than 30 per cent to their tuition because of this minister – and given that they didn't even get a piece of the Premier's so-called affordability plan announced last year, they're having to sell their vehicles, skip meals, and pile on debt just to make ends meet. How does this minister stand in the House with a straight face, which he doesn't even do – he has a smirk – knowing the pain and the suffering of students he is personally responsible for?

**The Speaker:** That sounded a lot like a direct, personal attack on the minister, which the hon. member knows is not appropriate.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** It's okay, Mr. Speaker. He can buy me a coffee afterwards and it's all done and dusted, although I have to correct the member. I'm not sure where he's getting his information from. I think we talked about this last year. I encourage the member to look at Stats Canada. Again, it's a very reliable source of information. I really don't know what the member is talking about when he says that tuition prices are the most expensive, because that is simply not true. The average undergraduate tuition rate right now in the country is \$6,800. Alberta is just above that at \$7,100, far below neighbouring provinces, far below Ontario, far below Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that this government is forcing more and more costs on to the backs of students who are already struggling



due to the UCP's countless poor decisions – to date \$700 million has been cut from universities, colleges, and polytechnics; \$700 million – and given that they have done this while the Premier seems somehow to find \$20 billion to hand over to her friends and insiders, can the minister then explain why they get the support and our students do not?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the member missed the press conference, but we've announced a series of affordability measures to help our students. We're eliminating the plus 1 per cent on student loan interest rates to help students cope. We're extending the interest deferral period from six months to 12 months. We're extending the repayment assistance program. As well, we're adding more money to student financial assistance to help those who need funding the most. We are taking direct, real, and measurable action to help our postsecondary students right now and well into the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

#### Postsecondary Students and Affordability Plan

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Making life affordable for Albertans continues to be a top priority for this government. We will continue to aid Albertans in achieving financial security by a variety of means. Our policies have already provided support to a multitude of groups such as seniors, AISH recipients, and families who are struggling with inflation and affordability in large part due to poor federal fiscal management. Our government has laid out plans to help protect the bank accounts of postsecondary students, starting with implementing a tuition cap. To the Minister of Advanced Education: how will the new tuition cap benefit Alberta students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. You know, one of the things that students have been asking for and have been lobbying me about over the course of the past four years has been stability and predictability when it comes to tuition policy. We currently don't have that because of the cap, that the members opposite created, that's allowed tuition to increase by 5 and a half per cent this current year. We're introducing a new cap that'll establish a base rate of 2 per cent. Institutions will not be permitted to increase tuition by that 2 per cent, giving students and families predictability and stability.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government aims to provide a foundation for Albertan graduates to be successful contributors to our economy and given that upcoming and recent postsecondary graduates will still face financial barriers and given that these individuals will require government support, what new supports are available for students who have already graduated or are graduating before 2024-2025?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Yeah. Recent grads and upcoming grads will benefit from some of the affordability measures that we've just announced. We are extending the interest, the student loan deferral period. Right now students have a six-month window after they graduate to begin repaying their student loans. We're going to extend that out to a year. We're changing the interest rates on student loans. That'll affect all current and future borrowers, giving

them more ability. In addition, we are expanding the thresholds for the repayment assistance program to help those recent graduates who need assistance in repaying their loans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, through you, to the minister for that answer and for recognizing the value of Alberta postsecondary graduates. Given that our government is prioritizing affordability for all Albertans and given that as a result we have already put significant measures in place to lighten the financial load on Albertans, how do these new measures support other initiatives to make life more affordable for all Albertans?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, addressing the cost-of-living crisis is a top concern for the government and, as the member noted, is being driven largely by reckless federal policies. But Alberta's government is focused on making life more affordable for Albertans, our postsecondary students, seniors, and other individuals. I know that the minister of affordability is working hard to address that. These measures that we announced a couple of weeks ago will help our postsecondary students through some of these challenging times and help them transition into rewarding careers in the near future. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

This concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In light of the budget, coming at 3 o'clock, we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine immediately. If you are leaving the Chamber to prepare yourself for such activities, please do so quickly, quietly, and appropriately out of respect to the remainder of Members' Statements.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

##### Ukraine

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, it's been over a year since Ukraine was invaded by Vladimir Putin's Russia. It's been a long year of watching cities devastated, families and communities forced to flee the onslaught of devastation wrought against a peaceful country by the Russian Federation. There are heartbreaking stories of people losing their loved ones, of communities devastated by invasion and bombings.

But throughout it all we've seen heroism of people standing up against the invaders determined to crush a free and independent Ukraine. We've seen compassion both around the world and right here at home with Premier Stelmach and Thomas Lukaszuk, who shipped tonnes of aid and supplies to Ukraine and filled planes full of refugees, who found their way here to find peace and stability as this illegal and immoral war continues. It's been a year of pain and hurt for Ukraine, but the people of Ukraine are still standing in defiance of the tyranny of Putin.

Now, there are those, including the Premier, who suggested that the only solution for Ukraine was neutrality. The Premier even stated that she thought the invasion was understandable. Although I appreciate that she corrected her wrong opinion, it still caused harm to the Ukrainian community here and those fleeing violence. Some may never forgive what she said.

Mr. Speaker, I'm deeply proud of my Ukrainian roots, and I know so many Albertans are of theirs. As a province I know that we will continue to stand up for Ukraine and its people.

Slava Ukraini.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has a statement to make.

### Federal Energy Transition Plan

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because the federal government persistently employs newspeak rhetoric to disguise its progressive ideological policies, the referencing of George Orwell has become necessary. In his essay on Politics and the English Language, written in April 1946, he said, “Political language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.”

Happily for the federal Ministry of Truth, a leaked memo exposed the rhetoric of the just transition policy as classic newspeak. The actual aim of just transition was revealed to be the murder of the Alberta oil and gas industry, albeit a respectable murder. A quote from the memo gave the game away: Canadians thrown out of work by climate change programs can get jobs as janitors. The memo revealed that they intend to throw 2.7 million Canadian employees out of work into janitorial jobs.

Surely no political party leader in Alberta can know this situation and with good conscience sit on their hands. However, the Leader of the Opposition’s hands are tied because her federal boss has already signed up to this attack on Alberta’s oil and gas industry, the industry which provides the funds for the social programs socialists claim to champion. Then conscience is obsolete.

Happily for Albertans, their Premier has not sat on her hands. Indeed, she is squarely on her feet. She proved this when, immediately and without compromise, she called out the newspeak rhetoric of the just transition policy. I know that the Premier along with my UCP colleagues will continue to expose just transition newspeak euphemisms and resist this ideological attack on Alberta until it’s defeated. However, we should heed the admonitions of Thomas Jefferson, who said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, because once we send this dishonest nonsense packing, Canada’s federal government will launch a new attack on our province.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a petition to present.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour to present this petition coming from the southwest Edmonton community of Edgemont. Spearheading this petition is the Edgemont Community League School Advocacy Committee, who have obtained 480 signatures. Right now the children of Edgemont have the longest average commute times to school in Edmonton, and this petition seeks to comprehensively address the educational infrastructure in the area by building a much-needed K to 9 public school in the community of Edgemont.

Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(3) I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the 2023-2024 estimates schedule.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, hon. members, that brings us to points of order, and at 2:22 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll be short. At the time that you mentioned, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford clearly shouted, after being warned by yourself, “You’re making this stuff up.” I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, and I suspect it may not even be caught by the ambient mics, but I sure heard it, and I suspect many other members in the Chamber heard it. That kind of language isn’t appropriate for this Chamber, especially because it was directed at a specific member, the hon. minister of public safety. I believe this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), and I encourage that member to apologize, withdraw, and do better.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member we withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker:** I accept this and consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

#### Temporary Adjournment of Spring Session

20. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the Assembly stand adjourned at the conclusion of its sitting on February 28, 2023, and reconvene on March 6, 2023.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 20 carried]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, the House stands in recess until 3:15.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:48 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I’ve received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

**The Speaker:** The Honourable the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, and recommends the same to the Assembly.

The Honourable the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2023-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the '23-24 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the '23-26 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2023 ministry plans.

## Government Motions

(continued)

### Budget Address

21. Mr. Toews moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's 2023-26 fiscal plan and move Government Motion 21.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I count it a tremendous, tremendous honour today to rise in the House and present Budget 2023, the fifth I've presented on behalf of Albertans. In the fall of 2019 I put forward a four-year plan to bring the province back to fiscal responsibility and a balanced budget. In some respects these past four years have felt like a century, in part due to the extraordinary global challenges we faced but also because of how far we've come. When as a government we took office in 2019, Alberta had an economy that was flatlined, and we were spending \$10 billion more than comparable provinces on services, without better outcomes.

Our plan to strengthen Alberta's economic foundation was twofold: first, to bring discipline to Alberta's spending – we could no longer afford to be the spending outlier among Canadian provinces – and then we were determined to position our province for competitiveness, leading to exceptional investment attraction, economic growth, diversification, and job creation, thereby ensuring an increase in fiscal capacity and provincial revenues. These goals were, to put it mildly, ambitious.

To achieve them, we committed to three fiscal anchors that informed our decision-making. The first anchor was a commitment to keep Alberta's net debt to GDP ratio below 30 per cent. This would ensure that debt and debt repayment would not strangle our economic growth. Second, it was imperative that we would get our spending in line with comparative provinces and, third, when there was economic clarity, to chart a path to a balanced budget.

As we implemented our ambitious economic recovery plan, the impact on Albertans was almost immediate. Our red tape reduction initiative has saved Albertans \$2.1 billion. We established the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation with \$1 billion of capital so that Indigenous communities can be full partners in the Alberta advantage.

Our government invested in strategic infrastructure projects that were essential for future growth while getting Albertans back to work at a time they needed it most. By July 2020 we had cut Alberta's corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent. We recapitalized the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, adding \$175 million to support investment into Alberta start-ups, and we established Invest Alberta to sell the province's incredible value proposition to the world. Then on February 24, 2022, I was able to stand in this House and present Alberta's first balanced budget in a decade.

3:20

That brings us to today. Today Alberta is leading the nation in economic growth. Today, with a rapidly diversifying economy, there are career opportunities that didn't even exist a few years ago. Today Albertans pay \$20 billion less in taxes than they would if

they lived in the next lowest taxed province. Today, after some very difficult years, the opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs are exploding, and today I again present a balanced budget.

This means debt is on the decline. In this last fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, we paid off over \$13 billion of debt, all of the debt that matured in 2022. This means lower debt-service costs and more resources available for health, education, and other programs. It means more available fiscal room and thereby more runway and capacity should we experience another economic shock. We are far and away below our net debt to GDP ratio ceiling of 30 per cent. Today Alberta is at 10 per cent, the lowest in all of Canada by a long shot. And because of our strong balance sheet, Alberta has received its second credit upgrade of the year, remarkable when we consider that our last credit-rating increase was back in 2001.

Investment attraction is essential to Alberta's strong economic growth and job numbers. In my business experience a government will either help or hinder progress, get in the way or get out of the way. It's an attitude, Mr. Speaker, and it matters to investors. Four years ago we put out the Open for Business sign, and we followed it up with real actions, not just words. We've reduced business taxes, cut red tape, and have created one of the most business-friendly environments on the continent, and the results speak for themselves. In a year when venture capital investment dropped in Ontario, Quebec, and B.C., we in Alberta, at \$729 million, set another record.

Businesses across sectors and across the province are creating thousands of new jobs while diversifying Alberta's economy. Just days ago Applexus Technologies announced they were moving their Canadian headquarters to Calgary, creating 125 tech jobs. Southland Trailer Corp. in Lethbridge will double its production, creating 250 jobs. De Havilland is moving its head office to Alberta – instead of to subsidized Quebec, I might add – and it's building an aerospace centre and manufacturing plant, employing 1,500 people, and that's just the start.

CGC development is building a \$210 million wallboard manufacturing plant in Wheatland county. Garmin Canada has announced expansion plans for their Cochrane head office that will double their workforce in two years. We have Imperial Oil investing \$720 million in the heartland for a biodiesel refinery. Drilling activity in the oil and gas sector ramped up to an eight-year high last year, and investment is expected to grow by a further 19 per cent in 2023.

IBM is opening its client innovation centre for western Canada in Calgary. Sidetrade is investing \$24 million to make Calgary its North American headquarters. Air Products is building a net-zero hydrogen complex right here in the heartland. Amazon, Walmart, Canadian Pacific, Dow, Infosys, Mphasis, HBO, Northern Petrochemical, RBC, CN Rail, Ernst & Young – I could go on and on, but there's not time this afternoon to detail every good-news investment story in Alberta's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be crystal clear here, and it's important that our colleagues across the floor hear this. Governments do not create wealth. They create the conditions favourable for investment attraction and wealth creation, and over the last four years this government was relentless in its focus to make Alberta the best place to do business in North America. Behind the long list of good-news stories the best part of the story is what this means for Albertans every day on the ground: 92,000 jobs were created in 2022 and over 20,000 in January of this year. In fact, almost a quarter of all jobs created in the nation in 2022 were created right here in Alberta.

These jobs are paying Albertans more. Workers in our province make more than in any other province. Since January 2019 the

amount Albertans earn per week has gone up 12 per cent, and we expect these earnings to keep growing. Further to that, thanks to the lowest taxes in Canada, Albertans keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians from other provinces and those new to Canada are taking note of Alberta's growing economy, our lower cost of living, and the abundant opportunities we offer, like the story of Nick and Jessica, two young professionals – one from Edmonton, one from Vancouver – debating about where they're going to start life together. When Jessica recently visited Edmonton for the first time, she was surprised by its natural beauty, but what tipped the scales? The high wages, the affordability, and the cost of housing. "Edmonton is cold," Jessica says, "but I can buy a coat." It's not surprising, then, that Alberta is leading the nation in population growth and that more Canadians are moving to Alberta than any other province.

Our growing population means good news for Alberta's labour market. Opportunities in every sector from finance to film, energy to agriculture mean we need a skilled workforce to keep up with the labour demands in the province. Budget 2022 committed \$170 million intended to create 7,000 training spaces for jobs in high demand. I want to commend our Minister of Advanced Education for his work in this area because, Mr. Speaker, he took funding for 7,000 spaces and worked with our incredible postsecondary institutions to create 10,000: 10,000 additional learning spaces for high-demand occupations across sectors and across this province.

Now, while Alberta's economy strengthens, we cannot afford to become complacent. We continue to face headwinds. Fuelled by supply chain constraints, global unrest, and our federal government's irresponsible fiscal policy, inflation is making life more costly for all Albertans at home, in business, and even in government. At the same time, despite record-breaking investment in Alberta, we continue to see declining business investment nationally. Since 2015 Canadian real GDP has grown by 13 per cent, but this growth has been entirely driven by government and consumer spending and residential investment. Much of this growth has been funded by debt, and it's masked the stagnant state of Canadian business investment.

Alarming, between 2015 and 2019 business investment in Canada actually declined. One of the impediments to business investment is Canada's growing reputation as a nation where it's difficult if not impossible to get large projects completed. Global investors have taken note of the many projects killed by the Trudeau government: Northern Gateway in 2016, Energy East in 2017, the Teck Frontier mine in 2020, and at least 15 LNG projects. In fact, since the federal impact assessment legislation, Bill C-69, was passed in 2018, there's not been one project subject to the act approved in all of Canada.

3:30

Not only has Canada lost out on billions of dollars of investment that would have created more jobs, better paying jobs, and greater financial stability for Canadians; we've turned our back on a world that desperately needs what we offer, including responsibly produced energy. If Canada fails to maximize responsibly produced energy production, we're not only failing Canadians; we're contributing to massive hardship for the world's most vulnerable. Canadian energy will help those living on the margins heat their homes. It will make fertilizer more affordable and boost agricultural output. It will improve air quality by displacing dirtier fuels. But it can do none of these things if it's left in the ground.

If Canada abdicates production, it simply moves to countries that give no credence to ESG concerns, with despotic leaders who use their energy wealth for destructive purposes. It leads to increased emissions and pollution as more coal is used in electricity

generation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if Canada is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the best thing we can do is export clean-burning Canadian LNG.

An energy-rich democracy like Canada that continues to hamstring its world-class responsible energy production with carbon taxes, emission caps, and a regulatory quagmire at a time of global shortage is irrational and grossly irresponsible. Canada not only has an opportunity, Mr. Speaker; we have a deep responsibility to prove ourselves a reliable trading partner and ally and deliver responsibly produced energy.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on our journey as a province over the past four years and as we recognize both the significant triumphs and the challenges we're experiencing today, the question becomes: where do we go from here? How do we maintain a strong balance sheet and positive economic trajectory? What can we do today to secure Alberta's future tomorrow?

First, Mr. Speaker, I'm appealing to the rest of Canada to follow Alberta's lead to make business competitiveness a key priority. Securing a prosperous future for the next generation depends on it. We need to be a nation that once again can get big, visionary projects completed. We need to be a nation that values the welfare of Canadians above the ideologies of the elite.

In the 1980s and '90s there was a saying going around the province: please, Lord, give us one more oil boom, and I promise not to squander it this time. As I recall, there was a different term, a less parliamentary term, used for squander. Remaining disciplined and responsible is most difficult during years of plenty. I expect most if not all of us in the House today would agree that, whether in our businesses or households, the tendency to unsustainably increase spending as revenues rise is almost inevitable. In this province, with our economy heavily influenced by commodities and our volatile revenue structure, it's been our story all too often.

The second key, then, Mr. Speaker, is to maintain responsible fiscal management into the future through a framework, a series of well-calibrated fiscal rules and guardrails. We're introducing legislation that will require a balanced budget. We'll limit year-over-year operating expense growth to population and inflation, ensuring appropriate and disciplined spending growth in easy times and difficult times. We'll implement a fiscal framework for surplus allocation to ensure that heritage fund earnings are retained in the fund and debt repayment is given first priority.

Mr. Speaker, had we from day one invested the earnings of the heritage fund back into the heritage savings trust fund without any additional deposits other than what we have made to date, instead of the \$18 billion we have in the fund today, the fund would be approaching \$300 billion. A fund of this size would earn Albertans close to \$20 billion a year in investment income. While we all wish we started reinvestment earlier, the best day to start is today. Speaking of today, to make up for lost time, we will immediately invest an additional \$2 billion into the heritage fund from the surplus of the last two years.

All of these measures together provide fiscal stability, enabling low taxes, and will ensure that business investment continues to be preferential to Alberta. It means future generations will not be encumbered with a debt they did not incur. Mr. Speaker, Budget '23 is about the future. It's about doing more of what has worked these past four years, more to champion Alberta's incredible value proposition around the world, more to attract investment, more to ensure Albertans have the services they need, and more to give a hand up to the vulnerable among us.

To further position Alberta's economy for investment attraction, we're introducing a nonrefundable tax credit for agriculture processing and manufacturing investment. This carefully calibrated incentive will build on our broad-based value proposition and

ensure we're able to compete with neighbouring jurisdictions, growing our value-added agriculture sector.

As the largest hydrogen producer in Canada we're building for the future with the Alberta petrochemical incentive program as we do the regulatory work, assign carbon hubs, and work with industry to advance logistics in our commitment to position this emerging sector for growth.

We're ensuring that future generations of Indigenous Albertans are partners in prosperity with a 50 per cent increase allocated to the Aboriginal business investment fund.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business there are 100,000 unfilled employment positions in Alberta today. It's remarkable. A skilled workforce is crucial to meet the needs of a growing and diverse economy, and as such broad and diverse training opportunities are needed not only to ensure key capacity for employers but to ensure more Albertans are invited into the Alberta advantage.

In addition to the 10,000 postsecondary seats created last year, Budget '23 is allocating \$111 million to expand seats in construction, tech, business, and energy and another \$11 million for aviation training with the new bachelor of aviation program. Over \$180 million is earmarked for upgrading or expanding facilities around the province, including a new school of business building at MacEwan University and a power engineering and instrumentation lab at Northwestern Polytechnic.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta we, like every other province, are experiencing a serious challenge in health care capacity. This challenge is less about bricks and mortar but, instead, a lack of front-line health care professionals. The new health workforce strategy provides \$158 million to support multiple initiatives to recruit and retain health care workers, including the targeted recruitment of internationally trained workers and nurses. This budget provides funding to increase the number of learning seats available in health care professions, including 1,800 new seats for health care aides, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses and an additional 120 seats to train more physicians at our schools of medicine, a 40 per cent increase in our physician training capacity.

Budget '23 provides \$2 billion over three years to fund the health care action plan, with investments to strengthen the EMS system, reduce surgical and ER wait times, enhance and update Alberta's primary health care network, and empower front-line workers to provide improved services for Albertans.

Although Alberta has the youngest population in Canada, it's estimated that the demand for long-term care beds could double in the next 25 years. We're investing more than \$1 billion over the next 10 years to ensure that our loved ones, the ones on whose shoulders we stand, will receive the care they need in their later years.

Mr. Speaker, affordability and the high cost of living due to inflation have been a source of hardship for many Albertans. The affordability action plan provides over \$3 billion in relief measures that will help Albertans. If we added all of the measures up, including all of the reindexing, we would be well over \$8 billion over the four years this fiscal plan represents.

**3:40**

The fuel tax suspension program is saving Albertans and Alberta businesses real dollars every time they fuel up and gives Albertans an enduring affordability advantage as we benefit from an owned resource. Electricity rebates are providing almost 2 million Alberta homes and businesses with relief from the high cost of electricity, and targeted affordability payments will support families, seniors, and our most vulnerable. Under this action plan the student loan

interest rate will be reduced and the no-interest, no-payment grace period will be extended to one year after graduation.

With so many families choosing Alberta, additional resources are required for our K to 12 education system. Budget '23 provides \$950 million to ensure schools are well prepared to welcome new students and includes additional targeted funding to provide for the increasingly complex needs of our youth. Budget '23 increases funding for school bus transportation, off-setting rising costs, supporting school choice, and providing a ride for an additional 80,000 students with a new family-friendly distance eligibility. And, Mr. Speaker, with all these new students we need more schools. Budget '23 provides new capital for 58 new schools in planning, design, operating, and construction. When I say "new," I need to say that "new" means schools being refurbished and upgraded as well as brand new builds.

Mr. Speaker, living a life free from the effects of crime should be the expectation of every Albertan. Sadly, this is not the case for some. Budget '23 includes a significant investment into Justice and public safety, with funding to include more Crown prosecutors and support staff to address the backlog, increase capacity, and modernize our courts. Funding is provided for increased law enforcement, more boots on the ground to better fight crime in our communities, both urban and rural. Budget '23 is also providing \$65 million over three years to strengthen First Nations policing. This will fund a new First Nation police service for Siksika and additional officers across the country.

Mr. Speaker, part of investment attraction means making sure we have the infrastructure and systems to meet the demands of growth. With tens of thousands of Canadians making Alberta home, the volume at land titles has been unprecedented. To all the realtors, developers, and lawyers out there: we've heard you. Service Alberta will again receive increased funding to clear up the backlog at land titles and, more importantly, to finally modernize the system.

Speaking of critical infrastructure, keeping communities connected with a road network that supports jobs and ensures the safe and efficient flow of traffic is essential. Budget '23 provides an additional \$580 million for transportation projects across the province with a focus on projects that improve productivity and competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, Thomas Jefferson once wrote that the measure of a society is how it treats its weakest members. I believe that the budget I'm presenting today reflects the true measure of Albertans with care across the province, across ministries for the most vulnerable and those who need a hand up. One hundred and seventeen million dollars will expand mental health services for youth across the province. Budget '23 provides for three new addiction recovery communities, and in Children's Services \$4 million of adoption supports will make it easier for a child who needs a home to become part of a family.

Now, Mr. Speaker, government initiatives and funding are essential in the care of vulnerable Albertans. They are so important, but the measure of our society goes so far beyond government programs. This province was built by people who didn't wait for government. They saw a need in their family or their community, and they stepped out to meet that need. The future of Alberta will in some measure be contingent upon our ability to preserve and foster the character trait of self-determination even in our compassion. There are examples every day from every corner of our province, people like Matthew Potts from Samson Cree Nation, who opened up his restaurant's kitchen to Ukrainian newcomers; like those from an Edmonton youth group who prepared a traditional Lebanese meal and care package for members of Edmonton's homeless community; people like Tylynn Hollingshead from my constituency in Sexsmith, who raised over \$24,000 for the Stollery children's hospital; or 11-

year-old Kennedy Bruno, who started her own T-shirt design business and donated the proceeds to the Ermineskin Women's Shelter. There are thousands – literally thousands – of stories like these across our province, and, Mr. Speaker, it's stories like these that fill me with such hope for the future.

Albertans are generous, compassionate, and intentional, and just like economic investment, when it comes to generosity, government can either be a help or a hindrance to Albertans as they work together to meet the needs in their communities. A good job is more than just paying the bills; it creates conditions favourable for people and families to thrive so they can lend that helping hand to their neighbour, to newcomers, or to those in their community who are less fortunate.

I would like to thank the MLA for Peace River, who brought forward Bill 202, reflected in this budget, which increases the value of the charitable donations tax credit. This is a substantial investment in supporting the generosity of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, in three months Albertans will have a decision to make regarding their next government. As a province we have the benefit of contrasting two very different approaches to governance and the economy, not theoretical or hypothetical conjecture but the actual results of two contrasting economic strategies. Now, I want to be clear. I believe that almost every MLA that comes to this House comes with the intention of making life better for Albertans regardless of which side of the aisle they sit on, but we have to be honest with ourselves and the people we were elected to serve. The NDP's economic management model of raising taxes, increasing regulatory burden, high operational spending, and working to expedite the energy transition in conjunction with Trudeau's Liberals was nothing short of disastrous. It resulted in the flight of billions of dollars in capital, tens of thousands of lost jobs, and perpetual deficits. Our government brought a different approach. Sound fiscal management coupled with tax reductions and reduced regulatory burden have positioned Alberta to lead the nation in economic growth, with a surplus budget, less debt, more and better jobs, and, from my perspective, a whole lot of hope.

Mr. Speaker, 61 years ago my parents came west to Alberta with nothing more than a dream, a big work ethic, and a deep sense of

self-determination, a story shared by so many in this province. They worked hard, sacrificed much, and built a home and a life for their family in a place where opportunities abound, in a province where family, faith, and community are held in high regard. We, the next generation, are privileged to build on that solid foundation and are now working to secure a similar future for those that will follow.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago I sought public office for one reason, to fight for an Alberta that can offer the next generation of Albertans the same opportunities, prosperity, and freedom this province has offered me and my family, the same opportunities for our children and grandchildren, for people like Nick and Jessica, and for those that don't yet call this land their home, the same opportunities for all Albertans.

We've faced some real challenges these last few years, but like those that came before, Albertans have dug in, worked hard, made incredible progress, and I couldn't be more optimistic and hopeful about the future of this province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe Alberta's best days are ahead.

Thank you.

3:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. [interjections]

Okay. I'll take the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I see that you are eager to get out and go report such great news to our constituents. With that said, I do move that in accordance with Government Motion 20 the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 6.

**The Speaker:** I feel like we've been here before.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:51 p.m. to Monday, March 6, at 1:30 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 20]

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## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022-2023)**

**Activity to Tuesday, February 28, 2023**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 cA-33.8 ]

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft.*), 342-49 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 361-72 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve.*), 421-25 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 430-31 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 446-50 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c19 ]

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 325-29 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 375-78 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c23 ]

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 321-25 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 372-75 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 392 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 426-29 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c17 ]

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 314-21 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 392-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 429-30 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c20 ]



**Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 309-14 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 349-54 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 399-408 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 409-21 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 431 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 450-51 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2022 c22 ]

**Bill 7 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No.2) (Schow)**

First Reading — 329 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 378-79 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 398-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 425-26 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c21 ]

**Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft.*), 354-60 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 289-97 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 445-46 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2022 c18 ]

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-303 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205 — Official Sport of Alberta Act (Lovely)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 206 — Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sabir)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 6, 2023

Day 13

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 6, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, I invite you to remain standing. As is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

### Mr. Melvin P.J. "Mike" Cardinal July 17, 1941, to January 12, 2023

**The Speaker:** Mike Cardinal was elected as the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche on March 20, 1989. He subsequently won three elections in Athabasca-Wabasca and one in Athabasca-Redwater, serving five consecutive terms before retiring in 2008.

Mr. Cardinal was the first status Indian to be appointed to cabinet in Alberta. He served as the minister of family and social services from 1992 to 1996, associate minister of forestry from 1999 to 2000, minister of resource development from 2000 to 2001, minister of sustainable resource development from 2001 to 2004, minister of human resources and employment from 2004 to 2006. During his 19 years of service he also chaired the Northern Alberta Development Council from 1997 to 2000.

Mr. Cardinal worked in the forestry industry for over 10 years before moving into the public sector. With an early career in the civil service focused on housing and career counselling, Mr. Cardinal entered public life serving as a member and chair of the Northland school board and as town councillor for Slave Lake. He continued his extensive community involvement on many boards and associations such as the Calling Lake Community Association and the Métis Association of Alberta. Mr. Cardinal said that one of the reasons he got into politics was to find how to improve the lifestyle of northern Alberta and Indigenous communities. With his dedication, he worked tirelessly for his constituents and the people of Alberta.

Mr. Cardinal passed away on January 12 at the age of 81. In a moment of silent prayer and reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Cardinal as each of you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Berlyn Broadhead. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
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.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Member for Edmonton Strathcona's 15th Anniversary of Election

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call upon the Clerk to call for the daily Routine, I want to take a moment to recognize that March 3, 2023, marked the 15th anniversary of the first election of the hon. the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is the first member of the 30th Legislature to reach this milestone. It may also interest you that of the 956 members ever elected to the Assembly, only 104 of them have ever served over 15 years, and as of today the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has served 5,481 days in this Assembly. I invite her to the dais to receive her recognition. [Standing ovation]

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to the members of families who have shared the burden of public office and public service. Today I'd like to welcome members of the Cardinal family who are present in the gallery. I will call each of you by name. Please remain standing until the remainder of the family has been introduced, and we will express our gratitude to you: son Michael Cardinal; daughter Marieka Cardinal; granddaughters Aliyah Cardinal-Mobley and Evelyn Horstemeier Cardinal; grandson River Horstemeier Cardinal; brother Irvin Cardinal; sister Clarice Cardinal; brother-in-law Clarence Cardinal; sister Linda Gladue; and brother Larry Cardinal. Hon. members, the Cardinal family.

Members, also seated in the Speaker's gallery today is a skilled young singer-songwriter from northern Alberta who led the Assembly in our national anthem just moments ago. Ms Berlyn Broadhead is an 18-year-old country singer from the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake who's been nominated for five Alberta country music awards. Thank you, Berlyn, for leading us.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a school group.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce two grade 6 classes from l'école Greenview school, the French immersion – bonjour, mes amis – and the English class. I had a chance to chat with them as well as their many adult helpers. They had great questions, including: have you ever voted against Bill 1, and why? Welcome, and enjoy your time at the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a school group.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also had a group of grade 6 students, from Elmwood school in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Riverview. They're here with their teacher, Lori-anne Bond. I, too, met with them previously, and they had lots of great questions as well. Could they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly 25 grade

6 students of Michael A. Kostek school from my beautiful constituency of Edmonton-South West, led by their teacher, Jennifer Hill, as well as a parent escort that has just joined them. May I ask you all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 33 grades 4 to 6 students from l'école escuela Holy Child school here in my constituency, just a couple of blocks away, so they had a short trip. It is a multilingual school, so I'd like to say to them bienvenu, bienvenido, and welcome, and please accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the other members someone that is close to me, and that is my daughter. If I could ask Amira to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members assembled Diane Richard, who works in the Lethbridge-West constituency office, along with her partner, Shaun Campbell, and her parents, Linda and Marc Richard, in town from Ponoka. I'm so pleased they could come to visit the people's House here this afternoon, and I invite them to rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you it is my distinct pleasure to welcome one of my constituents, Jodi Broadhead, who is the owner of Apex Well Servicing and Avid Energy Services in Lesser Slave Lake, to this esteemed House. Jodi's daughter delivered a beautiful rendition of our national anthem to us today. Please join me in extending a traditional warm welcome to her from our House.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Was the Minister of Finance rising for an introduction?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's an honour for me to introduce to you and through you the mother of one of our staff members from the Premier's office. It's Janet Crnković, and she's visiting from Vancouver today. It's her first time in the Legislature. Welcome, Janet, and please stand for a warm welcome in this Legislature.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a statement to make.

### Budget 2023

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Tuesday the Minister of Finance tabled Budget 2023. It is a good-news budget. I would even say that it's a great-news budget. It is a plan that, if passed, would secure Alberta's future by achieving the priorities of Albertans while ensuring our government lives within its means. Fiscal responsibility matters. It matters for Albertans, their families, and their communities.

Over the past four years our relentless focus on investment attraction, job creation, and diversification has secured our position as the economic engine of Canada. Budget 2023 continues the positive fiscal trajectory with yet another balanced budget, the second year in a row – two years – and a forecasted surplus of \$2.4 billion in 2023 and 2024 and projected surpluses for future years.

But what will this budget mean for you and I, Mr. Speaker? For our constituents, our job creators, and all Albertans it means we are securing the health and education of Albertans by increasing access to family doctors, surgeries, and emergency services by making sure our children and grandchildren have the education system they need to reach their full potential. A new fiscal framework means the next generation is not encumbered with a debt they did not incur. Budget 2023 is securing Alberta's future, a bright future for our children, grandchildren, and communities across the province.

Budget 2023 is a good lesson for the members opposite who are sitting here today. It's worth repeating: fiscal responsibility matters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Health Care System

**Ms Hoffman:** If the current Premier follows the law, the election will begin in 56 days, and we want every Albertan to know that Alberta's NDP will get you the health care you need where you need it, close to home.

The present government wants Albertans to forget the last four years and how much worse the UCP has made health care, but Albertans remember that the UCP chased nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals out of the province immediately after the last election. The Health minister even yelled at a doctor in his driveway. The UCP kicked 40,000 Albertans off the seniors' drug plan. They cancelled the much-needed Edmonton and north zone lab, a lab that would have been a game changer for timely health treatments. The UCP cancelled the child and adolescent mental health centre, saying that there wasn't a mental health crisis. What a slap in the face to every parent desperate for a therapist or teacher needing a student assessment or teenager fighting to make it through the day.

The UCP pushed privatization and chased nurses, anesthesiologists, and surgeons out of public hospitals. You'd better believe that Albertans remember the cruel and hurtful words of the current Premier suggesting that it was their fault if they got stage 4 cancer. The UCP even tried to take insulin pumps away from children with type 1 diabetes, and then there's the current Premier's ongoing plan to make everyday Albertans pay out of pocket to see their family doctor. We just can't trust her with our health care.

The good news is that we have a chance to vote for a government that will protect and improve public health care and ensure that you never have to pay to see your doctor. Albertans can vote for a Premier who cares about them and their family. We can vote for a Premier who believes in public health care, and she actually wants it to serve us all well. We can choose a stable, competent, caring leader. We can elect a government with a plan to ensure that 1 million more Albertans can have a family doctor and a health home. This spring we can stand for an Alberta that works for us all, one with better health care and much better leadership. This spring we can elect Alberta's NDP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has a statement to make.

### Joan Snyder

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in recognition of the life of an amazing woman, a business leader, and a visionary



philanthropist. Her name was Joan Snyder. Joan was a business leader who had a special place in her heart for the University of Calgary and their women's hockey programs. She leaves behind an amazing legacy and an outstanding gift to the University of Calgary.

This amazing donation of 67 and a half million dollars will boost research, student learning, and athletics at the university; \$30 million of the gift went to establish the Joan Snyder program of excellence in kinesiology. It will be used to help change the landscape of chronic and infectious disease research, sports science, and women's hockey. Another \$35 million went to the Cumming School of Medicine's Snyder institute for chronic diseases. This gift will sustain the institute in perpetuity and spark new discoveries. The last of it went to the Joan Snyder program of excellence in women's hockey fund for the benefit of the Dinos women's hockey team. She had actually previously donated \$500,000 to benefit the team back in 2011.

I hope all of my colleagues in this Chamber share the same sentiment and thank this woman and her family for the gift and her legacy she left behind to build a better future for us and our grandchildren.

### The Rolling Barrage PTSD Awareness Ride

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a cause that is very close to my heart, The Rolling Barrage, founded in 2017 by Scott Carey, a Canadian veteran dedicated to addressing an issue that many shy away from. For the past five years, after receiving an invite from Carola Singer, the wife of a veteran and firefighter, I've had the honour of engaging with this amazing organization, which conducts a coast-to-coast motorcycle ride to raise awareness for PTSD in veterans and front-line workers and to combat the stigma associated with it.

As the parliamentary secretary of EMS, the son of a nurse, a paramedic, and veteran, I am acutely aware of the critical role our veterans and first responders play in protecting our communities. The sad reality is that these individuals are at a far higher risk of the impacts to their mental health. The Rolling Barrage aims to assist recovery by raising awareness about the impacts of PTSD through encouraging an open and honest conversation about mental wellness. By doing so, the ultimate goal is to remove the stigma that is associated with mental health issues and create a positive culture of support.

As a supporter and rider for the past five years I have seen first-hand the incredible impact The Rolling Barrage is having on individuals and the communities it visits, but the work is far from done, and there is still much more that we can do to support our first responders and veterans who are struggling with mental health challenges. That is why I'm so proud to continue to support The Rolling Barrage and its mission to raise awareness for PTSD and mental wellness.

I would urge all members of the House to join me in supporting this important cause. By working together, we can create a brighter future for our first responders, veterans, and all those who are struggling with mental health challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, last week this Premier had the gall to get up and claim that there is no crisis in health care. "Everything's

fixed," she said. "Dr. Cowell says so." But today we are learning that's just not true, as if we didn't already know. What's actually happening is that paramedics are being directed to dump critically ill patients off at the ER even if there's nobody there ready to care for them. This is dishonest and dangerous, and it puts lives at risk. To the Premier: is dumping people in hallways her version of fixing our health care crisis?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the member opposite on 15 years in the Legislature. But she continues to spew information that is unverified, untrue, and irresponsible. The e-mail in question – we'll make sure that we get proper information out, but we have been very clear from the beginning. That's part of the reason why we have delayed rolling out targets, not directives, on what the acceptable drop-off time is at hospital. The target is 45 minutes. That's the target across the entire country, and we're going to be striving to achieve that.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the e-mail itself says, "I just found out this information yesterday . . . so I don't have all the details [and] solutions as to how we are [possibly] going to proceed with this in a safe manner." That is really a very good question. Today the Premier claimed she would magically find hundreds of nurses to fill in these spots, yet we know there are 3,400 vacancies in nursing today alone. How is the Premier going to implement this ridiculous plan safely?

**Ms Smith:** Well, there's no magic involved, just the good work of Dr. John Cowell and Mauro Chies, who is our CEO, going out, doing recruitment, and being methodical in putting out the call for resumés. They are systematically hiring 114 full-time equivalents. As we know, there's lots of part-time and casual staff, so it'll probably be more people than 114, but as they get rolled out at our 16 acute-care facilities, we will have off-load teams that are able to accept patients as they're being dropped off by paramedics.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, there are 3,400 vacancies right now, and this is scheduled to start in nine days. Now, meanwhile, this government has starved health care funding going on four years. The budget from last week is still \$1.4 billion short, accounting for population and inflation. Today we have more than 30 communities with bed closures. Expectant parents are driving hours for their babies to be delivered. Emergency rooms with random shutdowns, including the most recent last night in Airdrie. No urgent care. None. To the Premier: what is it about hospitals with giant flashing closed signs . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** I wish the member opposite would calm down and stop giving information out that is incorrect. At the Airdrie urgent care centre last night, I'm told, they did find a doctor, and it was not closed down. Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing in health care is that we are restoring some calm because it has been under stress for the last two and a half years. The calm, stable leadership of Dr. Cowell and Mauro Chies is allowing us to attract more workers back into the system so that we can meet some of these issues of service.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the only person that is calm about health care is the guy who gets to take a limo up to Edmonton for a

meeting. Everybody else just sees this Premier gaslighting them, and it is not creating calm.

### Budget 2023 and Capital Funding

**Ms Notley:** Meanwhile, the people of Calgary also feel let down. They feel that they have been completely insulted as a result of this government putting not one single cent in this last budget into downtown revitalization. When asked why the province snubbed Calgary, the Chamber president said simply: ask the Premier. So, Premier, why the snub?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no snub of Calgary. In fact, let me take this opportunity to talk about the investments that we're making in Calgary: \$541 million over three years for the Calgary LRT, \$429 million for Deerfoot Trail, \$282 million for the Springbank off-stream reservoir, \$166 million for the Calgary cancer centre, \$134 million to complete the Calgary ring road, \$59 million over three years for the Glenbow Museum revitalization – that's downtown; I know you guys don't spend time downtown, so you might not know that that's downtown – \$15 million over three years in the Repsol sport centre . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Nothing for the Calgary downtown revitalization strategy, yet lots of money to hire more political staff to write weird answers.

Here's another fact. This September another 8,000 kids are going to walk through the doors of the public school system in Calgary; 8,000 new students. Yet how many new schools are we building? One. Just one. Mr. Speaker, there are 21 Calgary MLAs over there. Half of them are in cabinet. They all failed. To the Premier: if it's not new schools, what's her solution for class sizes that are too big? Double-decker desks?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the Official Opposition gets their information from. We're building 58 schools, over \$300 million, 11 of which of them are in Calgary. We have got 11 projects, and as the opposition knows . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** . . . there are stages that you go through for the type of development that you have. I can tell you that both the Calgary board of education and the Calgary Catholic board have given us accolades for the amount of investment that we're giving because we followed their capital plan.

**Ms Notley:** One and a half real projects and a whole bunch of pretend ones, Mr. Speaker. That's all they got.

Now, we come up to Edmonton, and we know one of the biggest pressures residents are feeling is health care. The city badly needs a new hospital on the south side to address the rapid expansion of suburban communities. Families live there, all of them needing hospital care, yet once again the UCP government has failed to deliver. No plan to get shovels in the ground for the new south Edmonton hospital: four years of inaction, and now more of the same. To the Premier. I am one hundred per cent committed to building that hospital. Why isn't she?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we are one hundred and ten per cent committed to building that project, and we've demonstrated it with the \$634 million over three years that we have budgeted to put in there. I mean, as the opposition likes to point out, it takes a long

time to build these hospitals. The cancer centre: I think it took 12 years to end up building. We are committed to building this hospital. We have already begun the work on the site. I know more misinformation was given out last week in the Legislature. The site work has already begun. We're going to be servicing the site, we're going to do the design, and we're going to get it done. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her third set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** The site work is not done. I would urge the Premier to drive by there sometime.

### Affordability Plan and Energy Company Liability

**Ms Notley:** Now let's talk a bit about affordability. Despite sending out taxpayer-funded campaign leaflets touting their so-called affordability plan, these programs all start expiring right after the polls close in July. I've seen jugs of milk last longer. No more affordability cheques, no more gas tax relief, no more rebates, and Albertans will have to start paying off their deferred electricity bills. To the Premier: why do big, profitable corporations get permanent annual handouts while families are forced to pay more?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we wanted to make sure that the affordability payments actually didn't have an implication on the election, which is why that they go on after election day is over, which is May 29. May 29 is when election day is over. The payments will go until June 30, and we've said that we'll continue to look and hear from our constituents . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** We'll ask Albertans whether or not we continue to have the pressures. As we all know, leading into a winter season, when you have higher electricity charges, higher home heating bills, higher costs of gasoline and diesel: that's why we've targeted . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason the Premier can't afford a long-term solution for Alberta families is the fact that the money is already spoken for. She wants to hand up to \$20 billion to her irresponsible friends who don't want to clean up after themselves. Every single oil and gas economist has called R-star a bad deal for taxpayers. Even the environment minister said that it violates the polluter-pay principle. Why won't the Premier commit today that no version of this backwards idea in any form will ever be forced onto the backs of Alberta taxpayers?

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the leader opposite – she seemed to like this type of approach when her boss Justin Trudeau gave a billion dollars for site rehabilitation. She kind of likes it when her boss Justin Trudeau proposes a 300 per cent increase in the carbon tax, which she implemented when she was on this side. If she was worried about affordability, she would go and talk to Jagmeet Singh, who is in partnership with her boss Justin Trudeau, and say: do not increase the taxes on Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the only person this Premier is standing up on behalf of is her boss, the very companies who stand

to benefit from this giveaway, who are funding her re-election – they're paying for her ads during the hockey game, for heaven's sake – just as affordability programs for families and the Premier's \$20 billion handout to her funders will start to kick in. This is exactly the kind of corrupt, cynical politics she used to rail against; now it's her bread and butter. Why won't she reverse this program and . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there is no program. All there is is an intention to make energy companies live up to their obligations under the law. For a number of years energy companies have been allowed to have liabilities passed forward year after year, decade after decade. We are searching for a broad range of approaches so that we can clear up what is now a \$30 billion liability. It didn't get addressed when they were in government a few years ago. We're going to address it now that we are in government, and one of the ways that we're doing that is that we are demanding that 3 per cent of liabilities have to be cleaned up every year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her final set of leader questions.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this is about doing the bidding of her donors and nothing else.

#### **Kearl Oil Sands Project Tailings Leak**

**Ms Notley:** Now, last May it was discovered that runoff from the Kearl project was seeping into surrounding muskegs and waterways. At the time Albertans living nearby were given one notice describing discoloured water; that's it. The seepage continued for months, and it was later determined that the levels of arsenic and other pollutants exceeded safe thresholds. Proper monitoring, protecting public safety, and public notice, Mr. Speaker, are among the most basic of government responsibilities in these situations; the UCP failed on all of them. Premier, who will you hold responsible for this travesty?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I hold Imperial Oil responsible. Under the law they are required to communicate to stakeholders. I think they fell short in this case, and I pressed them to not only make sure that the Official Opposition was briefed but also our federal environment minister so that misinformation was not going to continue to get into the media, because the misinformation that was in the media left a lot of people fearful that their drinking water had been polluted. There were no leaks that went into our tributaries, it did not go into our river system, and people need to know that their drinking water is safe.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, she doesn't know that. The investigation is still ongoing.

Between July and November the government had clear evidence that the seepage of arsenic and other pollutants was unsafe, yet no one picked up the phone to notify those Indigenous leaders or their communities about what was happening on their treaty lands. The regulator is now claiming it was up to the company. A pretty sorry excuse; same for the Premier. This is grossly irresponsible. This government knew about it and did nothing. Why is this government so disrespectful of their obligations to honour treaty rights?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there's no justification for any spill, and that is the reason why the Energy Regulator issued its emergency order, and that is the reason why Imperial Oil has been working

diligently to clean it up. If you actually look at the press release today, the 5.3 million litre spill is almost completely . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would like to ask a question, perhaps he can get in line and do so, but until then we'll hear from the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** The 5.3 million litre spill which happened recently is almost completely cleaned up, and they will be having Indigenous leaders on the property over the next two days to demonstrate that cleanup. In addition, they are still working on doing the work to make sure that the additional seepage they found last year is going to be cleaned up.

**Ms Notley:** Nine months, Mr. Speaker, and this government kept the community in the dark. Shameful.

Now, in addition, they also broke their legal obligation to notify the Northwest Territories. In fact, the environment minister from the Northwest Territories said that he was in multiple meetings with this environment minister and was told nothing, further damaging our reputation and our credibility all across the country. To the Premier: how can Albertans or anyone else trust you on anything if you can't even follow the most basic law, the most basic rules, the most basic job of government?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, because I know that the opposition leader has been briefed on this, I also know that she is overstating what actually occurred here. The water did not seep into tributaries. We have testing to confirm that. It did not get into the water system and into the river, so it did not impact drinking water. Our obligation is that when it gets into the tributaries, we do have to make sure that anyone downstream of that leak does get impacted. This has identified an area, so we should have done the extra diligence to make sure that everyone knew it was safe.

#### **Balanced Budgets**

**Mr. Williams:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this year's budget is a testament to the perseverance of Albertans in the face of adversity. With unparalleled world-wide events affecting our country and our province, Alberta has come out on the other side stronger than ever before. The economic stewardship of this Conservative government and this Minister of Finance has led us to introduce again a second balanced budget, and we expect more in the out-years to come. Now, my question to the Minister of Finance. Please tell us, for the information of this House, especially the members opposite: if this government were to continue on the same spending that the NDP would have spent, would we have a balanced budget?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no, and here's why. The NDP increased per capita spending in real dollar terms by \$300 per person over their term. We made it a goal of this government to bring down our spending to align with other provinces. Mission accomplished. We're running a \$2.4 billion surplus. They would run a \$4 billion deficit. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite appreciate the question, as I do.

Now, given that the members opposite are stable and reliable at running deficits and our government is stable and reliable at good fiscal management, could the minister please inform our House, Albertans, and especially members opposite what the cost is to not

balancing the budget, not just in dollars and cents but the human cost to families, to Albertans, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's so much value to bringing responsible fiscal management back to the province. Strong fiscal management is attractive to investors – it attracts investment, it grows the economy, and it creates jobs and career opportunities – but surplus budgets ultimately result in the ability to pay down debt. The debt we paid down last year, over \$14 billion, is saving Albertans \$560 million in debt-service costs this next year alone, equivalent to 4,100 teachers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know even the members opposite are happy to hear that answer, as we all are in this House.

Now, given that difficult events have shaken the world economy in the past and given the irresponsible position that the NDP government left our government in when we came into power in 2019 and given the diligent work that we have done to pursue two balanced budgets in a row through the difficulties of a pandemic and world-wide oil price crashes, can the minister please let this House know what decisions he made in the past that he made now and will make in the future to continue having balanced budgets in this province?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, during the dark days, during the pandemic, during the time of the energy price crash, and during the time of the related global recession we set three fiscal anchors. We would keep our net debt to GDP ratio below 30 per cent. Mission accomplished. We're below 10. We would align our per capita spending with that of other provinces. Mission accomplished. We've aligned this year. We would bring a balanced budget. We did that last year and this year right through the fiscal plan. Mission accomplished. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

## 2:10 Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, Don Braid reports that the Premier is upset with his latest column, pointing out how the MLAs and ministers in the UCP who claimed to be representing Calgary were silent as Calgary and its priorities were ignored in the recent budget. This is the latest from a government that has seemingly dedicated itself to ignoring Alberta's largest city. Since they are apparently unable to identify a single Calgary priority, let me give them one. Will the Premier rise and commit to supporting the full vision of the green line LRT?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear and transparent in Budget '23 around our capital plan, the fact that this government supports LRT expansion in both Calgary and Edmonton. We've been clear and transparent. Moreover, this government has . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Okay. Okay.

**Mr. Toews:** This government has been focused on creating the most competitive business environment, attracting investment, creating jobs, bringing this province back to fiscal responsibility with a balanced budget.

**Member Ceci:** Zero for Calgary downtown is an insult. Given that this UCP government has made it clear that the needs of Calgarians

are not important to them, like when the Premier refused to let the people of Calgary-Elbow vote for their representative and now the laughable claim that not a single minister in this government actually knows what Calgary priorities are, and given that the green line is a critical project to get Calgarians to work, to school, to home, and to families, can the Premier please rise in this House and commit that despite her repeated failings of Calgary and Calgarians the future of the green line LRT will be supported and, importantly, funded?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If the opposition would actually read the budget, they would see that in the capital plan there is funding for the green line. The Calgary green line is actually in the budget, so that's just something that – there's a \$541 million commitment from the province. There's \$674 million from the federal government. This province has committed \$1.53 billion for the Calgary green line, a huge win for all of Calgary. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Member Ceci:** Only one phase, Mr. Speaker.

Given the importance of the projects like the green line to Calgary, given that Calgarians rightly don't trust this government and given the repeated failures to support Calgary when it comes to health, education, affordability, infrastructure, and more and given that the Alberta NDP is committed to serving the needs of Calgary – the future of the green line will be safe under an Alberta NDP government – can the Premier make the same claim?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, we want to talk about Calgary. I can tell you what Calgarians cared about in 2019. It was making sure that we had a pro-growth, free-market, growth-focused government in the Legislature pushing forward for things that mattered most to them. We have a tale of two governments now. Here's their track record: they hiked up the corporate income tax, emptied out the downtown, chased away 183,000 jobs from our province. Now, the member opposite is also known as the worst Finance minister in Alberta's . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite increased the debt by \$51 billion. Now, we are not going to take lessons from them. We're not going to write blank cheques with Albertans' hard-earned taxpayer dollars. We will work with the . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is next.

## Calgary Downtown Revitalization

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me try. Calgary is an economic driver for all of Alberta, yet Budget 2022 allocated just \$5 million to revitalize Calgary's downtown, a figure so small that the CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce couldn't believe it. Worse, Budget 2023 allocates nothing whatsoever for downtown revitalization. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why does this government continue to neglect the needs of our largest city?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the top-of-mind issues for Calgarians are absolutely economic growth, jobs and

opportunity, health care, education, affordability. That is why this fiscal plan commits nearly \$3 billion to infrastructure in Calgary. Please, let me read this list for the members opposite. I hope that they stay quiet enough to actually hear these investments. Mr. Speaker, they are: \$541 million over three years for LRT projects, \$429.7 million for Deerfoot Trail, \$166 million for the Calgary cancer centre, \$134.2 million for the ring road, \$84.7 million for . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this Premier prioritized an extra \$3 million in this budget for her own office and given that this Premier wants to hand out \$20 billion in royalty credits to her friends and insiders and given the desperate need for revitalization of the Calgary downtown core, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs again: does she agree with the CEO of Calgary Chamber, who says that zero dollars for Calgary downtown revitalization is an insult?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, I do just want to highlight a few other capital investments that we're making: \$57.1 million to support continuing care modernization – I can tell you that that matters to seniors right across our city – \$9.5 million to Telus Spark. The list goes on and on. But, again, we can't just write blank cheques. Albertans wanted to see a balanced budget; there have been no specific asks. I know that the members opposite maybe didn't work this way when they were in government, but I am committed to working with the city, with our postsecondary institutions, with our business community to bring business back . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Finance minister once said that the UCP government should do nothing to address office vacancies in Calgary's downtown and given that the Calgary downtown office vacancy rate now sits at 32.6 per cent, nearly double the national average, and given that the Alberta NDP caucus has put forward specific proposals to address downtown vacancies and downtown revitalization, to the Minister of . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Now, this is a new experience for you to be interrupted like this, but when I call order, you can stop, and then I'll give you the chance to re-ask your question once the House has come to order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will she admit that this government has no plan to strengthen Calgary's downtown and never had any intention of creating one?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very rich that the members opposite would actually talk about Calgary's economy because when they were in business, they jacked up taxes on everything that moved, added regulatory burden, joined Justin Trudeau in getting in the way of energy projects. That sent billions of dollars of capital out of the province, tens of thousands of lost jobs, and emptied out the buildings in downtown Calgary. We're turning that around. The economy is booming. Office buildings are filling up. We're bringing relief.

#### Affordability Plan

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that the cost of living has increased due to poor fiscal policies of the federal government. NDP-Liberal carbon taxes have increased the cost of everything. Struggling to keep the lights on is not just a common phrase but a reality for many Albertans. Our government remains committed to

easing this burden by strengthening our economy, creating jobs, and providing financial relief and support to those most in need. Can the Minister of Affordability and Utilities tell the House how the affordability action plan is working to address the financial struggles faced by Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has recovered strongly, but many Albertans continue to struggle under inflationary pressures. Because of our strong fiscal position and balanced budget we've been able to provide substantial relief. Through our affordability action plan we are providing an estimated \$900 per household in broad-based relief alone and additional targeted support for families with children, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans. Broad-based support includes our fuel tax relief, electricity rebates, utility price protection, and more. We will continue to assess . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**The Speaker:** It was a good question. If I could hear the answer, it would be even better.

**Mr. Jones:** As I was saying, we will continue to assess inflation and cost of living and provide support to Albertans that is appropriate.

Thank you.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the newly introduced affordability payments are only accessible to seniors, families with children with a combined income less than \$180,000, and Albertans receiving core benefits such as AISH, PDD, or income support and given that we know inflation is top of mind for many Albertans, can the same minister explain why our government chose to target these specific groups as recipients of affordability payments?

**Ms Hoffman:** And leave half of Albertans out.

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the minister of affordability.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We wanted to ensure that all low- and middle-income Alberta families receive targeted affordability supports because families with children face higher fuel, energy, and food costs as a portion of their total expenditures. We selected an income threshold that was consistent with other family supports, including the federal-provincial child care agreement, and at this threshold roughly 80 per cent of Alberta families, including all low- and middle-income Alberta families, are receiving targeted affordability supports. The top 20 per cent highest earning families are excluded, unlike other provinces. We also know that seniors and vulnerable Albertans are on lower incomes, often fixed, so we wanted to make sure they got those benefits as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for his ministry's excellent work in implementing this program. Given the clear need for this program within our province

and given the anticipation and excitement the announcement of this program has caused, can the same minister tell the House how many individuals have accessed this program and what other savings Alberta households have seen as a result of the affordability action plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of today over 1.1 million Albertans have successfully enrolled and received affordability payments, including over half a million Alberta children. I'm pleased to report that our affordability action plan is working. Albertans are seeing significant cost reductions and savings, and inflation has eased more in our province than every other province in Canada. Albertans will save between \$200 and \$400 just on gas and diesel from January to June from the fuel tax relief. Nearly 2 million Albertans are receiving up to \$500 in electricity rebates until April 2023, and we're saving families between \$450 and around \$600 per month in child care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a question.

#### Child Care Access and Affordability

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I often hear from families in my riding about the rising cost of living. Recently constituents again are raising concerns about the struggles parents are having with finding child care. Some daycares are asking families to pay a nonrefundable fee of up to \$700 in order to be placed on a wait-list. Now, families are already paying more for basics like groceries and gasoline under this government, and of course that's due to rising inflation, but they don't need additional barriers when it comes to trying to provide for their children. Can the Minister of Children's Services please explain why these operators are allowed to charge excessive wait-list fees and why families are being left in the dark about decisions?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's not entirely accurate. We have been working very closely with our daycare providers to find a delicate balance that allows for affordable daycare in this province to remain affordable, and that's exactly why we've been monitoring the prices in this province. We've been imposing a number of different restrictions on daycare operators to ensure that daycare fees in this province remain affordable. I'm pleased to announce that daycare in this province has decreased down to an average of \$22 per day, and we're slated to get to a \$15-per-day daycare fee in this year.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dang:** Given that this minister knows very well that families have to sign up on five or six lists sometimes, which means that there's a predatory wait-list fee, and given that this government claims to be focused on affordability, given that families in my riding are struggling to pay the bills while this minister is out campaigning instead, will the Minister of Children's Services create a formal policy preventing child care operators from charging these predatory, nonrefundable wait-list fees to Alberta families?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we've been working with all daycare providers in this province, whether they're not-for-profit or are private operators, to ensure that they have a viable and sustainable and long-term commitment in this province. What we've done is that we've introduced, or we've been

able to release, 1,600 new spaces very recently. We have a number more that are coming through the channel. We're reviewing them quickly for eligibility, and I'm pleased to say that you'll see a number of new daycare spaces available right away.

**Mr. Dang:** Given that nothing the minister has said today does a thing for families in my constituency and given that this government is willing to give away millions of dollars in corporate handouts to oil companies and given that this government is not supporting a child care program that actually works for parents, who, when they return to the workforce, we know provide hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity, what is this government doing to ensure that child care providers are adopting ethical practices and not taking advantage of Alberta families?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I find it funny that the hon. member talks about daycare operators in this province as though they're their enemies, and that's exactly what they did when they introduced their failed pilot program back when they were in government. We do not choose between winners and losers in this province when it comes to operators. We will not waver when it comes to protecting all operators in this province, and we'll continue to respect parental choice and make it accessible for all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### Kearl Oil Sands Project Tailings Leak

*(continued)*

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start this question by expressing my support for the people of the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations and Fort Chip Métis as they deal with the impact of the spill and discovery of a leak from an Imperial Oil facility onto their territory that went on for months without the local communities being adequately informed. This is unacceptable, a violation of the treaty rights of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation that could have long-lasting impacts to the land and the health of the people who rely on it to live. Why did the Minister of Energy fail to inform First Nations and Métis of this threat to their health?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety and environmental protection are always the number one priority. Always. Protecting our waterways and our environment, our wildlife always comes first. We've been assured by both the Alberta Energy Regulator and Imperial that no drainage fluid, no water, no substance reached the tributaries. Nothing went into the waterways. It's being remediated and cleaned up. That said, communication needed to be better, and it will be.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that leaving this community in the dark about a leak like the one at Kearl put people's lives and livelihoods at risk and chief and council are requesting its members to throw out the fish and wildlife that were caught since May 2022 and given that while the Minister of Indigenous Relations has found time to tweet about the budget but no time to tweet about the failure of health and safety, given that our caucus has been working with the people and leadership of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations to offer them our support, has anyone on that side of the House done the same? Have they finally picked up the phone almost a year late?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was very clearly an obligation and responsibility of the project, of Imperial, to have notified those First Nations. That said, we are looking at improving and enhancing some of the processes and procedures within the Alberta Energy Regulator to make compliance orders align with environmental protection orders, which require communications plans and require notification. Clearly, there needs to be a better communications plan.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that this crisis requires the government to take action to address the health and environmental concerns and as well to honour the rights of the community impacted and given that the affected communities were not informed for months about this leak, meaning that it could take a long time before we know the full impacts, and given that the municipality of Wood Buffalo has stopped drawing water from Lake Athabasca, meaning there is a limited supply of drinking water, what steps is anyone on that side of the House taking to get accountability for the people affected and the communities who were failed by this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's an ongoing investigation by the Alberta Energy Regulator. We've been briefed, as has the opposition, that no substances released reached the drinking water, no substances reached the waterways. Our water system is intact. They were briefed on that themselves, but don't let the facts get in the way of a good story with the NDP.

### Rural Health Care

**Mr. Reid:** As a rural Albertan and as the MLA for Livingstone-Macleod I am all too familiar with the need to improve rural health care for constituencies like my own. Rural farmers and families are the backbone of this province, and they deserve an EMS system that responds quickly to every emergency, no matter the time or place. To the Minister of Health: please tell the House what the government has been doing to improve EMS wait times and to ensure that rural Albertans get the help they need when they call 911.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As noted by the hon. member, each minute is critical in responding to a 911 call. As part of Alberta's health action plan we are constantly fine-tuning our efforts to improve times. In communities over 3,000 residents, as we noted in the 90-day report last week, we reduced the response time by more than two minutes. That's a 10 per cent improvement. In rural communities under 3,000 we've seen a response that's nearly as significant. In remote communities we've seen another 10 per cent improvement, chopping 10 minutes off the response time. We'll continue to work at it till we get it down even more.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the demand for health care services in many constituencies, including mine, has outpaced supply and given that the government of Alberta remains committed to ensuring that rural Albertans and their families stop

experiencing doctor shortages and long surgical wait times, can the same minister explain to this House what programs and strategies they have in place to attract physicians and health care workers to rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. As part of our strategy to attract health care workers, we are using training, using international graduates, both nurses and doctors, and we are actually having success at this point in time. AHS has recruited 28 physicians to rural Alberta and added 278 more registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and health care aides since November. In addition, EMS has added 39 front-line staff, including paramedics and emergency communications officers, over the last three months in rural areas, and we're going to continue to add staff.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, thank you and to the minister, through you. Given that the RESIDE program commenced in 2021 to give more family doctors the opportunity to start their careers in rural Alberta and given that in 2022 the Ministry of Advanced Education created over 2,400 new seats in nursing, health care aide, and paramedicine programs at postsecondary institutions across our province, can the Minister of Advanced Education explain what their ministry is doing to help regional postsecondary institutions in delivering medical education to improve health care services in rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member said, you know, in the last budget we allocated approximately \$30 million to create 2,400 new spaces – that's in nursing; that's in paramedicine and health care aides – and we're continuing that in this budget. In fact, this budget contains \$95 million to support growing our health care capacity. That will allow us to create 2,500 additional spaces, again, in high-demand programs, in health care, in nursing, and in other areas. As well, as the Minister of Health mentioned, we're also working to support internationally educated nurses to support that capacity.

### School Construction

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, education is a path to a better life. It's the foundation upon which our society is built, and it brings growth, opportunity, security, and prosperity to Alberta families. Every child deserves to learn at a comfortable, safe school with well-supported teachers who are teaching a future-focused curriculum. However, the current government has failed on all accounts. Why don't they care about growth, security, and prosperity for the next generation of Albertans? Why have they failed Alberta students and families so much?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again, a ludicrous statement from the member opposite. In fact, when I started as Minister of Education, we had a budget of \$8.223 billion. Right now we're at \$8.8 billion for the upcoming school year, and \$1.8 billion over three years is what we're investing in operating capital. School board reserves have never been this high. We started at \$268 million in 2019; they're now over \$400 million. I could go on and on, and I can't wait to school the NDP tomorrow.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that public, Catholic, and francophone student enrolment for Calgary and the surrounding area is at record rates and given that the current Premier, Education minister, and the

entire UCP government have failed families needing public, Catholic, and francophone schools, it's embarrassing that the minister is pumping her own tires over there while only funding the construction for one new school for the entire city of Calgary. Why has the UCP failed the Calgary families of Redstone, Rangeview, Walden, Carrington, Saddle Ridge, Cornerstone, Shaw? The west end needs a high school.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again the member opposite has not done her homework. During our time we have announced 106 schools: 58 in Budget 2023, 48 previously. Do you know what the NDP did during their time? Forty-seven schools. Forty-seven. In Calgary alone the NDP announced 11 schools. We've already announced 18 schools in Calgary alone. I could go on and on. I can't wait to school them in estimates tomorrow. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Hoffman:** They like announcements, but they only funded one, Mr. Speaker.

Given that I could have kept going – the list of communities that the UCP is ignoring in Calgary is long, and it's growing – and given that this year alone Calgary Catholic and public schools have 8,000 new students and given that the UCP's fake pre-election budget only funds one construction of a school, that's 900 students, it's clear that Calgary families are being left behind by the UCP. So where does the minister want to bus the 7,100 students who have chosen public, Catholic, and francophone education? Let me guess: private schools?

**Member LaGrange:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite doesn't even recognize or know that private schools only get 70 per cent funding and no dollars for capital, which is not what she wrote in a letter recently.

I'm going to quote Laura Hack, the CBE chair.

On behalf of CBE students and their families, we thank the Government of Alberta for the capital plan announcement. These extraordinary and timely investments in infrastructure are vital to support student learning opportunities within our system.

Calgary Catholic, the Calgary board of trustees, is grateful for the capital projects announced in the Calgary Catholic school division, which includes full funding for a K to 9 school in Nolan to serve these rapidly growing . . .

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

### Energy Company Liability

**Member Irwin:** Lately I've door-knocked in Red Deer, Camrose, Beaumont, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, all over Edmonton and Calgary, and I can tell you that Albertans everywhere tell me they're furious about this UCP government's plans to give billions away to profitable oil and gas corporations to clean up the messes that they're already legally obligated to deal with. Governing is about priorities, and this government has their priorities all wrong. How can the Premier possibly look Albertans in the eyes at a time when so many are struggling? How can she justify giving taxpayer dollars away to her corporate cronies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities is rising.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Companies are required to meet an annual, mandatory closure spend quota; \$700 million is earmarked for this work just this year alone, and I'm pleased to report that 15,000 wells were cleaned up last year. The Minister of

Energy and his department are currently exploring an additional liability management incentive program, but it's a program that's still under development, and it requires further engagement and consultation with affected groups like Indigenous, industry, financial institutions, landowners, and municipalities. We look forward to releasing additional information in the near future.

**Member Irwin:** Given that \$20 billion is not pocket change – let's put that into perspective – \$20 billion is over \$13,000 that could be given to each and every Albertan; \$20 billion that could fund 23 new hospitals; four-year tuition for over 900,000 students; the maintenance of Alberta parks for 232 years. Need I go on? We can see who this Premier's priority is, and it sure isn't Albertans. Will the Premier start listening to Albertans and not to the people who paid for her leadership campaign? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, no decisions have been made. There was simply consultation on an additional liability incentive program that's under way. This \$20 billion number confuses me; it's not in the budget. Perhaps it's the \$20 billion of investment that the NDP chased out of Alberta in a couple of years. Perhaps it's \$20 billion that they took from our children and grandchildren and put in our debt for them to repay. I think the NDP are in unfamiliar territory – it's called a surplus – and they're uncomfortable. So I recommend that the members opposite support our energy industry, as we do, and we'll make sure they fulfill their legal . . .

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

**Member Irwin:** Given that this \$20 billion giveaway is a huge insult to the most vulnerable Albertans and that this government continues to talk a big game about standing up for domestic and sexual violence survivors, can the Premier tell me how she can give billions to her friends and insiders yet refuse to give mere millions to the organizations doing the vitally important work to support survivors? How can she possibly justify the fact that survivors face months-long, even year-long wait-lists to get any sort of supports while her pals can just say the word and get billions? Unbelievable.

**Mr. Luan:** This government has stood firmly. We condemn all forms of violence and hatred. There is no room for such in our province. Mr. Speaker, all Albertans, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, should feel safe and welcome in this province.

### Agri-processing Investment Tax Credit

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP attacked agriculture producers with their infamous Bill 6. Our government recently introduced the Alberta agri-processing investment tax credit, which provides a 12 per cent nonrefundable tax credit to entities that invest \$10 million or more in Alberta's agriculture processing industry. Food manufacturing is a foundational industry in Lacombe-Ponoka and all of Alberta, and encouraging the expansion will bring further prosperity. My question for the ag minister: how significant is the food manufacturing industry within Alberta's economy?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Happy to talk about something as positive



as this agri-processing tax credit. I think it's going to have a great impact for the province. We believe that it will bring in 35 per cent incremental investment. You know, this has so many great, cascading impacts from jobs to communities to doing more with the food closer to home. We're all worried about our food and where it comes from. And you're right, sir: the NDP is still spreading misinformation regarding agriculture as early as last Friday. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka is the only one with the call.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given the already substantial economic contribution of the food manufacturing industry to Alberta and given the increasing demand for food across the world, which is only going to expand, and given Alberta's strong position to incorporate and embrace further growth in this industry, to the same minister: please tell the House how many jobs and how much economic growth this industry is projected to create for Albertans in coming years under this tax credit.

**Mr. Horner:** In 2021 agrifood industries employed 58,000 Albertans, with 36,000 in primary agriculture, 22,400 in food and beverage manufacturing industries. We set targets for the agrifood investment and growth strategy to create 2,000 jobs and attract \$1.4 billion in new investment. We hit those targets at the midway point of the term. I can tell you that the targets, going forward, will be exponentially higher. We're talking 9,000 jobs and \$5 billion in investment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the projected growth of this industry, as just spoken about, and given its potential to create good, strong jobs for rural Albertans in particular and given the recent introduction of the agri-processing investment tax credit, can the minister tell us who should apply for it, how they should apply, and what are the parameters for them to qualify for this agrifood tax credit?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, first off, the bill has to be passed, so I'm hopeful that we can get that done this coming month. But companies are already reaching out to our department to ask about details, and those will be coming. A lot of excitement about what this can mean for the province. Companies are already telling us that this will be a difference maker and that it will be what lands them here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a statement to make.

#### Hearing Loss and Primary Health Care

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. World Hearing Day is held on March 3 every year to raise awareness on how to prevent hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care. Research shows that untreated hearing loss is a risk factor that contributes to isolation,

loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline. The Alberta seniors population is growing at the fastest rate of any demographic. With age our hearing may decline. Ensuring that seniors have access to assessment and treatment is essential. By making ear and hearing health part of primary care, hearing loss may be detected early and treatment can be provided.

Primary care providers support the day-to-day health needs of Albertans through every stage of life and are best placed to refer patients for hearing tests. Audiologists and speech and language health professionals have specialized training to assess and treat a broad range of hearing and balance disorders and play an important role in primary care teams.

The Alberta NDP knows the importance of primary care, and that is why we created the proposal for Family Health Teams: A Plan for Modernizing Primary Care. We conducted a review of existing team-based care models in Alberta and other jurisdictions and found that they increased access, quality, and continuity of care. They decreased administrative burden and allowed doctors, nurses, and allied professionals to focus on caring for patients. At a time when our acute-care system is overwhelmed, investing in preventative services is needed. Sadly, the UCP government has instead cut funding, and 300 speech and language pathologists lost their jobs just before the pandemic began.

Since the UCP was elected, the number of speech and language pathologists and audiologists has decreased, which means more Albertans are not able to access these preventative services. This is one of the many reasons acute care is overwhelmed. The UCP has made several decisions that have created ongoing chaos in health care. Albertans can find information about hearing and hearing loss on MyHealth Alberta, and an audiologist can be found by calling Health Link at 811.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has a statement.

#### Recover Inc.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon is a microcosm of the entrepreneurial spirit that is Alberta today. I want to bring to the attention of this Legislature a company called Recover that speaks to our modern, environmentally responsible oil industry. Recover is working to advance the western economic corridor, and the western economic corridor was established to create jobs and attract investment through economic diversification in partnership with the county of Brazeau.

Recover is an Alberta-based clean tech company that has developed a solvent extraction technology that recycles oil-based drilling fluid used to drill modern horizontal wells in North America. When using this drilling fluid, the energy industry creates oil-based drilling waste, and despite using this fluid for over 40 years and investing hundreds of millions of dollars, industry had not yet found a viable method of recycling the waste stream until now. Recover has developed a solvent extraction technology to recover the hydrocarbons and recycle them back to the industry for continued reuse. Beyond the creation of a new recycled product, they have avoided biodegradation emissions, and they have reduced environmental liability of the waste going into class 2 landfills. Recover is also providing immediate cost savings for the operators that are using their technology.

The concept of Recover began in 2008. By 2018 the Lodgepole facility was completed and was turned over to a full-time operation in November of 2021. Since that time Recover has accepted more than 40,000 tonnes of oil-based drilling waste, recycled more than 40,000 barrels of hydrocarbons, and avoided up to 68,000 tonnes of

GHG emissions. Recover is the perfect example of how Alberta's oil industry develops and uses cutting-edge technology to generate wealth while addressing the need to be environmentally responsible.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies and Corporations

**Mr. Barnes:** I rise today to share some thoughts from the conservative heartland, concerns that are not being reflected by this government's budget. You see, Alberta's government has a dirty little secret. Despite all the talking points and press releases this government has been steadily veering into the realm of Ontario-style corporate welfare. We have been pumping billions of taxpayer dollars into risky investments, subsidies, and other forms of corporate welfare. In fact, I've been told by government partisans, folks with little real-world business experience, that this is the way the world works and that Alberta needs to get in the game.

This is exactly what various Ontario governments have been preaching for more than a decade now. How has this worked out? The price of electricity in Ontario has doubled. Most manufacturers not dependent on the government have fled, and this year Ontario will receive \$421 million in equalization. Ontario's failures are taking down the national economy as well. The OECD predicts the wage growth in Canada will be dead last amongst its 40 member states for the next four decades. Simply put, Ontario is not how the world works best.

There is a much better alternative. In fact, it was tried and proven here in Alberta under Premier Ralph Klein and led to the creation of the Alberta advantage: the lowest unemployment in the country, the fastest growth, and complete elimination of provincial debt. The government got out of the business of being in business. They reduced subsidies and corporate welfare and focused on broad-based tax relief for both families and businesses. That is the proven path to success, and, Mr. Speaker, it made Alberta exceptional.

Friends, we can do it again. We can drastically raise the basic personal exemption on income taxes and give working folks a fighting chance. We can eliminate the small-business taxes and level the playing field so Main Street can compete with Bay Street. We can create an economy where families can get ahead, where success is based on what you know, not who you know. We have done it before, and we're good at it. We can make Alberta the most free and prosperous place in North America.

2:50

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act, sponsored by the Minister of Justice.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? Seeing none – oh, the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of screenshots of e-mails sent from a hospital concerned about the change in EMS policy and the potential impact to patient care.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an e-mail written by a unit manager at the Foothills medical

centre emergency department stating that starting March 15, critically ill patients will now be off-loaded by paramedics in 45 minutes or less, regardless of whether there are available health care workers on-site at the hospital to take over their care. They state this comes as a big shock. They're not sure how their unit will be able to manage this, but it has been mandated by government.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act Alberta College of Paramedics 2021-22 annual report, College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2021-2022, College of Dental Technologists of Alberta 2021 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

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

#### Bill 203

#### Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022

[Debate adjourned December 12: Mr. Feehan speaking]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to rise this afternoon, getting a chance to speak to more private members' business, something we don't get a whole lot of time to do in this Legislature. While we said it'd be nice if we, you know, maybe had a few more hours with which to debate private members' bills, especially if we actually got an opportunity to debate some of the opposition private members' bills – unfortunately, we haven't seen a whole lot of that, but thankfully there's more than just opposition MLAs in the House. We've got some government-side MLAs bringing forward private members' bills, so at least we'll get a chance to talk about those.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Of course, specifically, this afternoon we do get the opportunity in which to discuss Bill 203, Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022. You know, maybe I'll go out on a limb here a little bit, Madam Speaker, that I don't think there's any member of this House that has served, currently serves, or will serve in the future that doesn't think that road safety is an issue. I think there are always ways to make our roads safer, always ways to ensure that speed is left in check, and that when drivers are, shall we say, going a little bit off the rails, there are mechanisms in place with which we can deal with those situations.

Now, obviously, it's been a little bit of time since we first started to be able to debate Bill 203, so it's probably, you know, a little bit prudent to talk about some of the things that are going on here, some of which were talking about how fines are going to be dealt with with regard to excessive speed. Some of the suggestions that this makes – as we know, private members can't make any specific kind of money requests and whatnot, which, of course, this doesn't necessarily do, but at the very least it gives us the opportunity to talk about these sorts of things.

One of the things I'm always interested in hearing about – and I do realize that private members don't have the same resources that are available to them that, for instance, the government has available to them around consultation. But has the member been able to suss out, with his communications with different organizations and whatnot, around some of the changes being proposed in Bill 203 even as far as: can they even be implemented effectively? I've always said that, you know, we can come up with all the ideas, but if the individuals can't actually implement those, then they're really quite useless.

One of the things that, I guess, stood out a little bit about the bill is around stunting. It seems to be a little bit broad around what stunting is, and I believe it's British Columbia that has done a little bit more work around that. You know, perhaps once we get into committee, we'll get the opportunity to hear some further answers to questions that we'll be posing along the way here, but I'm wondering if there was any inspiration that was gained from there, because kind of comparing the two, it seems a little lacking here. I think there was an opportunity, maybe, for some duplication of the language that was a little bit more robust around stunting.

Going back to around some of the consultation end of things, I know that dealing with traffic safety can be complicated – there are a lot of variables involved – but what kind of feedback did the Member for Calgary-Falconridge get around what they heard from municipalities? You know, did they get any feedback from Calgary or Edmonton or Red Deer, Grande Prairie, things like that? I have a feeling that, you know, if the member had placed some calls, I'm sure there would have been a very big willingness to share some of that information that could be used in drafting some of the legislation. I'm wondering what's, kind of, been heard around that. Was there any contact made with the Rural Municipalities association, Alberta Municipalities association? What was the feedback there?

I think another critical stakeholder that we could have reached out to, of course: maybe some of the chiefs of police. I know there are certainly some inside routes that maybe the member could have gained access to, you know, be able to get in touch with chiefs of police, but that's another discussion entirely and not related to Bill 203 here.

Another question I'm kind of curious about, flipping through some of the language here. We've seen a threshold that was set at 80 kilometres or less instead of less than 80 kilometres. I guess, how did we land at that point? Was it just arbitrary, or was there some kind of feedback that we were hearing that, you know, the problem starts at 80 kilometres an hour, and that was what informed some of the language that's in there?

I know that currently there are provisions right now that the police do have access to around dealing with things like careless driving, street racing, again, one of the things that I had alluded to earlier in my remarks. You know, what kinds of things was the member hearing around why we need to take a more aggressive approach or a different approach other than what we have right now and making speed limit changes on highways and freeways? I certainly hear from my neighbourhood here in Edmonton plenty of street racing, I can hear going on off in the distance right in the municipalities themselves, which, again, ties back to maybe: what did you hear from some of the major municipalities, and how could that inform provincial legislation? Essentially, you know, what was the inspiration to bring this bill before us to look at this? Was there some kind of public feedback that the member was hearing about? Or it could have been from colleagues as well which prompted this type of legislation coming forward.

3:00

You know, all the other provisions in this section of the act, 88 and on, are not subject to the review provision in section 35 for the

seizure or immobilization of a motor vehicle. I'm curious why the member chose to allow this new seizure provision to be subject to review. Again, I realize that we'll get a better opportunity to discuss this in Committee of the Whole, when we're able to go back and forth. I'm just trying to pose some of these questions now for the member to get the opportunity to be a little bit prepared to try to get some of these answers when we move along there.

What other inspiration were you able to garner from other jurisdictions, not only around this seizure but other aspects? Again, I made reference earlier around the definition of stunting. What B.C. offers: you know, pretty reasonable language there. Could we have implemented some of that in this bill, and maybe why did the member choose not to do such a thing?

I should refer back, because I know that in the Second Session of this Legislature there was another private member's bill that would have increased the maximum speed on highways to 120 kilometres an hour on nonurban highways. Of course, if this was adopted, transition fines, seizures would be possibly more likely, so what kind of connection is there?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Great. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022. I'd also like to thank the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for bringing this important safety-focused bill forward. Also, thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Decore for his comments and what sounds like some fairly positive views of this bill.

I believe this private member's bill is a very thoughtful and well-reasoned and well-considered initiative, and I strongly support any move that makes our roads and our province safer for all. I'm hopeful that this bill will be unanimously supported in this Legislature. The safety of Albertans should be top of mind for all of us, Madam Speaker.

Bill 203, as was referenced, proposes that all drivers caught speeding with more than 40 kilometres per hour over the limit in a speed zone of 80 kilometres per hour or less face the same penalties as those given for stunting. Quite frankly, as we see people speeding around, the intent that they have actually is stunting. It just happens to be with their foot a little harder on the pedal. This bill also proposes a change to increase the penalties for stunting to an automatic seven-day licence suspension, a fine of up to \$5,000, and a possible seven-day impound of vehicles. I think these are pretty strong measures and will act in the way that they are meant.

If passed, this bill would help to impose some of the strongest penalties and indeed deterrents, which I think is the approach we are taking here across North America – we've heard reference to some of the other initiatives in British Columbia and Ontario – but the real objective here is to aim to curb street racing, stunting, excessive speeding, and other dangerous driving habits, particularly within residential areas across the province, in urban, suburban, light commercial, and retail settings, where speed limits are typically below the 80 kilometres referenced, and to do so in a deterrent through fines, penalties, and the other measures that were referenced as well, seizures and other opportunities.

Madam Speaker, this bill would act as a material deterrent for reckless drivers, who by their actions endanger the lives of Albertans, by punishing those who continue to flaunt existing laws despite the obvious risks, dangers, and consequences. These people are flaunting existing laws, and we obviously hope that they will pay attention to the higher deterrent level that's brought in here. I wish we had made this change long ago; we could have had this

conversation. Again, I thank the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for championing this, and I know it's an issue in his community, as he has referenced in some of his previous comments on this particular bill.

I'm proud to say that our province now has some of the lowest road fatality rates in Canada, but it's not good enough, Madam Speaker. Even though we have a high degree of responsible drivers across this province – and I know many of us spend hours and hours, sometimes too many, on the highways – this lower fatality rate is something we can improve upon and must work to reduce. Remember that every fatality in this province is someone's child or grandchild, sibling, parent or grandparent, and we must do all that we can do to ensure that we create deterrents for this reckless and deadly driving behaviour. Those types of behaviours on our highways and roads are not okay, and such reckless actions must be stopped, and strong deterrents as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Falconridge are indeed key to us moving forward with this.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to share some relevant statistics that highlight the impact on the lives of Albertans of the current irresponsible operations of what I think are vehicular weapons used in an egregious manner. Between 2015 and 2019 76 per cent of injury collisions and 85 per cent of property collisions occurred in urban areas, in areas typically where those speed limits are 80 kilometres or lower.

According to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police 40 per cent of speeding drivers were between the ages of 16 and 24. Yes, they are new drivers, which means that they may not have the skills, but also there seems to be a little bit of testing of the limits in those age groups. Also, that age group is most likely to be a casualty in a collision, and 80 per cent of young adult passengers who were killed in a car crash were being driven by a similar-aged individual. That is what we hear all too often, that passengers in vehicles being driven irresponsibly become unwitting and innocent victims of this.

In 2019 22.3 per cent of fatal collisions involved drivers travelling at unsafe speeds, again referencing this deterrent, and out of 132,000 collisions, 120,000, or approximately 90 per cent, involved property damage; 11,700 nonfatal injuries; and fully 215 – yes, 215 in 2019 alone – led to fatalities. Again, that's somebody's child, grandchild, sibling, parent, grandparent.

Madam Speaker, this is why it's imperative, indeed our responsibility, I believe, in this House to pass this bill. Our youth and young adults are the most impacted by dangerous behaviour such as racing, stunting, speeding, and other bad driving habits, both inside and outside of the vehicles involved, some inside and unwittingly becoming a part of that and some being struck, obviously, on our roads and highways. We need to do everything in our power to protect our younger generations, and we will achieve this by holding the irresponsible drivers amongst them accountable for their actions and putting clear penalties in place as a deterrent to this behaviour.

With this bill we have an opportunity to make our roads safer – again, I'll reiterate that: safer – for all Albertans: children, youth, young adults, families, the drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and workers that we all have the honour of serving in this Legislature and who all, Madam Speaker, have the right to return home to their loved ones safely each and every day.

These increased penalties were suggested by the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, right from the highest level, with the intent to save lives, so this bill should not be taken lightly when the intent of it is recommended by those that, sadly, bear witness to carnage on our streets.

In fact, I think this bill is long overdue. Other provinces have strengthened, as referenced by the Member for Edmonton-Decore, the regulations surrounding unsafe driving habits, one example

being the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act, which was passed in 2021.

Further, this bill would demonstrate that this Legislature and the government of Alberta are prepared to take joint and strong action to protect young drivers, families, and vulnerable road users by introducing new, impactful, life-saving, and property-protecting legislation. It's not just lives and it's not just injuries but a lot of property damage, whether that's the vehicles themselves or that in many cases we've seen vehicles go off the roads, strike houses, and there's been not only damage, but in some cases there's been injury associated with that.

Madam Speaker, the safety of all Albertans is a priority for us in this Legislature. We should take that seriously, and we're committed to making our province safer and life better for all Albertans, and this is an opportunity for us to exercise this by voting for this bill.

Through this bill I'm confident that we can reduce the rate of accidents. I think that's one of our objectives here. Again, in addition, this bill will increase awareness of responsible driving habits, setting new standards of driving behaviour and acting, as we referenced, as a deterrent. The clear intent and value of this bill is to effectively strengthen the consequences for irresponsible, law-breaking drivers in Alberta. It is a minority, Madam Speaker – a minority – but that irresponsible behaviour must be dealt with, and we need to remind them of their accountability for their actions.

3:10

The results of adherence to this new law may have the added impact of reminding them of the importance of not only their own safety but also that of the many innocent people impacted by their reckless and lawless actions and that we support in this Legislature being tough on such deadly crimes.

Madam Speaker, I fully support the letter and intent of this bill, and I urge all members of this Chamber to join in common cause in the timely passage of Bill 203, the excessive speeding penalties act. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 203 in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to join in debate on this Bill 203. I thank the previous speaker for some of those comments – they echo what I would like to share briefly with you all – as well as my colleague from Edmonton-*Decore*, who addressed this bill just prior to the previous speaker.

I wish that I was in the House for the introduction of this bill by the mover, Calgary-*Falconridge*, but I wasn't, and I, unfortunately, didn't take the opportunity to see the . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I'll take this opportunity to remind you that we don't talk about presence or absence, even if it's yourself, in this Chamber.

**Member Ceci:** All right.

I wished I would have had the opportunity to review *Hansard*, Madam Speaker, to find out what at the time the Member for Calgary-*Falconridge*, when they introduced the bill, was saying. I bet there would have been some personal reflections about why this is important, because I know that, regrettably, in our home city of Calgary there have been, with far too many young people, injuries on the streets of Calgary and, regrettably, also with emergency service personnel, particularly police, who have been involved with stops of individuals on streets who have taken off and caused a loss of life.

Like the previous speaker, I do think that our roadways, where they are 80 kilometres an hour and under, or what he described as in urban areas, are the scenes of many of these stunting infractions, infractions that, regrettably, as I said, take the life of people who may not be thinking clearly about what they should be doing in the vehicle. You know, driving is a privilege in this country – it's not a right that you can drive – but if you abuse that privilege and drive at excessive speeds, speeds that call into question your judgment and speeds that, unfortunately, can have negative impacts on people in the car and on themselves as the driver as well as people outside of the vehicle, then that privilege should be suspended, and we should find ways to ensure that the legislation appropriately deals with this situation.

The way Bill 203 is talking about dealing with that, as has been mentioned earlier, is around taking the licence away, increasing the fine for that individual who was operating the vehicle. Those are two methods of increasing the current penalties that are put in place. We need to do those things because not everybody takes their responsibility in a vehicle the way they should. You know, the thing that I'm aware of that my constituents are concerned about, of course, is when speeds change on roadways and they aren't paying enough attention to the whole situation. I can remember that there are areas, in not exactly my riding but adjacent to it, where people have complained a great deal about the change from 70 kilometres to 50 kilometres, that it seems quite sudden to them. Many people, unfortunately, get tickets because they're – they used to get tickets. Once they have gotten them, they don't anymore because they're paying greater attention. But they worry and they've expressed a concern to me about situations like that, where they feel they're being unfairly targeted.

I hear people in those situations, but I don't typically show them a great deal of empathy because they have to be aware of their surroundings, what they're doing at all times when they're in, as a colleague across the way called it, a weapon that potentially could be harmful to many people if the cars and vehicles aren't operated appropriately.

The issue that my colleague and I would like to bring up and repeat and may have been brought up before is around the issue of stunting and the robustness in this bill of that definition. My concern, our concern, is that if it's not a robust, complete, comprehensive definition in the legislation as proposed, then there can be some muddiness in terms of its application. We believe there can be a better definition of stunting, a more robust definition so that problematic behaviour can be properly understood by law enforcement officers and legislated or in the courts the decision will be clear that a stunt occurred in that place.

I'm glad to hear that the Association of Chiefs of Police was part of the feedback with regard to the recommendation of changing this bill and improving it because, unfortunately, very often officers in their forces are putting their lives on the line in many cases. We know of situations where officers have been, regrettably, injured or struck down by vehicles that were stunting or trying to evade capture. The bill before us – I'll just open it up again – does have a definition of "Immediate roadside sanction: stunting." It goes on to explain how that sanction can be meted out when a stunt occurs.

When I look at the Motor Vehicle Act in the province of B.C. that is in place now, the definition of stunt is explained there. There is (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), so that's six different criteria under which a stunt can be seen to occur, and any of those six criteria, if they are, I guess, broken – not broken. If they occur, they can be the subject of action by police personnel with regard to the driver of that vehicle. I think that's something that I and my colleagues would like to see considered in this bill and will be the source of an amendment coming forward in the future when we get to that point.

The additional consultation – and I think certainly the chiefs of police are known experts in this regard, but it would have been useful to know if additional consultation took place and what the outcome of that was. As I said, I didn't have the benefit of reading *Hansard* on the original proposal of this bill, and it very well may have been in that. I can do that subsequent to this debate.

3:20

I think the only other thing that I wanted to address: I just agree with the focus of this bill being around the safety of people, not only the person who is driving but all of those who potentially could be impacted. We certainly need to have the privilege of being on the roadways a safe one for all drivers, and if some are not following that, their actions need to be corrected with things like this.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 203 in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 203, brought forward by our colleague from Calgary-Falconridge. Thank you to that member for this.

Madam Speaker, it's an unfortunate fact that every day across Canada, including Alberta, of course, people tragically lose their lives as a result of unsafe driving. Sometimes, of course, those who perish do so as a result of their own unsafe driving, and at other times they are the victims of other people's poor decisions. I'm sure it could be a different reason for every particular case, but I'm sure that sometimes people are just not thinking; sometimes they're being reckless; sometimes, I'm sure, they might have gotten a new vehicle and want to see what it will do. Of course, as we all know, that's not what these public streets and roads are for.

This heartbreaking reality is something that we as elected officials should think about. Vehicle stunting is defined, as I understand it, as a criminal act that does not only endanger drivers but other Albertans who may be on the roadways or near the roadways. They could be walking; they could be cycling; they could be doing any number of things. But the fact is that lives are put in danger due to this behaviour.

We need to protect the people of the province from what are needless, preventable traffic collisions. I won't call them accidents because I believe that any time someone is stunting, it's not an accident; it's a bad decision. In this place, this Legislative Assembly, we have an opportunity to act, and that is why my esteemed colleague from Calgary-Falconridge brought forward Bill 203, which proposes, obviously, to strengthen the penalties for stunting in Alberta. That would be that reckless drivers are more thoroughly deterred than they are now from endangering themselves and others and they are deterred with more severe punishments than are currently in place.

Alberta, as I understand it, is in this regard lagging behind other provinces when it comes to pursuing more severe penalties for vehicle stunting. Other provinces have previously strengthened their laws and penalties around these crimes. This is an opportunity for us to follow up and make stunting a crime that has stronger deterrents in the future than it has up till now. If passed, Bill 203 would increase the maximum fine for stunting to \$5,000 and introduce a seven-day licence suspension for anybody caught stunting. Now, I can tell you that there would be the option of a seven-day discretionary impound to be decided by law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is a deterrent that is strong. I know from my time – I've done a couple of tours now as transportation minister during my time here – that a seven-day suspension of a

licence and the potential taking away of one's car is a strong deterrent. In fact, even when changes were made a couple of years ago to have more of the impaired driving offences go through administrative penalties rather than criminal penalties, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and other organizations were very much in favour of that. You might say: well, why would an organization like Mothers Against Drunk Driving want to go a penalty route that's not criminal? Well, the fact is this. It's not about making criminals out of people; it's about people being incented not to do the dangerous thing in the first place.

There's something about human beings. Many times, Madam Speaker, people like instant gratification and they dislike the opposite of gratification, instant penalties. There's something, I suppose – I don't know; I'm guessing to some degree, but I don't think I'm probably completely wrong – that makes people think that if they do something terrible but they get back home with their own vehicle that night, they can have time to think about it and maybe do better or get away with it or something. There's something about that immediacy of arriving home and having to explain to those that you live with and love that you no longer are in possession of a driver's licence that is a strong deterrent.

You might in this case maybe not be in possession of your vehicle either. That's assuming that you were stunting and didn't crash it. Now, if you crashed it, of course, you may not have your vehicle anyways, but even if your vehicle is in great condition and law enforcement caught up with you, the fact that you don't get to present yourself at home with a driver's licence and a vehicle is a strong deterrent. I expect that's why the author of the bill has included that in there, because they're trying to take this particular offence very seriously.

These things really happened. There have been high-profile incidents in both Calgary and Edmonton. Both cities, by the nature of them being large cities, are oftentimes, particularly in the summer, plagued with stunting and street racing, and that creates avoidable collisions. At the beginning of September an Albertan was killed in a single-vehicle crash that authorities believe to have been the result of a street race. More recently, in October, two vehicles crashed on the High Level Bridge in Edmonton here, two vehicles which were believed to be involved in a street race.

The saddest thing, again, about the crashes like these is that they are one hundred per cent avoidable. They cannot reasonably be described as accidents. They are the result of bad decisions, irresponsible decisions by people with driver's licences that ought to know better, probably do know better, have just made a bad choice, and those choices can have such serious consequences, which is why we're here today talking about this now as making greater penalties for those serious consequences.

One of our priorities here as elected officials is ensuring the safety of Albertans, and this bill could improve that safety across our province. I'm proud to say that despite incidents like we're talking about here, as mentioned by my colleague on this side of the House, Alberta has the lowest road fatality rate of any province in Canada. Most Albertans are committed to road safety, and they know that acting responsibly is good for not only them but those they love and those they have never even met before. Everybody is safer when people make good decisions.

It's important that people that make those bad decisions are held accountable. These licence suspensions, the discretionary impounding of vehicles: it is hoped, and I believe it will be somewhat the case, that that will be a strong deterrent. It's not only a strong deterrent from the fact you won't have a driver's licence, but of course there's a social stigma about not having your driver's licence and being found guilty of really a dangerous and reckless act, really demonstrating a lack of care

for other people's lives and livelihoods. The deterrence is important, Madam Speaker. Increased fines will help with the deterrence.

As said before here – I think the member across asked a question. It was a good question. He said: were the chiefs of police consulted? My notes here say that they were, that this was actually requested by the Association of Chiefs of Police. That is what I've come to believe and understand. So there's an answer to what I thought was a pretty reasonable and good question.

3:30

And, of course, who better to consult, as the hon. member across said, than those that dedicate their lives to keeping the rest of us safe, those that put themselves in harm's way, and those that, unfortunately, have to see first-hand the terrible, terrible results of bad behaviour, that have to show up at the crashes, that have to see people in pain or dying and sometimes have to go to a home of a victim and explain and announce to that victim's loved ones that the person doesn't live anymore? Not just not live there anymore but doesn't live at all anymore. I just can't think of a worse way to make a living than having to do that sometimes, and of course . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and join in debate for the first time in this session of the Legislature to debate Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

Certainly, questions around speeding and bad behaviour with vehicles are something that fairly regularly cross my desk as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre. Here in downtown there are some tempting locales, shall we say, for folks to engage in some of the kinds of behaviours that are being talked about in this bill. Of course, we have the River Valley Road, which runs just below us here at the Legislature, a nice, long, gently curving stretch of road along the river valley. It leads up to Groat Road, another nice, curving, canyonesque road, which is just outside my constituency but certainly not far from the windows of some of my constituents. And, of course, on the other side here we have 104th Avenue, which again is a multilane, nice, long stretch of road where, unfortunately, on weekends and late at night there are some drivers who like to use that as a bit of a speedway.

So it's not unusual for me to receive correspondence from my constituents raising concerns about noise late at night from street racing and other activities like that here in Edmonton-City Centre, and of course it was referenced by one of the other members earlier: the crash on the High Level Bridge. Certainly, it's not that unusual to hear of or see the pictures in the newspaper or hear on the radio of somebody who has had a crash either with another vehicle or run into a telephone pole or jumped the barrier on one of those roads. Certainly, I recognize the damage that a vehicle can do, and, you know, as has been noted by some of the other members, this isn't just about protecting other vehicles on the road; this is also protecting cyclists, pedestrians.

Mr. Speaker, I spent many years as an avid commuter cyclist. I admittedly don't cycle commute nearly as much now as I used to. I used to ride right through the winter. I did that for many years, indeed during my first term as an MLA. It's one of the things you can do, I guess, when you live in a downtown constituency and with the excellent bike network that has been built here by the city of Edmonton in the downtown and the other trails that are available. But, certainly, I spent a lot of time riding in other parts of the city, too, before that network was built, and, I can tell you, if you want

to come to understand what the power and the weight of a vehicle actually is, you know, and what speed is actually like, being on a bicycle in the middle of a roadway as vehicles are zipping past you educates you on that fairly quickly. So, certainly, I came to have a healthy respect for the impact that a vehicle can have and the damage it can do, and, you know, whether on the seat of my bike or behind the wheel of my car, I have seen poor behaviour by drivers.

Admittedly, Mr. Speaker, I'm not completely innocent myself. I've had my share of tickets as I've made my way from Calgary to Edmonton and back. At times here in the city I've gotten my own share of photoradar. But, certainly, what we are talking about in this bill are not the kinds of general tickets or occasional bad behaviour that I think we all as drivers have at times endured though I will admit that my father, during his time, was an adamant respecter of speed limits. My father in his entire life never once got a speeding ticket. He was absolutely scrupulous about obeying the speed limit. Not all of us have that level of patience and integrity.

But all that to say that, certainly, what has been brought forward here by the Member for Calgary-Falconridge does resonate with me. For the reasons I've noted, I think it's reasonable to have appropriate penalties to encourage people to engage in better behaviour on our roads and have penalties that indeed reflect the potential damage that can be inflicted by choosing to engage in some of these behaviours, behaviours, again, Mr. Speaker, that we are talking about here that are beyond the pale, and indeed I think that's what we should be focusing to ensure that this bill does, that it focuses on those extreme behaviours.

Now, one of the concerns that has been raised is that we do not have a clear definition here of stunting, so I think it is important that we consider that, and I understand that one of my colleagues may be considering bringing forward an amendment to that effect just to provide clarity. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we recognize the great importance of law enforcement and the need to give them some discretion in how they do their work and to trust judgment, but at the same time we want to ensure that when we are imposing significant new penalties, we are very clear about the behaviours that may be encompassed within that.

As has been noted, there is B.C. legislation which is similar and which does talk about stunting. It talks about the occasions where, you know,

- (a) causing any or all of the motor vehicle's tires to lift from the road surface;
- (b) causing the motor vehicle to lose traction while turning the motor vehicle;

so intentional skids,

(c) driving . . . in a manner to cause the motor vehicle to spin; so your doughnuts, which I understand people were fond of doing in parking lots and that sort of thing as teenagers. I never did have that occasion. I was perhaps not quite that daring.

- (d) driving the motor vehicle in a lane intended for oncoming traffic for longer than necessary to pass another vehicle;

Certainly, I've seen that kind of behaviour. Indeed, we do have difficulties at times with people deciding that they don't want to drive around for a block, so they take a shortcut through the local bike lane.

- (e) slowing or stopping the . . . vehicle in a manner that prevents other . . . vehicles from passing or in a manner that blocks or impedes other motor vehicles;
- (f) without justification, driving as close as possible to another motor vehicle, a pedestrian, or a fixed object.

Certainly, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say, at times as a cyclist I did experience that behaviour, where drivers, frustrated that they were temporarily behind a vehicle that did not move as quickly as them, would literally drive right up behind my back tire.

Indeed, I know cyclists who have had vehicles tap them from behind, whether at a stop sign or in motion.

I think those are all very appropriate things that would be included, perhaps pieces that could be considered, then, in coming up with our own definition for an Alberta piece of legislation as to what is considered to be stunting.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I'm certainly in support of addressing issues with excessive speed. I know for myself, you know, I've made that trip up and down the highway between Edmonton and Calgary increasingly often as there seems to be something coming up on the horizon which seems to require more presence in the city of Calgary. Certainly, I continue to see quite regularly on those trips that there are at least one or two vehicles that feel the need to be driving 20 or 30 or 40 kilometres an hour faster than the remainder of the traffic, and we know the serious damage that can do. We've had members of this Legislature who have lost their lives on that highway.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So, certainly, I'm in support of having an additional and appropriate penalty in place for drivers, whether or not they are engaging in stunting activities, if they are in fact driving over the maximum speed limit, and in this case it is about driving 40 kilometres or more over a posted speed limit that is 80 kilometres an hour or less.

Now, I certainly do appreciate the concerns that have been raised by some other members about the potential impacts that this could have in certain areas where you do have that rapid adjustment of a speed limit, so we need to be very careful, I think, with this legislation to ensure that we are not creating a situation that would create more opportunities for what is sometimes colloquially known as fishing in an area where, say, the speed limit on a roadway, highway drops quite suddenly from a higher limit to a lower limit and then a speed trap is set just right at that line, so somebody who doesn't quite slow down in time ends up paying a fine.

3:40

Certainly, that's not the kind of behaviour that we want to incent, and we know that kind of behaviour does little to actually address the real issues around speeding. Indeed, during our time in government we worked to try to put some limits on how photoradar in particular was being used in that respect, so I think it would be worth some conversation – and perhaps we'll have that opportunity during Committee of the Whole – to look at how we can ensure that this piece of legislation would not add additional opportunities for that sort of revenue raising, shall we say.

There could be the opportunity here, I guess, for some more consultation and consideration to ensure we are covering all of the sorts of activities that might fall under stunting or that are concerns. You know, certainly . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Every day across the country people tragically lose their lives as a consequence of unsafe driving. Sometimes those who perish as a result of their own unsafe driving are some drivers testing the limits of their vehicles in attempts to impress their friends. This heartbreaking reality is something that we as elected officials should do more to prevent. Vehicle stunting is a criminal act that does not only endanger the drivers themselves but all other Albertans who use the roadways where these crimes are being committed.

In order to protect the people of this province from needless, preventable traffic accidents, we must act. Therefore, I am pleased to support the private member's Bill 203 introduced by the MLA for Calgary-Falconridge. This proposed bill would strengthen the penalties in place for stunting in Alberta so that would-be reckless drivers are more firmly deterred from endangering themselves and others while those who still violate the law are punished more severely. Alberta, quite frankly, is lagging behind other provinces when it comes to pursuing more severe penalties for vehicle stunting. Other provinces have rightfully strengthened their laws surrounding these crimes.

It is time for us to follow suit to help to prevent any more needless injuries or deaths. If passed, Bill 203 would increase the maximum fine for stunting to \$5,000 and introduce an automatic seven-day licence suspension for anybody caught stunting. Additionally, there would be the option of a seven-day impound to be decided by law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

The time to implement these more severe penalties is now. In the past few months alone there have been high-profile accidents in both Calgary and Edmonton, the two cities plagued the most by stunting and city racing, that involved avoidable collisions. At the beginning of September an Albertan was killed in a single-vehicle crash that authorities believe to have been the result of a street race. Even more recently in October two vehicles crashed on the High Level Bridge here in Edmonton, both of which were involved in a street race. The saddest thing about crashes like these is that they are entirely avoidable. They're caused by drivers there, and our top priority as an elected official is ensuring the safety of Albertans. It is my conviction that passing this bill would greatly improve road safety in our province. I'm proud to say that despite incidents like I have previously mentioned, Alberta has the lowest road fatality rate of any province in Canada.

Most Albertans are committed to road safety as they know that acting responsibly on the road keeps us all safe. A notable exception to this rule involves those who stunt, race, and otherwise drive dangerously. It is so important that these people receive the punishments they deserve when they commit these crimes. Through mandatory licence suspensions and vehicle impounding drivers who commit these needless, dangerous acts will be prevented from doing so again in the immediate future. Their friends will hear about their fines and suspensions and will think twice before ever going 40 kilometres over the limit in the city.

Deterrence is extremely important, Madam Speaker. It is much better if we prevent drivers from doing this in the first place than it is to give them serious penalties. On top of this, the increased fines will further contribute to deterrence so that these drivers will not act as dangerously again after their licences and vehicles are returned to them.

As stated earlier, this bill would bring Alberta's penalties for stunting more into alignment with other provinces. Ontario's stunting penalties are similar to the changes proposed by the bill. Additionally, these increased penalties have been requested by the police chiefs' association. Those who have committed their lives to protecting Albertans in all areas of life, not just on the road, believe that increasing the severity of these penalties will improve road safety. When organizations like the police chiefs' association make requests like this, I as an elected official do not take it lightly.

When these drivers engage in stunting, they endanger themselves and others in their silly attempts to impress their friends or show off. Albertans can be severely injured or even killed. These drivers need to learn to respect the power they have when they get behind the wheel. Without more severe penalties for acts as dangerous as stunting and street racing, these drivers may continue to take these unnecessary risks. If a driver is caught stunting and receives the

penalties outlined in this bill, they will be far less likely to commit these same acts again.

Preventing the perpetration of criminal behaviour works to increase community safety and to prevent death or injury that may have occurred if the penalties were less severe. Taking every reasonable step we can to keep Albertans safe is our top priority, and these penalties will increase public safety. If these penalties were not seen as effective, then their implementation would not have been called for by the police chiefs' association. By ensuring that the penalties surrounding stunting are proportional to the crime, all Albertans will be made safer. This includes young drivers who may be tempted towards recklessness, other drivers who expect their fellow road users to behave safely, and the pedestrians who walk along our roadways.

3:50

The problem of stunting and street racing is particularly bad in and around my constituency. Calgary experiences a notably higher rate of these crimes, and my constituents deserve to be safer when using their communities' roadways. While a higher number of these crimes may be seen in my constituency, stunting is still a problem that can affect any community or roadway within this province.

Madam Speaker, I am asking my fellow members to consider my words thoughtfully. Our first duty to our constituents is to ensure their safety, and by passing this bill, we can make Alberta's roadways that much safer. I believe that the implementation of increased penalties for stunting is extremely prudent, and I would be surprised if any members in the House disagreed with the idea that stunting and street racing are dangerous crimes that may be addressed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Members, we have three minutes before I will ask for the mover to close debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With only three minutes, I will enter into debate very briefly on Bill 203, the Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022, and I'll be pleased to speak for a brief amount of time on this only because I know how much this has impacted Alberta families when lives have been lost due to excessive speeding, due to stunting behaviour. So often this impacts the young people involved, the age group typically impacted being 18 to 24, or innocent bystanders who are injured as a result of the excessive speeding, as a result of the behaviour that is unsafe.

We see headlines every now and then because it makes the news when someone is going 123 kilometres per hour in a 50 zone or someone is going excessively fast, whether it's on a highway or within our city streets. As some of my colleagues have talked about in this House, we all know where those streets are that tend to draw stunters, that tend to draw people speeding excessively. Just at the end of last year there were crashes on the High Level Bridge that were blamed on excessive speed.

So we know this is happening, and in this case Bill 203 seeks to limit this behaviour by putting in stronger penalties as a deterrent against these activities happening but also as a lesson that will hopefully spread through friends of those people who are fined when that does come to pass.

I am pleased to say that I will support Bill 203. However, we hope that at committee an amendment can be considered because the current Traffic Safety Act really only refers to the word "stunt" in two places, in section 115(2)(e) and (f). What we find is that when we look at comparable legislation in British Columbia, there's a



great deal more detail, and I think there's something to be said about being very explicit and capturing everything . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time has come for the hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge for up to five minutes to close debate on second reading.

**Mr. Toor:** I'd like to stand to close the debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Schulz
Amery	Lovely	Shepherd
Ceci	Milliken	Sigurdson, L.
Dach	Nally	Singh
Getson	Nielsen	Smith, Mark
Glubish	Orr	Stephan
Gray	Pon	Toor
Horner	Reid	Turton
Hunter	Rowswell	van Dijken
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jean	Savage	

4:10

Totals: For – 32 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 203 read a second time]

**Bill 204**

**Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022**

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased today to be able to rise and to speak to Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. In 2017 I had the pleasure of introducing in this Chamber Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act. This private member's bill was patterned on the Amber Alert system and would enable a notice to be issued when a senior citizen or other adult with cognitive impairment, a mental disorder, et cetera, had gone missing. The Assembly passed the bill, and it received royal assent; however, it was never proclaimed.

Before I move on to explain why it was not proclaimed, it's perhaps important for us to look at and just review for a second what an Amber Alert is and what this was based on. When I originally introduced private member's Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, it was an attempt to bring forward the benefits of an Amber Alert to seniors who had gone missing.

An Amber Alert is a message activated by police to alert the public when a child or an adult with a proven mental or physical disability is abducted and at risk of harm. Now, these alerts are broadcast on radio and TV stations and social media platforms, cellphones and other devices. This tool is used by police to solicit help from the public in finding the abducted individual, and an alert is issued if all four of the following criteria are met: a child or an adult with a proven mental or physical disability has been abducted,

the child or adult is in danger of serious harm or death, there is enough descriptive information to enable the public to identify the individual, and there is a reasonable expectation the abductee could be returned or the abductor could be apprehended. Now, in issuing an Amber Alert, the information permitted for dissemination includes descriptions of the suspect, abductees, vehicles, et cetera; abduction details, when, where, how the abduction happened; locations, the last possible location of the suspect or the abductee; and directions the suspect may be travelling. A silver alert would follow this pattern of an Amber Alert.

However, while private member's Bill 210 was passed, it was never proclaimed, and when the United Conservative Party became the government in 2019 and I was re-elected, I then went to the minister of seniors and asked why it had never been proclaimed. It took some time, and my question went from the ministry of seniors to eventually the Ministry of Justice, where finally it was explained to me that in drafting private member's Bill 210, there was a conflict between the Missing Persons Act and private member's Bill 210 regarding the release of private information that was concerning to the Ministry of Justice.

Under the current Missing Persons Act, section 7(3), the act authorizes police to,

for the purposes of furthering its investigation into the whereabouts of a missing person, release . . . the following information collected under [the Missing Persons] Act

through media release or posting on a website:

- (a) the missing person's name;
- (b) a physical description of the missing person;
- (c) a photograph of the missing person;
- (d) information about any medical conditions of the missing person that might cause imminent risk;
- (e) pertinent vehicle information;
- (f) the place that the missing person was last seen;
- (g) the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing person.

In section 2.1(4) of the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, it lists the same types of information for relief as section 7(3) of the Missing Persons Act; however, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, also allowed police to use information collected independently of the Missing Persons Act. This could mean that police would be disclosing information that they did not collect under the Missing Persons Act and which is not subject to the retention rules or other provisions of the MPA. This oversight was concerning enough that private member's Bill 210 was never proclaimed and therefore was unable to help missing seniors.

When I was drawn for another private member's bill, this time private member's Bill 204, I was resolved to bring forward amendments that would address the concerns of the Ministry of Justice so that a silver alert would be able to help seniors that have gone missing in our province. I started by meeting with the ministry officials, trying to decide what was the best way forward. Some felt that rather than amending the Missing Persons Act, a stand-alone bill would be the best way forward. However, after much discussion and with the help of both sides both inside and outside of the Ministry of Justice, it was determined that we would be best off with some simple amendments within the Missing Persons Act that would best address the privacy concerns.

At the same time, I held many meetings with stakeholders across the province to determine if any other amendments would make for a better bill. I met with many stakeholders from the Calgary Police Service; the Edmonton Police Service; the Alzheimer Society; Carya Calgary and the Dementia Network; the seniors' council of Edmonton; Dr. Lili Liu; Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing

Association; Mr. Allan Rae, a senior with lived experience; the office of the Privacy Commissioner; and the Brenda Strafford Foundation. Based on their input, some additional amendments were added into private member's Bill 204, so Bill 204, should it be passed, will harmonize the Missing Persons Act and the silver alert amendment act and add some additional inputs that will make a senior alert an effective tool to help find seniors that have gone missing. To resolve some of the privacy and jurisdictional concerns that have been raised with the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, Bill 204 will address the privacy issues and add a few additional suggestions brought forward by the stakeholders that we've talked to.

Section 2.1 of the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, will need to be repealed by Bill 204 and integrated within the existing section 7 in the Missing Persons Act, and this will ensure that the same privacy rules will apply to police, whether they are issuing a media release or making a website post or activating a silver alert. To avoid any possibility of unintentionally constraining a police service, the new provisions being added to section 7 of the Missing Persons Act state that the power to issue a silver alert in no way limits or constrains a police service with respect to other missing persons. In other words, these powers will be additional and do not replace what already exists.

A proposed regulation-making power has been added to section 14 of the Missing Persons Act to ensure that if additional rules or processes are required for a broadcast agreement to function properly, the Lieutenant Governor in Council has the authority to put those in place.

There are some additions under definitions of seniors that give police, via the public safety ministry, the authority to issue silver alerts where there is an active investigation under the Missing Persons Act.

Finally, silver alerts are to be geospatially limited to lower the risk of alert fatigue. On the advice of stakeholders, a senior will be defined as someone who is 55 years or older in order to address the early onset of Alzheimer's.

In 2017 the original private member's Bill 210 addressed the very real problem of how we can best protect and reasonably act to protect a senior who has gone missing and is believed to be at risk. This Legislature understood at that time the need to provide police with the ability to have another tool in their belt when it comes to a missing person that is a senior. Private member's Bill 204 will address some of the pieces of this conversation that were missed and could have created some confusion regarding the private information that could be shared and now harmonizes a silver alert to the privacy of information expectations of the Missing Persons Act.

4:20

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 senior population is projected to be about 1 million people. This number will continue to grow, and by 2041 it is projected that 1 in 5 Albertans will be 65 years or older. Combine this reality with the understanding that a decline in cognitive functioning is associated with aging and that the risk of dementia doubles every five years after the age of 65, and we can now better understand why some of our seniors are at risk of going missing.

In Calgary the Alzheimer Society estimates that more than 13,000 Albertans are living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia in that city alone. For every person diagnosed with Alzheimer's or related dementia, 10 to 12 people are directly impacted. These would be family members, friends, caregivers. In

addition, the Alzheimer association indicates that 6 out of 10 people with dementia will wander at some point in time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 204 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to join debate on Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. Certainly, like the member said, way back in 2017 this bill was brought forward, and it's a clear example – at that time the NDP was government, and I was the minister of seniors, and this is a clear example of a sitting government, the NDP at the time, working collaboratively with an opposition party, and certainly we worked with the member, and we did pass this bill back in 2017.

But, as the member explained, it never received proclamation, and that was due to the bill giving powers to the police that were not in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. So the bill had to go back to the UCP caucus and make sure that the drafting was corrected, and I understand now that this is what the hon. member has done, and this bill is now addressing those issues and making sure that it's in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. The UCP have done their homework, I guess, to make sure that this bill is appropriate. It's not contravening any other legislation, and it is now before the House again for members to debate and discuss.

Certainly, we in the New Democratic caucus here, now in opposition, as we did when we were government, support the silver alert bill. We think it's an important bill, that people who are aged – I guess it's 55-plus now. We've redefined what a senior is, and – guess what? – I'm a senior under that one. You know, usually our age is 65 for seniors, but this bill says 55. I'm 62, so I'm well within that range, and I can be supported if someone calls a silver alert out on me. I'm grateful for that.

**Member Ceci:** I'm dialing now.

**Ms Sigurdson:** You're dialing now. Oh, no. I may not be able to finish my debate part here.

Anyway, I guess I wouldn't mind just sharing another – besides being within the range of people who can have a silver alert put out on them, I think this would have been something my father would have benefited from, actually. My dad passed away last summer. He was 93 years old. In his later years he was diagnosed with dementia, and on more than one occasion he did come home with a police escort because he didn't know where he was and he'd lost his orientation. You know, it was usually fairly quickly, the same afternoon. Luckily, there was nothing that happened that was too egregious when Dad was confused and didn't know how to get back home.

Certainly, I think that this could support so many seniors to be well cared for, and if there is a time when they do get disoriented and don't know where they are, how to get home, those kinds of things, this legislation would indeed support them, support their communities to give them more resources to collaboratively work together to make sure that seniors in our community are safe.

Certainly, we know that currently in Alberta we have 700,000 seniors in our province. That's the fastest growing demographic, actually, in Alberta, and seniors are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. But certainly as we age, we may have cognitive decline. Sometimes we are, like my father, diagnosed with dementia, so having the supports in place for our ever-growing seniors population is extremely important. As I've said before, I stand in support of this bill and that we want to make sure that if people are out in the community and they get disoriented, don't

know where they are, there are supports around them so that they can be brought home safely.

You know, I guess a question I might have for the member bringing this forward is: how come it did take almost the whole mandate of the UCP government to bring it forward? It would have been good to have it come earlier; it was 2017 when it was first introduced, so this is several years later. I think this is legislation that could have supported seniors much earlier, so I do wonder about that.

I guess another question that I have, too, is that, sadly, under the UCP government so many services for seniors have been cut or not responded to, and we know that the very first thing in 2019 the Seniors Advocate office was cut. That was something that provided advocacy, support for seniors in our province, and the UCP – that was one of the first things they cut in 2019. You know, it is troubling that there are programs that have been cut. This would seem to be a significant delay in this legislation being brought forward even though it was supported by both sides of the House.

Of course, another egregious thing that the UCP cut right away was the income support program for seniors, the Alberta seniors' benefit. They deindexed it, and of course this was at a time when we had record inflation, lots of . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just maybe a reminder to get back on the subject matter in the short time available to members, Bill 204.

**Ms Sigurdson:** This is certainly about services to seniors, and, you know, certainly this bill is providing safety for seniors to make sure that they are supported. But I would say that there is also a lot of connection with the Seniors Advocate office, that it provided safety and advocacy for seniors in many areas, and seniors could be supported, too, with income support programs that met inflation. So that was a significant support for them.

We know that many programs do receive government funding that support seniors, and, you know, the grants program was also slashed by more than \$2 million under the UCP government. This meant that seniors living in community – and we all know that that's such an important thing, that seniors age in community, and I think this silver alert bill does talk about supporting people to age in community. I guess, very similarly, the investment in grants to senior centres also is something else, so I feel that these are very similar, and these were cut also under the UCP watch.

We know that seniors in our province are absolutely making significant contributions to our province, to our society, and we're wanting them, for sure, to be as safe as possible, and that's why we in the NDP caucus certainly do support this bill, but we just see that there should be much more robust services around seniors. It feels like the UCP, immediately upon being elected, did actually roll back many programs that supported seniors. So, you know, I just stand in concern of that and wanting the UCP to go further down this road and reinstate the Seniors Advocate. You have now reinvested in indexing the Alberta seniors' benefit, so that's a very positive step forward.

4:30

I guess I have some questions for the member about this bill. What are the potential costs associated with the system, and how much time would be needed to assess those costs? With the existing Amber Alert system and sort of working together with the silver alert system, will there be enough support, enough infrastructure to work collaboratively and make sure that for everyone who has sort of the misfortune, really, of having to call for a silver or an Amber Alert, those programs are sufficiently resourced so that Albertans

can access them? Of course, this is always in a very timely manner. These are emergency situations, when someone doesn't return at perhaps the designated time that they told their loved ones. You know, emergency services people have to work very quickly, so do we have enough support? Certainly, we know that there are many challenges in our health system, our emergency system right now, so things are overwhelmed. We want to make sure that we have those resources and that support and investment in those programs is done.

There are also certainly concerns about older adults' right to self-determination and privacy . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. Thank you, all, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, and I promise I will stay just on the topic here. We all have senior citizens in our life, and of course they are near and dear to us, and then those that we have lost far too soon. We have also all heard the sad stories about somebody's loved one wandering off from the facility, the care home, and then getting lost, and far too many have resulted in a senior being injured, particularly in this extremely cold weather and unfamiliar areas, that can easily result in frostbite setting in within a matter of minutes. In real-world scenarios there have been far too many cases of these seniors passing away and then not being found in a significant period of time, if at all.

This really breaks my heart, Madam Speaker. This is somebody's parent, grandparent, mother, father, sister, brother, husband, or wife. As recent as last week a missing 72-year-old senior not too far from my riding, Calgary-Beddington, in the Scenic Acres community was found dead after being reported missing five days prior. One can only guess that if there was a system in place to notify as many people as possible in the general public, this man could have been found and saved. Sadly, this is one of the so many sad stories where often seniors have accidentally found themselves in a state of danger.

This is why, Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear about private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, put forward by my colleague the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. If passed in this House, Bill 204 will make a key change to 2017's Bill 210, which also would have otherwise granted police powers in disclosing information and then not connecting in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. This wasn't the intent of the original bill, and Bill 204 acts to fix it. The silver alert system created by Bill 204 creates a comparable system to the highly efficient Amber Alert, a program to quickly issue an alert to the general public when senior citizens or other adults with a medical disorder go missing.

Like the amber system, that has saved countless children from dangers, harm, death, the silver alert would broadcast alerts on the radio and television stations and social media platforms and cellular phones and all the other devices, et cetera. So when the police supports the public safety authority, there will be an active investigation under the Missing Persons Act. This will also allow for police to ensure there were agreements, whether through broadcasting or through other means, to make sure the alerts are geographically limited when applicable to prevent Albertans not in the affected area from getting a notification that doesn't apply to them. Amongst other situations, this would apply to, particularly, a localized area where the senior went missing and is considered in danger.

Madam Speaker, this is just another example of the well-thought-out legislation that our UCP private members have brought forward

in the 30th Legislature, and I'm looking forward to what they bring to the table in the 31st, forming a majority United Conservative mandate in the coming spring election.

Madam Speaker, Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, follows the lead of the several jurisdictions that have already enacted similar legislation, including Manitoba, Ontario, and 37 U.S. states.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to support my colleague the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, who I know feels very passionate about this particular issue. This is a common-sense solution to a very real problem that will no doubt save lives. Because of this, I strongly encourage all my colleagues, on both sides of this Chamber, to join me in supporting this bill as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on private member's Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. Bill 204 will discuss vulnerable seniors across Alberta who go missing. PMB 204 is built upon previous PMB 210, passed in 2017, but it was never proclaimed because of some discrepancies between PMB 210 and the Missing Persons Act regarding the privacy of information.

By building and amending the previous legislation, it's essential that we recognize that this bill is important for many seniors who live the awful experience of going missing and finding no help from others. We will vindicate loved ones – many have tragically lost their partners, parents, or grandparents – by giving first responders more tools to alert the public of missing seniors. It's never a great feeling to lose somebody and never find them again. This new amendment will clarify and allow first responders to finally alert the public of missing seniors.

I have a personal story to share as well. When my grandparents were still living, my grandfather woke up to find my grandmother missing from the house. She had not taken her coat or boots, and it was the middle of the night, and it was winter. He called the police, and they started a search for her. It was a very frightening time for our family. She had some health conditions, and my grandfather worried that she was disoriented. It was a few hours later that the police finally did find my grandmother at the city dump. She had wandered many miles without proper winter attire, but she was alive. That was the last day that she was at her home. A higher level of care was required for her. Thank goodness the police officers found her, but had a silver alert system been in place, there would have been many more eyes looking for her. Perhaps she would have been found much sooner, and the weather would not have taken such a toll on her.

Our family's story had a happy ending – thank goodness – but for many, there is not. Our population ages, and many wish to continue living in their own homes, but we must respond responsibly to take care of our vulnerable.

4:40

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 approximately 1 million people. This number will continue to grow. By 2041 it is projected that 1 in 5 Albertans will be 65 years or older.

A decline in cognitive function is associated with aging, and the risk of dementia doubles every five years after the age of 65. In Calgary the Alzheimer Society estimates that more than 50,000

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 are family members, friends, and caregivers.

In addition, the Alzheimer's association indicated that 6 out of 10 people with dementia will wander at some point. This is frightening. When individuals walk 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 incident.

Bill 204 will seek 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 differ from the circumstances that lead to missing children in Amber Alerts; hence, 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 adult with cognitive impairment, a mental health disorder, or a medical condition that 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 public or private transportation, which would necessitate a broader application of the broadcasts.

This legislation will save many lives by implementing this and using the already existing Amber Alert system to another good use. It's morally vital that we help senior Albertans that go missing. It never is great when our loved seniors disappear and we never see them again. We have seen other provinces trying to solve this issue of seniors going missing. However, our provincial approach could be proven easier to implement and a more cost-effective policy to be enforced and help law enforcement to find missing seniors, who we love so much.

Several provinces, including B.C., have partnerships with an American program called Project Lifesaver. With this program, enrolled seniors wear a small transmitter on the wrist or ankle that emits an individual 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. In addition, this bill makes safety procedures available to all Albertans using resources that are already in place.

In closing, passing this bill will allow for a province-wide system to be brought online, enabling vulnerable Albertans a great likelihood of returning home safely. But, again, this issue crosses political boundaries, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this bill, and I thank the member for bringing this forward.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think the testimony from the Member for Camrose, who just spoke on this important piece of legislation, demonstrates how important the legislation is and how close to home it is to not only members of this Legislature but to all Albertans who share the responsibility of caring for elderly parents or grandparents and loved ones who may be suffering from dementia who are 55 years of age and older, some

even younger. But for the most part, of course, this legislation looks to provide an alert for those who go missing at age 55 or older who may be suffering from the effects of dementia or other cognitive dysfunction.

All of us in this Legislature know somebody who does act in the role of a caregiver for someone who is over the age of 55, myself included. As a designated caregiver I look after my mother, who's about to turn 88, and certainly I think there's no one in the Legislature who doesn't have a significant connection with a family member or relative or friend who wouldn't be concerned enough to share the value of this legislation.

Now, of course, it was brought in 2017, not proclaimed, as the member who brought forward the bill explained. Of course, it now is before the House once again with some remedies to some incongruities that were in the former Bill 210. We, of course, on this side of the House are in support of this legislation.

As we know, seniors built this province, and I now am one. I'm fully of the age of 65. I know that individuals who preceded me in generations in my family would potentially have benefited from this legislation. I know the Member for Camrose spoke eloquently about how indeed she thought it may have been very beneficial to her grandmother if indeed the legislation had been in place when she went missing. Thankfully, there was a positive outcome in that situation, but as we all know, whenever we do hear about a senior going missing either from a residence or a seniors' lodge or nursing home, it quite often has very devastating results. Whether it's winter or summer, the person can get into difficulty very quickly. Particularly in wintertime it may result in the death of a senior who's gone missing from their residence or seniors' accommodation.

We would have wished that this legislation had come forward a little bit earlier in the mandate of this UCP government. Of course, they've had plenty of time to do it, and it may have indeed been a reflection of the lack of prioritization of seniors' issues on their legislative agenda. One would hope not, but I know that we've not seen a lot of rapid action in terms of supporting a seniors mandate. In fact, we've seen cuts to seniors' services, and this seems to be one other sort of dereliction of duty towards seniors, sort of dragging their feet in getting this piece of legislation before the House in its current form. The delay, I think, could have been avoided, and seniors deserved to have it here, before the House, earlier.

We will certainly support the legislation. I do have some questions about it, Madam Speaker. Of course, we all know that when an Amber Alert is called, it gets your attention very quickly. It's broadcast widely on cellphones, on television, radio, and multiple platforms of social media. People are very much aware that an Amber Alert has been called, and I'm not certain if indeed it's absolutely clear how much the addition of a silver alert will, let's say, be diluted in comparison to an Amber Alert.

The hope is, of course, that a silver alert won't be sort of a second class of alert, because life is in danger, whether it's an Amber Alert or a silver alert. The creation of a new level of alert to warn the public and engage the public and seek the public's assistance in helping to locate the missing person, in this case an individual over the age of 55 who may have some cognitive difficulties, may result in a less intense effort to find that individual. We're hoping that that's not the case, but we want to make sure that in the communications of this silver alert, the public receives the same sense of urgency that they do when an Amber Alert is broadcast.

4:50

Of course, as has been mentioned by other speakers, the silver alert would in all likelihood be more commonly a localized alert. We know that, with our media capacities, those localized alerts can

be focused in and around the area where the senior is known to have gone missing, so perhaps – and this is one question I have for the member as well who brought forward the piece of legislation – there can be some attempt made to collaborate with local agencies such as Neighbourhood Watch to engage individuals on the ground, once a silver alert is called, to assist in a localized ground search for that individual.

As others have mentioned, it is more likely with a silver alert that an automobile was not necessarily involved and that somebody may be on foot and gone missing from their home. In a larger number of cases, of course, there may be a situation where vehicles are involved and a wider silver alert call would have to be made, but there seem to be some opportunities for local collaboration in the search effort, because time is of the essence. If indeed a senior who has wandered from their place of residence, whether it be a seniors' lodge or their own home, is found quickly, of course, the results are going to be better than if the individual is missing for an extended period of time.

So that's a hope that I have, that there might be some effort to engage local neighbourhood and community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch to assist law enforcement efforts in locating those who have gone missing and given rise to a call for a silver alert.

Now, of course, we always want to make sure that the legislative efforts that are raised are costed out, and we're not sure exactly what the cost might be in relation to a silver alert compared to an Amber Alert. We don't know if there are any savings that can be achieved by somehow twinning the two systems. We're certainly hopeful that that will be the case, but we'd like to hear from the member about those possible savings and possible collaborations.

What about the rights, of course, of the older adult's self-determination and privacy as well? We know that the legislation was not proclaimed initially, when it was called Bill 210, in 2017 because there were some contradictions against the Missing Persons Act, and I'm just wondering if indeed adequate care has been taken to consider the older adult's rights to self-determination and privacy.

How much longer shall we have to wait, though, to get this in place? Is it going to be something that the government is able to implement in fairly short order, or are there other considerations that will have to be investigated in order to make sure that the bill can actually get proclaimed this time without having to be delayed once again and brought back because things were discovered that could have been changed before the actual bill was passed? Hopefully, the bases have been covered, and we'll see it pass.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 204, as I did back in 2017 for Bill 210, which, unfortunately, tripped at the finish line, literally at the finish line. It was unfortunate that we as a Legislature weren't able to catch some of that conflicting language that prevented it from being proclaimed. Hopefully, the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has gotten some solid assurances that the language is solid, that we're not in conflict with anything else that, again, could prevent a very good idea from going forward with regard to a silver alert.

I guess, you know, just a couple of questions that I have in the brief time that I do have available here to me. I'm wondering. Hopefully, once we get into Committee of the Whole, perhaps the member might be able to provide us with some insight on if there were any discussions with the red tape reduction minister. I know there's been a very firm commitment from the government around reducing red tape and wanting to look at one

in, kind of one out if we are bringing in some regulations, to make sure that this is all airtight. Will there potentially be any holdups because of that? One of the things that I've alluded to with other pieces of legislation that require regulations: will there now be a rush to try to eliminate something else in order to be able to, I guess, provide that balance, hit some kind of target, quota, or whatever? Hopefully, we'll get a chance to maybe hear some comments on that or even from the red tape minister around that.

Like my friend from Edmonton-McClung had mentioned about potential costs to the system, you know, the last thing I want to see is, again, a very good idea start to get pared back because somebody thinks that, well, maybe it's costing a little too much. I'd hate to see a price being placed on something like this and preventing it from moving forward in a fulsome way, which kind of ties a little bit into what the member was talking about, about impacting the current system. You know, is it going to be fully integrated with the Amber Alert system? Are they kind of just going in parallel? Are the two separate? If it is in conjunction with it, will the government ensure that the resources are available, with the extra volume that comes with placing these calls, to make sure they're done quickly and efficiently so that we can get that alert out as fast as possible?

It's kind of timely because I know that in north Edmonton over the last couple of months I've seen, you know, Facebook alerts around a couple of residents from north Edmonton that, unfortunately, have gone missing. Thankfully, they came to good conclusions, but maybe the system could have helped had we had the chance to see it in action. Hopefully, the timeline – I would certainly never presume the decision of this Chamber – is going in a positive direction, and we can get this passed. What will we see as the finish line, where we flip the switch and it's up and running? Hopefully, there are not several years before that's available. Maybe the member will get a chance in Committee of the Whole to chat a little bit about what the government might see around that.

Otherwise, you know, I am definitely fully in support of this legislation. I do want to see it moving forward in an expeditious manner, but at the same time I do want to see some assurances from maybe some of the ministers around their commitment to making sure that this bill will get over the finish line, that it will be implemented, and that we won't be taking any shortcuts or coming up with any excuses for paring it back or shortcutting or anything of that nature, because, again, like I said, it would be a failed opportunity if we've missed something and then have this lost again.

You know, again, private members don't get a lot of time to be able to bring forward what I've seen is some pretty good legislation in a lot of private members' business. I'd certainly like to see more robust discussion around every private member's bill. At the very least, I think this is a good piece of legislation that we'll get a chance to move forward, and I'm looking forward to seeing some of the answers that I've asked about around costs, around impacts to the current system, any kind of, I guess, pitfalls that might be coming.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Two clocks now strike 5 o'clock. We will conclude the business on this for today.

### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

### Seniors' Services and Benefits

503. Ms Sigurdson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government

- (a) to consider taking immediate action to reduce costs to seniors related to medical benefits, long-term care, continuing care, home care, assisted living, drivers' licence medical exams, and other basic essentials that have increased dramatically since 2019; and
- (b) to create an independent office of the Seniors Advocate, the mandate of which would include
  - (i) helping seniors navigate provincial public services,
  - (ii) providing policy and affordability recommendations related to seniors to the government, and
  - (iii) conducting reviews on providers of services to seniors to ensure seniors' needs are met.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and join debate on Motion 503. It's about seniors' affordability and the Seniors Advocate. This motion is, I think – even the previous bill, actually, the silver alert bill: I think, when I was speaking, I touched on, really, some egregious things that have happened under the UCP watch. It's just more and more burden put on seniors, and this motion actually goes some direction in supporting seniors. We know that seniors created, you know, built this province, and they deserve to age in dignity in our province of Alberta. There are 700,000 seniors in our province, and as I said before, it's the largest growing demographic in our population.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

But, sadly, it seems to be not a very important group of people to the UCP government. As the latter part of this motion indicates, we're asking for a Seniors Advocate to be created, and that's because one of the very first things the UCP did when they came into government was to terminate the Seniors Advocate office and fire Dr. Sheree Kwong See, who was the Seniors Advocate. Really, supports for seniors in terms of that kind of advocacy disappeared.

Despite, in this Chamber, in estimates, in other public opportunities, you know, having asked the minister at the time about this position and about the Seniors Advocate and who was going to be supporting seniors in this regard – she continually assured me that there's still a Seniors Advocate; it was just housed within the Health Advocate's office. Yet when I would ask at estimates, a point of order would be called on me because I wasn't supposed to ask about the Seniors Advocate, and when I spoke about it in Health estimates, they said: well, there's nothing about the Seniors Advocate; you have to ask the seniors minister. Clearly, there was some misinformation shared by the minister.

We know that certainly there are other aspects to the Health Advocate. There's the mental health advocate, which is also housed there, and there's the patient advocate. You know, those are clear, and they're designated within the Health ministry. Nothing – nothing – about the Seniors Advocate. We know, certainly, that seniors do have concerns about the health system, and they do need help navigating it. The Health Advocate is expected to support them with that, but that was, like, not even a third of the focus and the needs of Alberta seniors. Certainly, from the annual reports from Dr. Kwong See we knew that financial issues and social services were the others, more than two-thirds. Obviously, nothing is being done to support seniors regarding that, and that certainly disturbs

me, especially because it was suggested that indeed there would be those supports in place. But they weren't, so again that was misinformation shared.

You know, we've just been through a global pandemic, and according to the Ryerson institute we had the largest number of outbreaks in our continuing care system of any province in Canada. Just about 1,300 seniors died in continuing care. If this isn't a time for an advocate to speak out to support seniors regarding the issues in our continuing care system, I don't know what time is. Obviously, many, many seniors suffered greatly during that time. Many seniors lost their lives, and there was no one to speak up for them. If the Health Advocate was indeed the champion for seniors, I'm surprised that she didn't speak up.

But that's the interesting thing about the Health Advocate: the Health Advocate was appointed; it wasn't an open competition at all. It was appointed by the Health minister, who actually interfered with the process to have a legitimate candidate, through a competitive process, come forward. Janice Harrington was appointed to that position, and she was the previous executive director of the Conservative Party. It was a completely partisan appointment, so certainly she wasn't going to speak up in support of seniors, in support of people who had experienced difficulties in the health system, hold the ministers to account for some of the very egregious things that went on during the pandemic or other times during the mandate of this government. You can see how the UCP has just set this up so that, really, seniors aren't important to them and they are not looking after their best interests.

That's why an independent advocate, an office that's independent, would absolutely support some rigour and some oversight and some challenge. We know that those checks and balances are part of a good democracy. It's very sad that the UCP would choose to terminate that entire office and take away that voice, because certainly I met often with Dr. Sheree Kwong See, who was a professor at the University of Alberta, and when we hired her, she had 30 years of research focused on seniors and had done extraordinary work and certainly is very well regarded in the seniors field.

So you can just see the difference, the clear difference, and sort of the neglect, lack of care, cavaliness, perhaps even arrogance, Mr. Speaker, I would say, of the UCP government in, you know, how they treat seniors and how little regard they have for the candidate that would be in that role. I don't know. I know that many Albertans that I've spoken to are quite disturbed by that and want an independent office of the advocate. If the NDP is elected in this spring election, we have committed to creating an independent office of seniors, and you can rest assured that we will have a very well-qualified candidate in that position. It won't be a partisan person like the UCP has chosen.

Besides that, this motion also talks about other ways that the UCP has forgotten seniors and put more burden on them in terms of costs. We know that continuing care and medical benefits have all gone up for seniors under the UCP government, \$44.6 million for new annual costs for continuing care under their watch. The recent budget is increasing accommodation rates in June by 2.3 per cent. It's interesting because it's June, and when is the election? The election is at the end of May, so it feels, you know, a little bit of a deception on the part of the UCP government that they do this immediately after the election. Certainly, I'll be speaking about this and will continue to speak in this House about that so that Albertans will know that this is a clear plan and it is in this most recent budget.

5:10

We know that 2.3 per cent will be the increase in June, and that comes on the heels of a 5.5 per cent increase layered on in the fall

of last year. These are the continuing care accommodation rates, so those are going up for seniors. Of course, they're doing this all based on an Ernst & Young report that the UCP commissioned, and the report recommended a \$44.6 million increase for annual costs of continuing care. They also recommended for home care an increase of \$35.9 million. The UCP is not making this hidden, but this report that they have commissioned has encouraged them to increase all the costs to seniors, who often are on low fixed income and don't have a lot of resources to be able to access. It is certainly a concern on this side of the House.

We also know that seniors in continuing care will be paying increased fees for medication, and that's another burden because a lot of times when we age, we certainly are taking more medication, and seniors often take, you know, more than one type of medication. Another increase by the UCP is the driver's licence medical exams. This used to be all covered by the government. At 75 it's mandatory: you must have a medical exam in order to be a driver in our province. Then you must also have that same medical exam when you're 80 and then every two years after that. This used to be covered, but it's no longer covered.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak to the motion? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about private member's Motion 503. Thank you to the member across the Chamber for your passion and dedication to Alberta's seniors. Improving life for Albertans is the shared goal for all the members of the Legislature regardless of political stripe. We must make sure that we do not mistake the duplications of a service for the expansions of a service and not when every tax dollar must serve Albertans.

Alberta's government recently appointed Catherine Douglas as the new health and mental health advocate. The advocate will help guide Albertans through the appropriate channels to resolve the issues and then provide the information and education so that they become advocates for their own health journey and for those that they care for. Seniors are a growing segment of the population in Alberta – that's mentioned many times in the Legislature – and quite often in need of the advocate's service. It's true. Aging Albertans are also more likely to access the health care system in general. One could say that the new advocate is already in place as a resource to help them.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to highlight all of the work Alberta's government is doing to help those who make up 15 per cent of those who use the health care system in 2021 and 2022. When a government provides the service that meets the needs, both on a daily basis and where the needs are more pressing – many people accessing the system have unique and complex needs and require a more hands-on approach. That's why the offices of the Alberta health and mental health advocate are there to assist all Albertans, especially seniors with any concerns on how to navigate the system, that can be daunting and confusing to some.

When I was the former minister of housing, I waited for a year before I terminated – not terminate, though; a switch to combine two offices, the Seniors Advocate and the Health Advocate, together. So I just want to make it clear that cutting and termination are incorrect. In effect, then, with this office, the health and seniors advocate office combined, the staff from seniors and housing brought to the new office covered it to make sure that the senior issue will be appropriately managed. The current mental health advocate is already doing the work of the Seniors Advocate. I do, you know, regularly – and my staff have been checking with the Health ministry and asking how things are going, and most of

the time when seniors have an issue, an inquiry, they are health related. We actually provide a service, a one stop for seniors instead of going to a Seniors Advocate and then they end up referred to a different ministry. This government is focused on efficiency and serving our seniors appropriately.

As a part of expanding and strengthening the role of the offices of Alberta Health and the mental health advocate, in a collaboration, in a partnership with the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, how will we be there to assist them in resolving their health system related concerns and help them direct their questions to any non health related government body?

We also know that seniors are facing increasing costs at these times, and we want to help to mitigate those financial pressures. Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of ongoing programs that support seniors, especially low-income ones, with health costs. All seniors are eligible for coverage for seniors programs, which is to provide premium-free coverage for things like prescription drugs and home nursing care. There are more than about 680,000 seniors enrolling in this program.

Low-income seniors: let's talk about how we can help them. Also, they are eligible for up to \$5,000 every year toward their basic dental service and up to \$230 every three years for the purchase of prescription eyeglasses. To help with the rising costs of living – it is a concern, so the government is providing financial relief to Albertan residents in designated supportive living and in long-term care from November 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. To support seniors, Alberta's government is investing \$11 million to help fight inflationary increases around accommodation costs.

Another notable point is about the coverage for seniors programs. Assistance is available for low-income seniors for health and daily living expenses through the special needs assistance for seniors program. Funding is provided for the copayments, amount paid above the average of \$45 per month for a single senior or seniors in a couple where one individual is under the age of 65 and \$90 per month for seniors in couples where both individuals are age 65 or older.

The Alberta government is also making sure to consider those on a fixed income when offering affordability supports. Seniors amount to 1 million Albertans who are receiving six \$100 affordability payments, and we also increased the seniors' benefit by 6 per cent.

Along with all other Albertans, seniors are many of whom who live on a fixed income and also are benefiting from additional actions this government took to help overcome the inflation crisis. The electricity rebates, the province offering tax relief in natural gas and electricity, the price protections: these are all actions we took to relieve the financial pressures that face our province. We passed private passenger vehicle insurance rates and increased it through to the end of this year. We made changes to personal income tax that will help to keep more money in the pockets of Albertans. Our government also increased funding for low-income transit pass programs to make sure that those who are most in need are not left behind.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government has put their words into actions when it comes to supporting seniors in the province. As the former minister of seniors and housing I went through, covering almost all Albertans, and I talked to thousands and thousands of seniors myself. I was a seniors advocate.

**5:20**

We will continue to make sure that vulnerable – in fact, I forgot to add one thing. For all the rural areas: they were so excited to see me. They told me that they hadn't seen the minister for seniors for years or had never seen a minister before. I was just so happy to

learn that and to have the support of the seniors from the rural areas. Thank you, everyone, for that comment. This government is always for you.

We will continue to make sure that vulnerable Albertans are supported in every way possible. They need a more streamlined process with less red tape to help navigate the health system. We want to do things more efficiently, not wasting taxpayer dollars. We already have the patient's advocate, so adding a secondary office would only serve to create an additional backlog for people in need. I'm also very pleased to share that the new Mental Health Patient Advocate and the team of professionals, their office is extremely qualified.

I believe it is the best for Albertans to know that they only have to go to one office for the information, assistance they need. We're there. This government is always there for our seniors. Seniors are the strength of Alberta. That's why I will not support this motion.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I certainly will be supporting this motion and with good reason, because an independent Seniors Advocate is needed more than ever, and that's apparent in the current government's treatment of seniors since their election in 2019. Now, after the UCP removed the Seniors Advocate and rolled that responsibility to the Health Advocate, a partisan appointment that was direct from the executive of the UCP, one would be remiss if one doesn't question whether, in fact, that role was independent. Seniors certainly would be right in questioning whether or not that independent role had been negated by rolling the responsibility into the Health Advocate's portfolio.

Previous to that, of course, we recognized the importance of seniors when we were in government by establishing the Seniors Advocate office, and that's what we wanted to say to seniors. We wanted clearly to let seniors in this province know that they matter, they were important, they are critically important to the province, and they deserve to have a direct channel to government.

What happens, of course, as one may know as one becomes a senior and is maybe not any longer in the workforce, is that their visibility diminishes. A person with grey hair becomes invisible to many facets of society, and we didn't want them to become invisible to their government. We wanted to ensure that they knew that they mattered, and to do so, we demonstrated that by providing the Seniors Advocate position and office. Of course, when the UCP took office, that was eliminated and rolled into the Health Advocate's portfolio, thus diminishing the significance of seniors to the current government, and it's surely a reflection of what they've done to seniors since they formed government.

Former Conservative governments, Mr. Speaker, used to brag about how they showered the seniors in this province with benefits through Alberta seniors' benefits, you know, that in decades past they were developing and increasing, but now this current UCP government, the current rendition of conservatism in this province, firehoses our seniors with extra costs, extra burdens, some of which have been documented here.

Mr. Speaker, I really do stand in support of this motion because a Seniors Advocate is more necessary than ever, and this motion urges the government to do what it failed to do or to undo what it did and to actually create once again an office of the Seniors Advocate. The mandate, of course, would help seniors navigate provincial public services and would provide public policy and affordability recommendations related to seniors and to the government, and it would conduct reviews on providers of services to seniors to ensure seniors' needs are met. That's something that's



indeed a laudable goal to have in this province, and it's something that we recognize, and it behooves me to comprehend why any government would want to dispense with the Seniors Advocate office, as the UCP did early in their reign. It only begs the question: was it done because they wished to avoid the criticism that might come from a Seniors Advocate once they engaged in the raft of extra cost burdens that they were placing upon seniors during the mandate that now is almost four years of cost increases to our seniors?

I will never forget, Mr. Speaker, talking to seniors on the doorstep who now discover that after age 75 they're responsible for paying for their driver's exam medical. There were some very, very volatile seniors at the doorstep talking to me about that. They were really not happy with it, and it's a big cost. It's, you know, 85 to 150 bucks, in some cases on a biannual basis, after you turn 75. This is just one example of some significant costs that the UCP government has inflicted upon seniors, adding fees and/or reducing coverage for seniors in health care.

The new fees for home care alone are burdens not only to seniors but to their families because, Mr. Speaker, quite often, of course, seniors' income is insufficient to cover the cost of home care, and there was a \$35.9 million increase in new costs to seniors as a result of this UCP government's policy – that's evidenced by the Ernst & Young report on Alberta Health Services, which included recommendations to add costs on seniors in continuing care – \$35.9 million in new costs onto seniors. Yet the government has seen fit to find ways of shovelling billions, like \$20 billion, over to oil companies to clean up wells that they are already responsible for cleaning themselves. But, no, seniors have to fork out another \$35.9 million to pay for their own lodging, and of course that means that their siblings, their younger family members are probably going to be the ones carrying the can because that senior doesn't have the adequate income to cover some of those extra costs.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is in. It's very, very clear this government has no desire to court the favour of seniors in Alberta. In fact, they've given up on seniors. They have dispensed with that voting bloc and have taken them for granted. They do so at their own peril, because I know that not only when I'm at the doors talking about the driver's medical – and this isn't something I'd had to bring up. Believe me; that's brought up spontaneously by seniors who have just suffered the driver's medical. You run into one at the door who has had an anniversary date and has had to go and get the driver's medical, and they've had to fork out 85 to 150 bucks for it, 85 to 150 bucks they don't have extra right now – they let you know about it. That's just one example. The changes to the medical exams are certainly a sore point with seniors, and the government doesn't seem to be listening.

The Seniors Advocate program that the government has shifted over into the Health Advocate portfolio is something that seniors are going to sorely miss, Mr. Speaker. The role of the Seniors Advocate is something that granted the respect due to our seniors because it recognized them as full participants in our society. Without that recognition, by rolling it into the Health Advocate's portfolio, the government has gone backwards and is disrespecting our Alberta seniors by saying: "You don't matter. You're something that is a secondary category to us. We expect you to vote for us. We think you're going to do it regardless, and we're going to keep hacking away at your bank account by making sure we add costs onto seniors that otherwise would've been covered by the government."

5:30

The role of the advocate is to help navigate casework, and we've all seen this, Mr. Speaker, where you get seniors calling into our

MLA constituency offices absolutely confounded with government programs and services, forms and applications, and believe me: it's not just because they're seniors. Seniors are from every walk of life. They are complex forms, and they're reflective of many other departments, not only those programs which affect seniors. Seniors in particular should not be denied or not be able to access programs and services they are deserving of, those which still remain available to them not cut by the UCP, because they have difficulty with the complexity of the application process. That we see every week in our offices, and indeed the programs and services that seniors are able to access should be something they get without having to go to a family lawyer to understand a process.

The Seniors Advocate is there – or would've been there under our government; no longer there because of the UCP taking it away. That's one of the big roles of the Seniors Advocate, not necessarily to bang on a counter demanding better services; just to make sure seniors can advocate and navigate to get the services they already have.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like, with your approval, to move to one-minute bells.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right. So we're looking for unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-City Centre – or Edmonton-City Centre. You said you've been spending a lot of time in Calgary. I thought maybe you're running.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Indeed, Mr. Speaker. I've been visiting Calgary a fair amount. I haven't yet decided to move there, but I appreciate the thought.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion today, you know, advocating for the creation of an independent Seniors Advocate. I want to talk for a little bit about why that's important, an independent Seniors Advocate. Now, some of my colleagues have already made reference to the process by which this government appointed the first combined Health Advocate, mental advocate, Seniors Advocate, and it was not a very good process, Mr. Speaker.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, just as part of this, I want to note that the former minister of seniors spoke of this being a process of efficiency, making this better, making it more convenient for seniors to be able to access their services all in a one-stop shop. Mr. Speaker, you know, in a CBC article talking about how this government went about appointing the Seniors Advocate and Health Advocate and mental health advocate all combined in one office, it noted that in mid-September of 2019 there was a draft ready of the posting for the position, but the department was concerned that "combining health and mental health roles could draw out the process and make it difficult to find a suitable candidate."

That's just two offices, Mr. Speaker, and then they added on a third, making it difficult, in the eyes of the public service, to find a suitable candidate, somebody that could meet all of that criteria. Well, the government found a convenient way around that: they just found someone who wasn't qualified for any of the three. What happened was that as the public servants were doing their due diligence, the traditional processes that had been followed by ministers for years in making these appointments – they did their

work and they had the process laid out and they had the job posting ready to go. Then suddenly the then Minister of Health, now the Minister of Justice, came to the department and said: wait a minute; just put that on hold; I'm going to have a little chat with the deputy minister.

When they came out of that chat, lo and behold, they cancelled that job posting because they didn't need it anymore because they were going to appoint the former executive director of the United Conservative Party, someone who did not have any qualifications in regard to seniors, in regard to health, or in regard to mental health. That is what the former minister of seniors considers to be convenient, helpful for seniors, a good use of taxpayer dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Lori Williams, a political scientist at Mount Royal University – here's what she had to say about that appointment.

Not only to cut short that process or to set it aside, but to instead appoint someone who is an active and rather passionate partisan makes it look like this advocacy position is really nothing more than an arm of the government doing the government's bidding.

Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult to take the former minister of seniors and indeed any of these government members at their word when they say that this was about doing something better for seniors when this process – and let's be clear. We have seen this government repeat this sort of thing over and over again. Speaking of the former minister of seniors referring to good use of taxpayer dollars, certainly the embarrassment of a war room that spent a million dollars a year: that was not a good use of taxpayer dollars but also had a partisan appointment at its head, a former candidate for the United Conservative Party. Some of the Premier's recent appointments, the COVID-19 review, her former mentor, supporter Mr. Preston Manning getting a cool \$250 million a year – or \$250,000. Pardon me; \$250,000. Sorry. My apologies. For a moment there I was thinking back to, you know, the discussion of the carbon tax in the 2019 campaign. It's \$250,000 for the supporter and former mentor, or current mentor, of the Premier.

Really, we don't have a government, Mr. Speaker, that is concerned, really, about taxpayer dollars. They are more than happy to make use of them in all kinds of ways that are politically convenient and beneficial for them. Really, this is why, to return to what I was saying about the importance of an independent Seniors Advocate, when we have demonstrations of a government, like, unfortunately, many Conservative governments before, that fall into that pattern of entitlement and arrogance and cronyism, it is incredibly important that we have some protections built in.

When something is as important as a Seniors Advocate, setting that up as an independent office, that would be required, then, to go through the proper procedure of going before a legislative committee and going through due diligence of a proper job posting and process of hiring and then be brought before this House for a vote, removes the sort of situation that we have had under this government.

Now, of course, that former advocate is no longer in that role, and there has been a newer appointment. Indeed, I would note that with that newer appointment this government does seem to have learned a lesson. They did appoint somebody that does actually seem to have some of that expertise and to the best of my knowledge has not formerly even been a member of the United Conservative Party, let alone the executive director.

That said, this is an important role. I believe it is one that goes beyond simply being done off the side of a desk by someone who is wearing three hats. You know, the former minister of seniors, the MLA for Calgary-Beddington, talked about and seemed to want to brag about everything this government has done for affordability for seniors. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I represent a number of

seniors here in Edmonton-City Centre, and there are a number of them that wrote to me about the fact that they are cut out of this government's utility rebate program because they happen to live in an apartment or a condominium in a building where those utilities are handled jointly as opposed to individual billing. This government has never addressed that issue. Those are many seniors, some of whom are indeed lower income, who do not get part of that utility rebate because this government couldn't be bothered to do the work and find a way.

The MLA for Calgary-Beddington talked about: well, you know, hey, we're giving seniors more money back because we reindexed income tax. Mr. Speaker, that member voted in favour of deindexing income tax and raising income tax for seniors for multiple years in the midst of a pandemic. So this government can try to applaud itself on one hand, but the fact is that this government, as my colleagues have noted, raised costs for seniors over the last few years.

5:40

I've certainly had seniors reach out to my office when they pushed a number of those seniors' dependants and partners off the seniors drug benefit program, again raising costs for those seniors. I had seniors reach out to me with real concerns when this government moved to make changes to the insulin pump therapy program, which would have forced some of those seniors potentially to have to pay out of pocket for a technology that's incredibly important for them in maintaining health, particularly in their later years.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is no high horse for this government to climb on. What we have here from the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview is, I think, an important step forward, not only giving seniors back their own separate advocate – and, I can tell you that many, many seniors in my constituency have written to me calling for just that. They want their advocate back. They want to have that lone voice that is there for them. Much as we have a disability advocate – and let's be clear. Probably many people who write in with concerns with the disability advocate are also talking about health care, but that doesn't mean that we tell them to go and talk to the Health Advocate.

Seniors want to have representation in their voice. Not only is it important to bring that voice back but to do it in a way where that advocate is empowered to act independently, to look into serious issues that come up that affect seniors, and indeed is protected from the kinds of partisanship we saw from the government in their earlier appointment for the advocate in this position. So I will be happy, Mr. Speaker, to vote in support of this motion, and I will be happy, should we have the opportunity to form government, to vote in favour of the legislation that will in fact take this step and form a new independent office of the Seniors Advocate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Motions Other than Government Motions. Is there anyone? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to provide some comments around Motion 503, a motion that I am very happy to also support. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-City Centre bringing us down a little bit of history of why this motion has now come forward and how we have an advocate for seniors that – the voice has been watered down. The reason I say that: it kind of reminds me of back in the days when I used to work for Lucerne ice cream.

The plant was situated in between two of the Macdonalds Consolidated warehouses. The decision, of course, was made, you

know, long before I was ever there, to bargain at the same time because of the location. Now, having participated in a couple of different negotiating sessions, one of the things I noticed during that time – and do I think anybody was doing it on purpose? No. It was just simply a reality that when you had all these warehouses and all these employees and the ice cream plant with 30, it was very, very difficult to get our points of what we needed to see changed or added or deleted from a contract based on everything else that was going along.

I lost count of the number of times that I would tell the negotiator from the other side: “You know, that’s great language. That’s going to work in the warehouse where they’re picking orders, but I don’t pick orders at ice cream. I palletize it, and then we put it onto a truck. End of story.” I’d eventually have the negotiator from the company saying: “Oh, yeah. I guess you’re right. Maybe we need to do something different for you guys.” You think?

The whole purpose of bringing forward the Seniors Advocate was to provide that voice for seniors, specifically for seniors’ issues. I get it. Health issues affect seniors. I get it. But there are so many other things.

You know, like my friend from Edmonton-City Centre who has had a lot of contact with seniors, because of some of the organizations that I have in Edmonton-Decore, I have a significant interaction with seniors in north Edmonton, not just in my own riding of Edmonton-Decore but from others across north Edmonton, and I did not hear one senior tell me over the course of my years that we need to come up with a way to water down voices for seniors. If anything, it’s been the opposite. We need a stronger voice for seniors. We need a clearer voice for seniors.

Like my friend from Edmonton-City Centre said, now we’ve got somebody who’s wearing three hats, and that is simply getting watered down. I’m not going to reiterate the whole point that he made around the partisanship appointment.

You know, it also kind of reminds me of Sobeys coming in and taking over Canada Safeway. They never did like the Safeway brand. They were always competing. And – surprise, surprise – over the course of the time I’ve seen the Safeway stores disappearing or becoming FreshCo.

They’re trying to get rid – so, you know, how do you go about it? Well, you simply water down the whole situation, and that’s what we have; hence, why we’re here with Motion 503, to try to bring the voices of seniors, the ones that built the province – we’re all benefiting from that, every single person in this House – and bringing those voices to the forefront because not only do they deserve it; they have earned it. We have done them a disservice back in 2019 by removing that specific voice and rolling it in with the Health Advocate and then adding another thing and, as my friend from Edmonton-City Centre said, made it almost impossible to find somebody with all those qualifications.

Perhaps that was actually the intention, just as I was alluding to with Safeway and FreshCo stores. You create a situation so that you can just simply say: “Well, this whole process isn’t working. We can’t possibly find anybody; we’ll just appoint someone.” Now all of a sudden we have an opportunity to start making partisan appointments in a position that should not be. It should be a stand-alone office that reports to the people of Alberta, presents a report, just like we have with other offices.

I get it, all the red tape reduction and everything like that, but at what point do you start making reductions to the disadvantage of people? That’s exactly what occurred in 2019, trying to be more efficient: oh, a one-stop shop. It’s done a disservice to our seniors.

You know, I must admit, Mr. Speaker, I was a little frustrated listening to the former minister of seniors patting herself on the back and the government on the back for all the work that they’ve

done for seniors. If everything has been so rosy, why, when I’m talking with seniors or they’re coming to my office, are they showing me how their lives have gotten more difficult? Their insurance costs have gone up, their property taxes have gone up, their utilities have gone up, making life more difficult. But now they’re on a fixed income at the same time.

5:50

As was mentioned earlier, you know, making changes so that going to get an exam for the driver’s licence – that’s one of the biggest things I hear. I’m so grateful we’ve gotten to a place where people are living longer, they’re able to stay at home longer, be independent, but having a vehicle: that is really, really true independence. I’ve heard a lot of stories – it breaks my heart – where, unfortunately, a doctor has to tell someone: it’s no longer safe for you to drive. It’s absolutely heartbreaking. But here we are telling people who aren’t in that situation: well, you have to pay for that. You’ve raised their costs so much that now \$85 or \$150 is now becoming a barrier, and a Seniors Advocate would have told you that very clearly.

**Mr. Nally:** They would’ve told us that the carbon tax is a bigger barrier.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I’m happy to see the minister of red tape get up and participate in this discussion rather than just chirping on the other side. Maybe you should start advocating for your seniors and stop having them pay to get their driver’s licence exams.

**Mr. Nally:** Join us in pushing back on the carbon tax.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, we need to have a Seniors Advocate despite the minister of red tape thinking he has all the answers and a bag of chips.

I’m voting in favour of Motion 503. The seniors of Edmonton-Decore deserve it, the seniors of north Edmonton deserve it, and I’m going to bet dollars to doughnuts that the seniors in Alberta deserve it. If not, well, maybe there’ll be a change, then, on May 29 and they’ll elect a government that will bring in a Seniors Advocate, that will make their voices a priority, that will say: you deserve to have a stand-alone voice to help advocate to make your lives better.

I certainly look forward to the rest of the debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 503. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has approximately three minutes.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, my goodness. Okay. Well, I better pack a lot into that three minutes.

You know, I did pause there for a minute because, as everyone in this Chamber is aware, there has been a whole heck of a lot of heckling from the other side yet a lack of willingness from said members, like the minister for red tape and Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, to name a few, to actually join debate. As my colleague from Edmonton-Decore so aptly stated, it would be nice, you know, if they are that concerned about seniors in their constituencies – that they’d stand up and speak for them.

I can tell you, speaking of seniors in other constituencies, I was actually door-knocking – I know the members opposite love when I tell door-knocking stories – in Red Deer just two weeks ago in a seniors’ complex, one with external entrances; we weren’t going indoors. I was a little concerned when they said that’s where we were going. I thought: okay; this will be interesting, a Red Deer seniors’ complex. I can tell you that it was really overwhelming, the support that we were getting, people who were identifying as long-time

conservatives expressing their concern about this government's plans for health care. [interjection] Again, for those folks watching at home, I'm being heckled relentlessly here by Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, so it would be nice if maybe he stood up and joined debate for once.

The point being that we are hearing from seniors all across this province who are fed up with this UCP government for so many reasons, but I can tell you – health care, long-term care, lack of affordability measures, as my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre so aptly pointed out. He's heard from seniors who are being left out of this government's affordability plans. I've heard from seniors as well. I've got a number of seniors' complexes in my own riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I'm not kidding when I say that those seniors are absolutely, absolutely fed up with this government.

That's why I'm so proud to support my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview's motion, seniors affordability and Seniors Advocate. You know, she talked a little bit about the work that she did in government.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion other than government motion to close debate, I invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview to do such now.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, of course, encourage all of the members in this Legislature to vote in support of Motion 503, seniors affordability and Seniors Advocate. Certainly, I've been very thankful to my colleagues on this side of the House for the thoughtful arguments and comments they've made and why indeed it is such a significant – why it is so important that seniors do have an advocate, because they are being absolutely left behind by this government.

I must say that I was kind of – incredulous, I think, is the most polite word I can give you for what the former minister of seniors and housing shared, the Member for Calgary-Beddington. She just repeated the same misinformation she has throughout, even though I demonstrated in my comments earlier that what she said was not accurate. She proclaimed very profoundly that she was the Seniors Advocate.

I just want to perhaps do some education here. Political science 101: in a constitutional democracy you have checks and balances. The fundamental elements of a constitutional democracy prevent the unconstrained exercise of power. That's meant to improve decision-making and ensure that mechanisms exist for preventing or penalizing unethical behaviour. It helps the public maintain confidence in the political system, and the government has a responsibility to uphold them. Checks and balances distribute power, preventing any one institution or individual from exercising undue control.

So the minister proclaiming that she is the Seniors Advocate, of course, puts all the power in the position of one, and that is completely against what a constitutional democracy says. This is poli-sci 101 for the minister, just to help her. She cannot be the Seniors Advocate. An independent office is meant to... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** An independent office, in this case the Seniors Advocate, actually oversees, maybe challenges, questions, helps make better decisions about what is in the best interests of seniors. So, you know, I just would like the now Member for Calgary-Beddington to perhaps do a little bit of her own homework so she understands what a constitutional democracy is. She cannot be the

Seniors Advocate. That flies in the face of what this role, this office is all about.

I guess just another thing that's completely obvious, I'm sure, to anybody who's watching today or anybody who knows anything: the public confidence is so important to having a good democratic process where people are engaged, they care about the institutions that govern them, there's high voter turnout, all those things. But the UCP doesn't seem to understand that the decisions that they make erode the public confidence, like the termination of this office, like appointing a partisan, Janice Harrington, to that position, someone who has absolutely no qualifications. It's disgusting. The UCP just is cavalier, and they don't seem to respect and understand this at all, and for me that is disturbing.

That is absolutely why this motion should be passed, because there's no respect on the other side. They don't see this as an important issue. They just think they can do what they want, when they want, and they cannot. So I do commend all members of this House to have some level of respect for this institution and actually vote in favour of a motion that's going to strengthen our democracy, not further erode it like the UCP does each time they make bad decision after bad decision. An independent office of the Seniors Advocate would go a long way to mitigate some of the things the UCP has done to denigrate – denigrate – this institution. I'm sorry that the former minister, the Member for Calgary-Beddington, is completely ignorant of this element...

**Mr. Rutherford:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called. The hon. the government whip.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) this is language that is going to create disorder. It's been pretty borderline for the last few minutes, but to call another member ignorant, I think, absolutely requires an apology and a retraction.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with great interest because it was obviously a lot of passion, and I don't believe that the member was calling another member ignorant but was talking about knowledge of a specific issue. That is what I was hearing as she kept reiterating democracy 101 and trying to make the point that a Seniors Advocate is critical for this province and for moving forward. But I leave it to your good judgment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

6:00

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. If I needed your help, I would ask for it.

I am of the opinion – and while it was difficult to know what the remainder of the sentence may have been, it is very apparent that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview said that the now Member for Calgary-Beddington is ignorant. It's possible she could have provided some clarifying statements about content. I would say that that language is always likely to create disorder, and as such she can apologize and withdraw.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

There are 15 seconds remaining.

**Debate Continued**

**Ms Sigurdson:** I just want to ask again all my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of this motion. Of course, we want to support seniors in our province, and voting positively on this motion would go a long way to doing that.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:02 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Irwin	Shepherd
Dach	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Gray		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Schulz
Amery	McIver	Singh
Ellis	Nally	Smith, Mark
Getson	Nicolaides	Stephan
Glubish	Orr	Toor

Horner	Pon	Turton
Hunter	Reid	van Dijken
Issik	Rowswell	Williams
Jean	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	
Totals:	For – 7	Against – 29

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) and the 2023-24 main estimates schedule, the Assembly will stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This evening the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Justice in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Education in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Culture in Grassland.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:06 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 7, 2023

Day 14

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)	Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Deputy Government House Leader	Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)	Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)	Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)	Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC), Premier
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the privilege to meet with a very special guest who now joins us in the Speaker's gallery. Please welcome the consul general of Japan, Mr. Watabe; his wife, Mrs. Watabe; Mr. Wakasugi, the consul, economics, consulate of Japan; and the honorary consul general of Japan in Edmonton, Dr. Bilash. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Legislature some of the smartest and hardest working school students in the entire province of Alberta, those being the students from Clara Tyner elementary school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. I ask them, if they're in the galleries, to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, students from Garneau school, situated in the fabulous riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. Many of them have already written letters to my office and to others this year advocating for specific changes to make their school an even better place, and I'm sure that they're learning lots about advocacy while they're here this week. Please rise, students from Garneau, and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the other members of this House an amazing school from the best riding in this province. That's Morinville-St. Albert. It's the grade 6 kids from Lois E. Hole elementary school. Please rise and receive the welcome of the House.

## Members' Statements

### Budget 2023 and Calgary

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, as a proud Calgarian I know that this province's largest city is a wonderful place to live, full of ambitious, forward-looking people. But I also know that they've faced some tough times recently. Today our schools are bursting at the seams, and our downtown office vacancy rate stands at 32.6 per cent. Here's what troubles me: 21 UCP MLAs represent Calgary constituencies, nearly half of the Premier's cabinet are from Calgary, but with 8,000 new students expected this fall, how many Calgary schools does this government plan to build? One. And with a budget swelled by massive royalty revenues, what have they found for Calgary's downtown? Nothing whatsoever. Zero dollars. An insult.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a betrayal of Calgary, but the truth is that we already know that this Premier doesn't care about Calgary. In fact, her Finance minister is on record saying that the UCP government should do nothing to support Calgary's downtown. No, what really troubles me is this: silence, silence from Calgary UCP MLAs while this Premier speculates about moves that will effectively cancel the green line, silence from Calgary's entire UCP caucus while the Premier does nothing to address our desperate need for schools, and silence from the UCP cabinet ministers in Calgary while the Premier neglects Calgary's downtown. Did they not notice, or do they just not care?

I'm glad to say that Alberta's NDP caucus does have an ambitious plan to build schools in our city and to support Calgary's downtown. Our plan is freely available on [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca). That's a plan we'll offer to Calgarians in just a few short weeks.

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

### Child and Youth Mental Health Supports

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was pleased to join the Premier, the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, and the Minister of Technology and Innovation for an announcement to partner with CASA Mental Health to significantly expand youth mental health supports. CASA Mental Health is an important organization within the Sherwood Park community, and they are leaders in delivering child and youth centred mental health services. They have the experience, expertise, and passion needed to truly make a difference in the lives of children, youth, and their families.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, Budget 2023 will provide record-level funding to the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction. This includes a proposed \$92 million over three years for CASA Mental Health to provide critical mental health supports for children and youth. This proposed investment would allow for CASA Mental Health to expand four programs, helping more than 700 additional young Albertans every year and making a monumental impact on the lives of children from right across our province.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in Alberta, including our children and youth, deserves the opportunity to access mental health supports and treatment, pursue recovery, and live a healthy life. We know that with the right support and care recovery is possible for everyone. I am pleased that Alberta's government has identified Sherwood Park's CASA Mental Health as a leader in this field, and I am extremely confident that the work they do will play an important role as our government continues to build a recovery-oriented system of care, where everyone struggling with mental health is supported in their pursuit of recovery.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm seeing two in one. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has a statement to make.

### Alberta-Japan Relations

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to recognize and celebrate Alberta-Japan relations. The relationship is strong and will only grow stronger. Formally, diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan began in 1929, and a Japanese consulate has been in Alberta since 1967. The Alberta government's oldest international office is in Tokyo and opened in 1970. As well, Alberta has had a vibrant sister province relationship with Hokkaido since 1980, and many Alberta municipalities have sister city relations with Japanese municipalities.

Beyond formal ties, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta-Japan relationship is robust, with many Alberta educational institutions having relations with Japanese institutions, including the U of A, the U of C, and the U of L as well as secondary schools. As well, thousands of Albertans are of Japanese ancestry. Economically Japan is Alberta's third-largest trading partner, with energy, agriculture, and forestry products being the top commodities. Culturally Alberta and Hokkaido's associations maintain close ties.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta-Japan relationship prospers due to durable foundations, shared interests and values. On energy and food security we are perfect partners, Alberta as a supplier of reliable, high-quality products and Japan as a market and investor in these important sectors. Make no mistake: both Alberta and Japan have condemned Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine, which has made energy and food security even more salient for Japan. Alberta can and should be Japan's reliable provider of these products.

Alberta and Japan are both open societies, too, committed to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as well as a stable world order that includes a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Mr. Speaker, Alberta and Japan have had relations for more than a century. It is a relationship built on shared interests, values, and friendship. I look forward to the next 100 years of this beautiful relationship.

[Remarks in Japanese]

### Health Care System

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, this UCP government and Premier are desperate to convince Albertans that there is no crisis in health care. They are desperate to convince Albertans that somehow they have solved the crisis that took them four years to create in just 90 days. But I have some sad news for the members opposite: there is a crisis in health care, and while you try to spin it, Albertans are living with it.

Albertans are living with the consequences of calling for an ambulance, only to be told that either they don't need one or that one isn't coming. They are faced with spending days sitting in ER rooms waiting for medical attention. Albertans are faced with long waits for cancer treatment, with people waiting months in fear and pain just to see the oncologist. These are just some of the experiences Albertans are living with, and while the Premier might not accept them, the Albertans experiencing them deserve to be listened to.

1:40

But while the Premier plans to unfurl the mission accomplished banner rather than hearing what Albertans are experiencing, our caucus heard Albertans, did the work, and put forward a real solution, a real plan for 1 million Albertans to get access to a family doctor and a family health team. We're ready to get moving on this

right away and start hiring family health team members into existing clinics. Albertans will soon get to choose a government with a real plan to get their family the care they need, when they need it, right near home.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North has risen.

### Support for Türkiye and Syria

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past several weeks multiple earthquakes and tremors have devastated parts of Türkiye and Syria. To date these earthquakes have resulted in the loss of more than 50,000 lives, and the number is growing as recovery efforts continue. Complete city blocks have been levelled, and key infrastructure has been rendered useless. As the people of Türkiye and Syria try to move on from this devastating tragedy, they find themselves in a humanitarian crisis. People are without food, water, medical supplies, hygiene products, and other essentials that are needed to recover from natural disasters such as this one.

The people of Türkiye and Syria, Mr. Speaker, need our help. I am proud to see that our government has stepped up and responded to the urgent need for humanitarian aid in Türkiye and Syria. Yesterday a joint news release was sent out notifying the public that Alberta's government will be matching donations to the Red Cross of up to \$1 million to help the people of Türkiye and Syria. Albertans are caring and giving people. We rally to help our neighbours down the street or complete strangers on the other side of the globe. Albertans rallied together when Calgary and other communities flooded in 2013. We rallied when flood waters washed through a third of Pakistan in 2022. We rallied when fire ripped through Fort McMurray and surrounding areas in 2016, and we answered the call for help when a deadly explosion occurred in a port in Beirut in 2020.

It is in our blood to help, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are very giving and caring people, with huge compassion for others. I encourage all Albertans to help the people of Türkiye and Syria by donating to the Canadian Red Cross. Please visit [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca) to donate generously.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Phillips:** The UCP Finance minister recently told the news media there will be a referendum about gambling away Albertans' retirement savings in 2024. Well, I've got news for him: there's a little event between then and now; it's called an election. That's when Albertans get to vote on the UCP scheme to gamble with your CPP pension. All those contributions made to your pension since your first jobs as teenagers are at stake on May 29, 2023. Will that money, that is yours, still be there for you, or will it be gambled and wasted by an untrustworthy Premier?

On May 29 it'll be Albertans, not the UCP Premier, that will decide whether they can count on the money they saved in CPP contributions to help them retire in dignity. On May 29 it'll be Alberta employers that decide whether they want to pay higher premiums to bankroll the Premier's separatist fever dreams. On May 29 it'll be Alberta's seniors who decide whether they want to hand over the management of their monthly CPP cheque to a Premier whose lapses in judgment are well known, including that time she looked straight into a camera just a few months ago and argued that we should all pay to see a family doctor.

Albertans do not trust the UCP to mess around with their CPP, yet the Premier presses on. She said that some of our CPP could be used to pay for her UCP police force or for a new UCP tax



collection agency so that we can all file our taxes twice. Let me be crystal clear for Albertans: the Alberta NDP will defend your retirement security. Your retirement savings are yours. They don't belong to any politician. Albertans can count on the Alberta NDP to protect their CPP.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has a statement to make.

### UCP and NDP Government Records

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the UCP's first of many terms in government nears its end, a balanced 2023 budget is evidence of this government's success on behalf of Albertans. In the wake of unprecedented global events Alberta has emerged in an extremely strong position. Our economy is flourishing. We have more than replaced the 183,000 jobs driven out of Alberta by the NDP when they were in government. Diversification is real under the UCP government, with several sectors blossoming, including IT, film and television, agricultural processing, and aeronautics. Calgary is now attracting talent from across Canada and beyond to a diverse and thriving job-creating environment. The NDP once had a minister advise Albertans to go to B.C. to find a job.

Our government and our budget exemplify the strong position Alberta is in right now. Allocations to support those still struggling and incentives to bring even more business and investment to our province are included. While the NDP pays lip service to struggling Alberta families, it was they who did more than anyone to cause the problems. They partnered with Justin Trudeau to crush our largest industry and drive out a hundred billion dollars in investment. They helped Trudeau kill Energy East and Northern Gateway, which could now be providing responsible energy to Europe rather than our allies being held hostage by Putin's war machine.

Campaign NDP talks about making life affordable for Albertans. They want us to forget that government NDP raised electricity costs from 3 cents to somehow bragging about 6.8 cents, and now it's over 10. Albertans know this UCP government has helped replace the jobs lost, bring back the industries crushed, and brought responsible money management back to Alberta. Albertans know that staying warm in the winter is not a bad thing, as the NDP made it seem. They know that driving to work to support their family is a contribution to Alberta and Canada, not an assault on the environment. This government encourages expansion of transit but will not tell rural Albertans to take a bus that doesn't exist.

Albertans will not be fooled. After four years of the NDP making life worse, they have a very stark choice, with a government that cares about them and their families.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies as chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This is the appropriate number of copies for the 2022 annual report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and with this, I'd also like to pass on my thanks to all the staff who supported the Public Accounts Committee for the last four years and all the various deputy chairs, including the hon. members for Livingstone-Macleod, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship I'm pleased to present on behalf of the committee the appropriate number of copies of the committee's report on a presentation by southern Alberta alternative energy partnership and Energy Futures Lab on February 2, 2023.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, sponsored by the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

#### Bill 8 Alberta Firearms Act

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, Bill 8, being the Alberta Firearms Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the time is now 1:50, and that makes it Oral Question Period. The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Budget 2023 and Calgary Sexual Assault Services Funding

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is all of our jobs to make sure that Calgary's economic future is secure. Revitalizing the downtown is a top priority, and my team has put forward a bold plan taking the best ideas from the mayor, the Chamber, and many others. The UCP, however, seems to have stopped opening their mail. Yesterday the Premier said that she didn't receive a priority list from the mayor for the downtown, but the mayor says that she sent it in November. To the Premier: on what date did she receive that list, when did she first read it, and why did she make that unfounded claim yesterday?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

1:50

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter wasn't brought to my attention, but it was forwarded to the Minister of Finance, and I'm pleased to see that many of the items that were recommended by the city of Calgary were included in our budget such as increased funding for FCSS; \$541 million for LRT projects, including an amount that will allow us to extend the line to the airport; \$282 million for the Springbank off-stream reservoir project; \$15 million for the Repsol sport centre; \$59.2 million for the Glenbow Museum revitalization; and, of course, year-over-year increase in MSI funding that will take it up to \$258.6 million by '25-26. I'm delighted to work more with the mayor.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, more than half of the items they keep listing for Calgary are projects that we started, so one party in this Assembly has Calgary's interests in mind.

Now, yesterday the Premier also claimed that Alberta sexual assault centres refused – her word – a \$4.2 million investment, a strange story. Later we learned they didn't actually refuse it; they just didn't think it was enough. Now, while this budget has \$30 million for a war room, can the Premier please tell us why it was her who actually refused to fully fund supports for survivors of sexual assault, not them refusing to take the money?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the \$17.1 million this year is going to be spent on sexual assault centres. That's a 25 per cent increase over the past five years. Now, our government did offer \$4.2 million in additional funding, which was not accepted by the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. If they've changed their mind, we'd be more than happy to have them contact our minister of social services so that we can cut the cheque and we can get started on making sure that services are given to the women as they need them.

**Ms Notley:** Doubling down, I guess.

You know, in one press conference yesterday the Premier intentionally provided inaccurate information to Albertans twice. That's a light day for her. She did receive a priority list from Calgary, and she declined to support the downtown. Advocates for survivors of sexual assault did not refuse funding; rather, she walked away when they told her it wasn't enough. Will the Premier admit that her statements yesterday were not accurate, that her statement today was not accurate, apologize to this House, and then reverse both of those decisions?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we stand ready to give the \$4.2 million to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. If they'd like to contact the minister, we'd be happy to cut the cheque for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we discussed an e-mail about an off-loading policy for paramedics in ERs, one that staff described as unsafe. Today the Parkland Institute released a report with descriptions from paramedics describing the hardship it causes. "I've seen nurses that I've known for years cry because they don't know what they're gonna do . . . People have died in the waiting rooms . . . They need somebody to be there taking care of them." So to the Premier: is moral injury the new mandate in EMS? Yes or no?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're delighted the Parkland Institute is catching up with us four months after the fact when we already began the process of making changes back on November 17. We knew that the issues were as acute as had been described because of the great work that the MLA for Highwood had done, going all over this province, talking to front-line workers, developing 98 recommendations for how we needed to implement and make change. We've released both of the reports publicly, and we've begun the process of making sure that we have more efficient off-load. As a result of that, we expect by the end of March that we're going to be reaching the 45-minute drop-off target.

**Ms Notley:** Every time she answers this question, her answer changes, and it's so confusing because the front-line staff are clearly under the impression that what's going to happen is that they're going to be mandated to do this, and they believe that all across Calgary. Now, it's my job to be their voice in this House.

She claims it's not a mandate; it's a target, but maybe it isn't a target. She claims she's hiring hundreds of nurses, all in just eight days. These folks deserve clarity. Will the Premier commit that there will be no changes to off-loading until every single nurse she claims she can hire in eight days is hired, trained, and on-site in the ER?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent in this Chamber for all of us to give true information to the public so that they are not made fearful by misinformation and false allegations. I'm quite happy to say that I have had a conversation with Dr. John Cowell, and the e-mail in question is patently untrue. It is irresponsible of the Leader of the Opposition to continue pretending it is true. There are 114 full-time equivalent nursing staff being hired as we speak who'll be stationed in all 16 of our acute-care hospitals. There will never be a case of a person being dropped off without care.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Dr. Cowell's so-called solutions are never always what they claim to be. For instance, AHS recently touted funding for 19 new ambulances. However, in a recent media story Calgary-area paramedics told us that staff are actually being told to park the old ambulances and then take out the new ones. "On paper, we can say every day the new ambulances were staffed, but they're actively dropping [trucks] . . . off the board." Can the Premier please explain how Dr. Cowell asking staff to switch trucks somehow puts more trucks onto the road?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are going to judge the performance of the system by their experience in it. Last January we had over a thousand incidents in Edmonton where we were on the red alert, where there were not ambulances available. This year, after all the reforms that we have so far made, that was down to about 80. That's a 90 per cent reduction, and we had similar success in Calgary. Year over year the number of red alerts are down 60 per cent. That is a sign of a system that is working, because we're empowering paramedics on the front line so that they can treat on-site and also make sure that we have effective drop-off.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is next.

### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Ganley:** Twenty billion dollars: it's roughly the entire health care budget, also the amount that this Premier plans to give away to companies to clean up their own liabilities. Yesterday I visited Airdrie and Red Deer. Residents in these cities are facing ER closures, ambulance shortages, and can't get the medical care they deserve. Why is this Premier more focused on giving away billions of dollars of Albertans' money instead of addressing the real issues facing the people of this province?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that information is just, quite frankly, false. Our Energy minister is consulting on a number of different initiatives for us to address the outstanding liability to clean up inactive well sites. We know that that amount has now gone up to \$30 billion, and it's why our government took action. The members opposite didn't take action when they were in the position. We are now cleaning up every single year \$740 million – \$740 million – in existing liability that comes out of the companies' own profits.

**Ms Ganley:** I'd love to know when the people of Alberta are going to see these other projects.

The Premier claims that her giveaway is only a pilot program worth \$100 million, likely a down payment on the \$20 billion, but coincidentally that's the same amount Calgary requested in the budget to support its struggling downtown. But they got nothing. Meanwhile Calgary has the highest office vacancy rate in the country, and the number of head offices has gone down under the UCP. Why is this Premier ignoring Calgary while giving billions of dollars to her friends?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think the members opposite have any credibility when they're talking about hollowing out the downtown office core in Calgary. We had 13 consecutive quarters where people left this province, and their Energy minister at the time said that their job-creation plan was: go get a job in British Columbia. We only had \$30 million worth of venture capital investment; we're up to \$729 million a year. And a lot of those head offices and those expansions are happening where? In Calgary. An 8 per cent corporate income tax is to credit for that.

**Ms Ganley:** Let's talk about credibility, Mr. Speaker. This Premier tries to claim that her \$20 billion giveaway is just a pilot project and that no decisions have been made until after the election. But the organizers for this scam: one of them runs a third-party attack ad on the NDP, another one campaigned for the Premier during her leadership contest and now works in her office, and the third is the Premier herself. Why is the Premier hiding the details of her giveaway? Is it because she knows it makes Tory land look like Disneyland?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I will not hide the fact that I believe it's a priority for this government to clean up the \$30 billion of liability that have been created over the years because of inactive wells, and we are going to take every measure to make sure that we do it. We have \$740 million being cleaned up this year, and part of the reason companies have the ability to do that is because we reduced the corporate income tax rate down to 8 per cent. They increased it: 12 per cent. So when they're talking about caring about Calgary, I can tell you that's no way to attract businesses into downtown Calgary. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

## 2:00 Budget 2023 and Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, imagine the mayor of Lethbridge's surprise last week when he told the media that he thought there was a page missing from the budget. People in Lethbridge could not believe our city got nothing in the budget. My question is simple. To the Premier: why is there \$20 billion for friends and insiders but nothing for families in Lethbridge?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is hilarious to hear this from the member opposite when, in fact, if she had looked at the budget, she'd realize that just capital spending alone, just this budget: \$70.6 million on top of previous years' \$165 million of just capital spending, not to mention that just yesterday I had the honour of spending the day with the minister of seniors and community services announcing \$355 million in programming for the disability and homeless sector. More than proud to stand up for Lethbridge, more than proud to stand up for our government.

Thank you.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, the budget has no details for expansion of cardiology services in Lethbridge. The project has been on AHS's radar since 2018, when we committed to it. Several years later, with advocacy from physicians and the city council, Lethbridge still got nothing. One cannot find a family doctor accepting new patients, and there's no plan to address that either. Why is the Premier ignoring access to health care, any kind of health care, really, from primary care to advanced cardiac care? Is it because she would just rather that we pay to see a doctor?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Again thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If the member opposite had done her homework, she'd realize that Alberta Health Services south zone didn't even put the cath lab on the capital list until 2022, let alone that it was never put on the priority list, so the Minister of Health never received that. Hard to fund a project that was never asked for in the first place. I'd like to see – what did that member do when she had four years in government to invest in health care in Lethbridge? Absolutely nothing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. members will come to order.

**Ms Phillips:** I guess we'll have to see what kind of documents actually exist for that.

The city and county of Lethbridge identified a number of critical investments in water and waste water, the replacement of highway 3 bridge, new investments in housing, yet nothing. Let's see: nothing for infrastructure despite having the Infrastructure minister in the city, nothing for health care despite having one of the worst health care crises in the province, nothing for housing despite homelessness doubling since 2019. To the Deputy Premier and the Infrastructure minister. He does realize that it's his job to be the voice for Lethbridge in government, not to just seal-clap for government talking points in Lethbridge. He does realize that, right?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, if they'd done their homework, they'd realize that capital investment in this budget: \$70.6 million, new projects, new schools, new gymnasium for a school, but she couldn't get that gym done in 20 years. We authored \$25 million additional spending for health care, surgical initiatives, the renal dialysis program, which was a priority put forward by the Alberta Health Services south zone. On top of that, more infrastructure, the agrifood tax credit, which will be a huge benefit to the south as that's where we not only grow food but we process it and ship it all over the world. More than happy with this budget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

## Child and Youth Mental Health Supports

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. CASA Mental Health is a vital part of the Edmonton region and a leader in delivering youth mental health services across the province, and that is why I was pleased to see our government partner with them to expand mental health treatment for youth across Alberta. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: could you please inform the House about the government's partnership with CASA Mental Health and the impact that this announcement has on families here in this region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member, of course, for that very important question. You know, every person in Alberta certainly deserves the opportunity to access mental health supports, access and pursue recovery, and live a happy and healthy life. If passed, Budget 2023 will invest \$92 million over three years to provide critical mental health supports for children and youth across Alberta in partnership with CASA Mental Health. This is an enormous investment in children's mental health, and on this side of the House we support.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for his answer. Given that CASA House is based in Sherwood Park and has proven results providing youth mental health services and given that no child should go without the help and support they need to live healthy and happy lives regardless of where they live in the province and given that Alberta's government is dramatically expanding services to support more young Albertans in their pursuit of recovery, can the minister please elaborate on the government's plan to expand CASA House programming to other cities here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member again for the question. As part of the \$92 million investment into CASA Mental Health, \$25 million is going to go towards capital projects in Fort McMurray and in Calgary to expand CASA House services to those cities. CASA House is a live-in program for youth, for grades 7 to 12, where their parents and caregivers can activate and participate in treatment. It's all-inclusive, and it's something that CASA is very proud of, the work that they have been doing in expansion to help more young Albertans with complex mental health needs. It's something that's very important on this side of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Budget 2023 includes record-level investments for the newly established Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction and given that provincial funding for this ministry has more than doubled since the members opposite were in power and given that the \$92 million investment to expand CASA Mental Health services will make life-changing impacts on young Albertans right across the province, can the minister please inform this House how yesterday's announcement fits into the province's recovery-oriented system of care?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. You know, of course, this is unprecedented, the amount of money that we're spending to support children with mental health issues, Mr. Speaker. The funding alongside this record-setting \$275 million investment to the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction builds on an ongoing effort to remove barriers and make high-quality mental health care accessible to everyone. On this side of House it's about ensuring that we have mental health supports that are accessible and affordable for all Albertans.

Thank you.

## Health Care System Capacity

**Mr. Shepherd:** The Premier's recent claim that our health care system is not in crisis was an insult to every health care worker in our province who's been mistreated and unsupported by this government, and they were quick to say so. Dr. Neeja Bakshi said: "I woke up to [over] 120% capacity for internal medicine for the 18th month in a row and [that's] dangerously close to saying we can no longer safely admit patients – but sure. It's no longer in crisis." She says: "Morale is very, very low . . . The front liners can tell [this Premier], that things have not changed, things are exactly the same." To her: who should Albertans trust, the workers on the front lines saving lives or a Premier desperate to save her job?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We know that we have challenges in health care. That's why I am so pleased that part of this budget, Budget 2023 – we are investing nearly another billion dollars, the record amount ever, to be able to expand capacity within our health care system and hire more people to support the delivery of health care services. We are making progress in getting the times down. I was very pleased to be standing with Dr. Cowell and our Premier to make the announcement of the 90-day report, getting wait times down in terms of EMS, emergency departments, and I'll talk more about that in a second.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given that regarding wait times, Mr. Speaker – Sheila Ethier is a nurse advocating for her husband, who has stage 4 lung cancer. She's on a mission to get Brian treated as quickly as possible, but given that Sheila has worked the phones daily since his diagnosis but recently sent us a note saying that they're resigned to the wait, that there's nothing they can do about the backlog in Edmonton and Calgary due to the severe staff shortages caused in good part by the UCP, will the Premier or this minister apologize to Sheila and Brian and all Albertans who are waiting for treatment for their failure to be truthful about what Albertans are experiencing in our health care system?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to all Albertans who are sitting on the wait list and many of them who are waiting in pain. There are levels of uncertainty. This is a problem in Alberta. This is a problem, quite frankly, across the entire country and most of the First World. COVID demonstrated the cracks that already existed in our system. Unfortunately, patients were waiting far too long even under the previous government, but we are taking action to address that. You know, very pleased, again, that as part of the 90-day report our surgery wait-list is coming down. In November it was 39,246, and as of January 2023: 35,595 waiting at a time. That is still too high, but we are making investments to be able to get that number . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government hammered on the cracks until they split wide open and given that in her president's letter to Alberta Medical Association members on March 3 Dr. Rinaldi wrote:

It's . . . important to note the crisis is far from over. Members are seeing unchanged pressures in the ER and ER closures continue at various rural sites. In my own practice, I have noticed no change in the lengthy wait to see a specialist and many Albertans are still unable to find a family physician.

Given that there are dozens of hospitals partially closed due to staff shortages, will this Premier, this minister take some responsibility,

admit they were wrong, acknowledge the very real crisis in health care in Alberta?

2:10

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I noted, there are challenges in our health care system. As part of Budget 2022 we allocated an additional \$600 million in that budget year; \$1.8 billion over three years; this budget year, as I already indicated, nearly an addition billion dollars on top of that. We know we have challenges in our system, and we are addressing them. Again, very pleased, as part of the 90-day report, that the trend lines are heading in the right direction in terms of surgery wait-lists, EMS wait times, and ED wait times, but I recognize we need to do more. We have a plan to do it, and we're delivering on that plan.

#### Child Care Cost-control Framework

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, last month the UCP quietly released their cost-control framework for child care, but when asked about it at a press conference, not one of the three UCP ministers there wanted to or could answer questions about it. Why? Because they don't want Alberta parents to know that under their plan parents won't ever be paying only \$10 a day for child care. Parents will be paying extra fees for, quote, enhanced services. What's an enhanced service? Well, food – snacks and meals – language and inclusion supports, a puppet performance, an art class, things that should be part of every early childhood program. Will the minister admit he wants to nickel and dime Alberta parents at the expense of their kids' early learning?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I am incredibly proud about the progress that we made with respect to the cost-control framework, and we're working diligently with our federal counterparts to make sure that parents in this province have the choice of what type of daycare they want to provide for their children. This cost-control framework program will allow all daycare operators to flourish in this province while keeping daycare in this province affordable for all parents as well.

Thank you.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that the UCP's plan means children of parents who can't afford to pay these so-called extras will be left out of meals, field trips, activities, which is heartbreaking and callous, and given that for-profit and nonprofit child care operators are all saying that this goes against everything they know about early childhood education and that it isn't even practical to separate kids from each other because of staffing requirements, how does the minister plan to implement this framework in April since he hasn't consulted with operators or been up front with parents? Or is he waiting until after the election so we have to clean up his mess for him?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, we're doing exactly that. We're taking our time to get this right, unlike the failed program of the NDP, the \$25-a-day pilot program, which was an incredible failure. We're taking the opportunity to get it right by consulting and engaging with all stakeholders in this province, including our daycare providers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that working parents using out of school care are currently paying more for one to two hours of child care than some parents using full-day child care and given that since Budget 2023 doesn't include even a dollar more from the province for child care, the UCP is continuing to exclude these parents from affordable child

care and given that the Alberta NDP has been clear that we will include out of school care – we will not ask parents to pay more for quality child care, and we will consult and value all operators and educators. Three UCP ministers have failed Alberta families on child care, but Albertans will get to make a different choice soon. Is the minister ready to admit that the NDP is the party to make affordable quality child care . . .

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

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, the mere thought of an NDP government with respect to our daycare providers in this province strikes fear in all of our providers. Their failed program was proof positive that they cannot manage the daycare program in this province. This government is providing affordable daycare. This government is providing a sustainable daycare model for our providers in this province, and we'll continue to do so into the next election and beyond. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is next.

#### Budget 2023 and Calgary

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a Calgarian and the owner of a family business in downtown Calgary for 32 years, I've seen downtown Calgary both struggle and grow. Today Calgary is coming back as investments pour back into the city. In fact, according to a recent Avison Young report vacancy rates in downtown Calgary are dropping for the first time in years. To the Minister of Finance: why was the situation in downtown Calgary so dire under the previous government, and what is this government doing to turn things around?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Ms Schulz:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll take a walk down memory lane to when the NDP jacked up the business tax, refused to defend our energy industry, emptied out the downtown core, chased 183,000 jobs out of Alberta, and then told Albertans to go to B.C. if they wanted a job. We have taken many steps to diversify our economy, encourage investment, and create jobs. We accelerated the job-creation tax cut. We implemented the innovation employment grant. We created Invest Alberta. We recapitalized the Alberta Enterprise Corporation. We've cut almost 30 per cent of red tape. We're investing additional funds to Alberta . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government has restored the Alberta advantage and has just introduced our second balanced budget in a row and given that Alberta's economy is strong and leading the nation in economic growth, meaning that we can invest in projects that matter to Calgary families, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain what the 2023 budget for Calgary projects is and how those projects will help our beloved city continue to grow and prosper?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, the long list of capital investments in Calgary is so long that I can never seem to make it through the entire list. We are investing nearly \$3 billion in capital investments in three years. So what I'm going to start with is the new projects and initiatives in this year's budget: \$59 million

for the University of Calgary vet med expansion, \$41 million for SAIT John Ware redevelopment, \$38 million for the office of the Chief Medical Examiner that's in Calgary, \$22 million for a new interchange at Stoney Trail and Airport Trail N.E., \$20 million towards the Repsol sport centre, \$5 million for the Calgary Stampede Foundation . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgary's downtown economy is growing and diversifying, with industries like film and television, technology, and the arts all booming, and given that the members across the aisle, particularly the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, seem to have a preoccupation with festivals as a component of downtown vitality, can the Minister of Culture tell us what the single largest festival in Alberta is and what impact it has on downtown Calgary's economy?

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, hon. member, for that great question. Unlike the NDP, who don't even know how to read the budget – let me tell you this. In Budget 2023 we invest \$5.8 million to the Calgary Stampede. That will yield \$540 million in economic impact for Calgary alone. Mr. Speaker, we have 1.2 million people participating in the Calgary Stampede. We're not done yet. The Glenbow Museum: a \$40 million investment for the grand opening, targeted for 2025. I'm looking forward to . . .

#### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Mr. Dach:** The budget tabled by the UCP last week was their fifth budget, and for the fifth time in a row the UCP have failed to deliver the critically needed south Edmonton hospital. The only thing they manage to do time and time again is delay this vitally needed hospital, that would serve growing communities in south Edmonton. Instead of a hospital under construction, Alberta families have an empty field. Why does this government refuse to build the south Edmonton hospital?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This budget has \$630 million for that very hospital.

I'd like to point out the fact that in 2017, while the NDP were in government, they did a very high-level, pathetic, superficial needs assessment. They did no business case, they did no clinical service plan, they did no functional plan and then just picked a number out of the sky and put that towards the hospital. Very difficult to build anything without a plan. Maybe they should go back and learn to do that work before they announce big, grandiose numbers.

**Mr. Dach:** Empty fields, empty promises.

Given that after four years and five budgets the best the UCP could muster is talking about how they're planning and doing site work, which anybody who's actually been to the site knows is not true, and given that the Infrastructure minister was unable to answer the question about when construction would start on this hospital when asked before the budget, let's try again. Can the Infrastructure minister tell this House on what date construction of the south Edmonton hospital will actually begin?

**Mr. Neudorf:** On the date that we finally fix the mess that the NDP left us. It's interesting that the NDP, when they picked the site for the south Edmonton hospital, picked a piece of land under which an active pipeline is. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it's very

difficult to negotiate how you build a hospital on top of an active pipeline. It's really great that they left us another mess with no business case, no clinical service plan, no functional plan, and just a number picked out of the sky. Once we fix all of their problems, we'll actually start.

2:20

**Mr. Dach:** More empty fields, more empty promises, Mr. Speaker.

Given that our government ended decades of Conservative flip-flopping to get the Calgary cancer centre built but given that the UCP made it their mission to delay the south Edmonton hospital as long as possible, showing that when it comes to the health of the Edmonton region and the surrounding area, this government simply doesn't care, can the minister state categorically on the record what date the south Edmonton hospital will open? Or, like the rest of the province, is he waiting for an NDP government to come back into office to get the project built?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will start this project. We have started this project, but we're still fixing their messes. Not only did they pick a site with an active pipeline underneath it; they had no plan, no business case, and no clinical services planned. We are working on building that, we have dedicated money for that, and when we figure out the best way to meet those services and the needs of people in Edmonton, we can start designing this. We want to build this, we've set money aside for it, and we're continuing to move in the right direction even though they didn't do any of that in their four years in government.

#### Support for Ukrainian Refugees

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, roughly 20,000 Ukrainian refugees have come to Alberta in the last year. I'm proud to be from a country that has opened its doors to help Ukrainians. That's also a reason I'm so deeply disappointed to hear that the UCP is forcing Ukrainian refugees to jump through unnecessary hoops and verify their assets before qualifying for provincial aid. Timely access to financial aid for refugees is crucial, and this government is making it harder than need be. To the minister: does this government seriously think that Ukrainian refugees can phone their banks to verify their assets, assets that may have already been destroyed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. Certainly, we want to make sure that Ukrainian evacuees that are in Alberta are getting the support that they need. That's why we've recently announced the expansion of the income support program, got rid of the six-month deadline, to make sure that people could access the supports. So if people are still falling through the cracks and not getting that support, I'd love to work with the member as well as the community, as we have been, and our great parliamentary secretary for Ukrainian supports to make sure that we're meeting the needs. I look forward to talking more afterwards.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Ukrainians cannot access financial aid because of the asset verification requirement, an issue the government, I've been told, has been made aware of multiple times yet has still not addressed, and given

that the government has a duty to ensure refugees have the support they need to live in dignity, how can Ukrainian refugees trust the government has their best interests at heart when Ukrainian refugees are living in this province right now without access to vital financial support because of this bad policy?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for bringing this to my attention. It has been my direction – of course, we can't use assets that are locked up in Ukraine against individuals that have had to evacuate to Alberta. That is not our policy. If that is what's happening on the front line, I will get that fixed. I want to make sure that people who have had to evacuate their country because of this unjust, terrible war get the appropriate supports here in Alberta. I think we all can agree that that is of utmost importance, and I'm so thankful for that member bringing it to my attention. I will get on this right away to make sure that we deal with this shortsightedness.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Ukrainian refugees have endured trauma, left and lost loved ones, and are now faced with the immense challenge of resettling in a new and unfamiliar place, we need to make the situation as easy as possible for them. So I will hold the minister to his words. I appreciate his willingness to work with us and the Ukrainian organizations that are helping refugees settle and would urge the minister to act with diligence and speed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for his advocacy on this issue. He certainly has my commitment and the commitment of this government to make sure that all Ukrainians that end up in Alberta are getting the support, that they know this is a warm and welcoming place for them to be able to land. Of course, working across this government, we're going to do that. Thank you again for bringing this to my attention. That's my commitment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River has a question.

### Crop Insurance

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A quiet drama has been unfolding in the ag file outside of this Chamber, and I wanted to bring the question right here to the Legislature. The other day, listening to 630 CHED, I heard a member of the opposition, the critic for agriculture, claiming that when we look at crop insurance premiums, they're going to be going up by 60 per cent. Now, that's a big number, and it ran a shock down my spine. I wanted to hear the truth in this Chamber and give the minister an opportunity. Is the NDP right? Is it going up 60 per cent, Minister?

**Mr. Horner:** Of course, they're not right, no. I can assure everyone in this House that crop insurance premiums are definitely not increasing by 60 per cent. You would think, if the members opposite were confused by the fiscal plan or the budget, they would ask a question of me, my ministry, the department, or maybe AFSC as opposed to calling a press conference to spread misinformation and attempt to incite panic. The programs in our business risk management suite should never be politicized; they're too important to the ag community. More questions, fewer memes. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that that's embarrassing for the members opposite and given that farmers are working hard to keep up with the challenge of rising costs, never mind the Trudeau and NDP carbon tax that is continuing to drive up costs for farmers, and given that insurance coverage needs to be adjusted to the market conditions, what growth coverage should Albertan farmers expect in this year, 2023?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The crop insurance coverage in Alberta has increased substantially over the last two years, by an order of magnitude. We've seen the aggregated coverage double, from \$4.8 billion to almost \$10 billion. Now, much of that increase we saw last year. We will still see increases in this year, with year-over-year changes in hard red spring wheat at 17 per cent, feed barley at 9 per cent, canola at 12 per cent, yellow field peas at 2 to 3 per cent. The increase in premiums to individuals in this year will align closely with the change in the value of the specific crops they're growing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the clarity of the answer here in the people's Chamber so that farmers can hear the honest truth.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, have social media accounts with memes propagating this sort of misinformation, given that not one question came to this Chamber or to the minister's office and given the importance of focusing on the truth in this Chamber if nowhere else, could the minister please let us know what he is doing . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Williams:** . . . to address the misinformation and speak to the honest truth about what Alberta farmers can expect from this government? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

A point of order is noted at 2:27.

The minister.

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. It feels a little like Groundhog Day in here. I told the NDP critic last year that you can't just bust out your crayons and mess with this formula. The formula is set; it's the same formula that was here under the NDP. It's part of an agreement between the federal government and the provinces. The funds that move are statutory. The formula encompasses your area rate, your historical yield data, the premium rate, your level of coverage, and your crop type. I would suggest that the next time you feel like bebopping outside of the Anthony Henday, you know what the heck you're talking about.

### Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

**Ms Goehring:** In the UCP's first budget the Finance minister declared economic diversification to be a luxury and proceeded to cut several tax credits, including the interactive digital media tax credit. As a result, Alberta lost jobs as companies hired out of province. One tech CEO said that he moved his company to Calgary because of the tax credit, and if he had known that the rug would have been pulled out like this, he never would have moved to

Alberta. The tech sector has been asking for the digital media tax credit to be reinstated for three and a half years, but the UCP keeps letting them down. Minister, where's the tax credit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Yes, it is true. The Premier did ask me to look into bringing forward a proposal on what a tax credit for the digital media space could look like, and we are continuing that important work. The key thing here is, though, that we need to find a balance between representing the interests of all Albertans and Alberta taxpayers and the interests of the digital media industry. If we're going to introduce a program that's going to cost tens of millions if not hundreds of millions of dollars over the long term, we owe it to Albertans to make sure that we've done our homework on the economic analysis and the cost benefit. That's exactly what we're going to do, and it's going to take a little time.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that in November the minister said that a digital media tax credit was, quote, a priority and given that in her mandate letter the Premier asked the Minister of Tech and Innovation to develop a tax credit proposal for the video game, digital media industry to be competitive with Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, attract investment, and create jobs and given that the tax credit wasn't in the budget, why has this minister failed to deliver on this?

2:30

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to remind the members opposite that I have an obligation to all Albertans and to Alberta taxpayers to make sure that whatever programs I recommend that our government proceed with are a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. I am still committed to following up on the Premier's direction to explore proposals for a digital media tax credit, but we've got to do it in a responsible way that respects all Albertans, as I said, finding that balance between the needs and priorities of all Albertans and the needs and priorities of the digital . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that one tech CEO whose company started in Alberta thanks to the digital media tax credit said that he was getting ready to reinvest in the province with the expectation that the tax credit was coming back and given that this snub in the budget means that those investment plans and jobs will die in Alberta and thrive in other provinces and given that B.C. just extended their digital media tax credit for another five years, why is this government okay with losing Alberta jobs to other provinces?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we remain committed to exploring policy proposals for a digital media tax credit, but we have to do it in a responsible and sustainable way that relies on good, sound economic analysis. We need to do a proper cost-benefit analysis of this. Other provinces that have these programs have a PST, which is a major economic disadvantage to their entire economy, but that's partly how they fund these. We do not have a PST, and we're proud of not having a PST. That is why we are taking a little bit more of a cautious approach as we are evaluating . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert is next.

## Food Bank Funding

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, food banks are struggling to keep up with demand. It's gotten so bad that they're actually cutting the size of food hampers here in Edmonton, saving some of the amount that they give families. The cost of living and the price of food are too high, and this government has done very little to address this problem. The UCP's inaction has hurt nonprofits and the hard-working people of this province. They deserve better. This UCP government announced that \$20 million would be going out the door to help food banks in Alberta, yet the two biggest food banks, that are feeder food banks – they're huge – in Edmonton and Calgary, only got a combined about half a million dollars. Why is that, Minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm proud to be able to stand up today and say that this government has put money behind food banks, which has not happened before in Alberta's history, because we know how important food security is. We were happy to be able to partner with not-for-profits across this province and not only support food banks but also support community and cultural organizations across the province because they have great reach into our communities. They know where the need is. They can help meet that need, and we can usually leverage our limited dollars with their great volunteer and community support. We are committed to addressing food scarcity and promoting food security.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that food banks serve a significant portion of Alberta's population, with the province's biggest food bank serving over 30,000 visitors a month, and given that government's so-called support for food banks has only provided Alberta's food banks enough money to cover one month of food supply in these biggest food banks, will the minister admit that this government is not and has never really been invested in supporting people in this province? Over the last four years you made poverty worse. Now we're close to an election, and it's: money, money, money for you; here, we're going to fix this problem. You made the problem worse. Explain how you're going to fix it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

I just might provide some caution to the member that making an accusation like, "You made the problem worse," and not speaking through the chair are certainly not likely to create an environment where decorum is moving in the right direction.

The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has demonstrated a serious commitment to addressing challenges within our community, not just food scarcity issues, through our historic investment into food banks but also partnering with not-for-profits across the board. We've increased funding for homeless supports. We've increased funding for mental health and addictions supports.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** We've increased money for affordable housing, significant increases for affordable housing. Our affordability minister has done fantastic work expanding supports as well. We are very committed to helping our most vulnerable. We indexed AISH,



seniors' benefits, and other supports as well. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to addressing these issues.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:35.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that we've seen four years of cuts that have made poverty worse in this province – we've seen it all over the place, four years of cuts, Mr. Speaker – and given that this minister now is standing up and trying to boast about helping the food banks when actually this government created the problem and given that many people in this province were ineligible for the affordability payments despite the fact that they desperately needed support, it's clear that the government actions lack any substance, so will this government stand up today and admit that they actually missed the point, that they only really got money to a tiny fraction of the population?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of what we've been able to do to help care for our most vulnerable in our community. I'm committed to continuing to work with our not-for-profit sector to make sure that we are addressing these needs, these great needs, that are in our community. During the last election when I was going door to door, there was a lot of hurt door to door, a lot of people who had lost their jobs, talking to people in their mid-50s who weren't ready to retire but were worried about how they were going to survive and talking to parents whose kids were leaving the province because they couldn't find work here in Alberta. Now as I'm door-knocking in my constituency, my constituents are working. That's how we're addressing the challenges in our community.

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

### Immigration Nominations and Settlement Supports

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Strategic immigration is key to any jurisdiction's success. Immigration helps economies to grow. When newcomers move to Alberta's communities, they spend their money in Alberta and help continue Alberta's economic momentum. Immigrants bring new skills and talents with them, and when they arrive in Alberta, they help our province fill any labour shortage. To the minister of immigration: was Alberta able to receive an increase in immigration nominations, and if so, what were the new nomination numbers?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. After my conversation with the federal minister of immigration, Minister Sean Fraser, we were able to secure an increase in nomination certificates for Alberta. The Alberta advantage immigration program will be able to award 9,750 nominations in 2023. This is a significant increase from our 2022 number of 6,500, and we expect to receive more than 10,000 nominations in 2024 and almost 11,000 nominations in 2025. This is ...

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta has received a substantial increase to nomination numbers and given that Alberta's government has made it a top priority to increase immigration to our province and given that this government has stated that Alberta is facing a labour shortage in

key sectors, to the same minister: what key sectors are facing labour shortages, and what is the Alberta government's plan to address these labour shortages using immigration?

Thank you.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is currently facing labour shortages in technology, tourism, service industries, health care, and more. AAIP will help us attract and retain skilled newcomers that bring skills and talents that will help fill these labour shortages. I am working closely with the Ministry of Health to create a stream within AAIP that will attract needed health care workers to the province. We are also working hard to ensure that Alberta streamlines the process of foreign credential recognition to help get all newcomers into the jobs that they are qualified for. AAIP also has a rural immigration stream that will help with rejuvenating rural economies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta will be welcoming a large number of immigrants in the coming years and given that through the economic focus of the Alberta advantage immigration program our province will be able to nominate newcomers with skills needed to fill labour shortages and given that many newcomers will find themselves in our province, where they will be faced with language barriers, can the minister of immigration tell the members and Albertans how this government will support newcomers settling in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we are going to attract newcomers to the province, it is paramount that we set them up for success. We are fighting racism to ensure newcomers feel safe and welcome in Alberta's communities. We are prioritizing newcomers with close family connections in the province to ensure that they have family support systems. We are supporting language and settlement services to help newcomers learn English and settle into their communities, yet – yet – Alberta still needs more help from the federal government to support these newcomers. I've called on the federal government to ensure they provide funding to help with these settlement services.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Madu, Deputy Premier and Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta annual report 2021.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:27 the hon. the Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) but specifically around the practices of this Chamber around the use of terms like "lying" and "misinformation."

The Member for Peace River was speaking and, through his question, both question 1, supplemental 1, and supplemental 2, repeatedly accused the opposition, the Leader of the Official Opposition of lying and spreading misinformation, ironically, about a topic where on page 70 of the fiscal plan it is printed, “The increase in 2023-24 is due mainly to: \$99 million for a 60% rise in agriculture insurance premium rates necessary to replenish the crop insurance fund” in black and white. This was the item under debate. He then accused the opposition of misinformation and lying and of creating memes to that effect. He also accused the opposition of being unable to confirm information or ask questions when the 60 per cent increase and the cause for it and the direct impact of it were confirmed during technical briefings with the government’s officials.

This is a point of order, and it speaks against your rulings, Mr. Speaker, including rulings made on June 7, 2021, and others around the use of “lying” and “misinformation.”

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, so I would not be able to confirm what was or was not said by the hon. Member for Peace River and the government deputy whip. It is a long-standing tradition in this House that we do not identify specific members and use the words “lying” or “misleading.” If that was in fact the case, it would be unparliamentary and would require an apology and a withdrawal.

But I do not have the benefit of the Blues, I did not hear the remark, so I leave it in your capable hands, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I do have the benefit of the Blues, and what I can confirm – and I might just note to the Opposition House Leader that it’s almost like you are continuing debate in a dispute of the facts on: was it or wasn’t it? That’s what we do here on a general basis, and points of order are not to be used for such things.

With respect to the Blues: “Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the clarity of the answer here.” It sounds like a bit of a preamble; I might just provide some caution. The member goes on to say: “Given, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, have social media accounts with memes propagating this sort of misinformation.” While I can appreciate that it does get close to the line of “misled” or “lying” – it certainly didn’t use either of those terms today in the Chamber – I also will point the hon. Opposition House Leader to the majority of those decisions; there was a period of time that led up to those decisions where I referenced previous cases.

I anticipate that it’s going to be a very robust month of debate here in the Assembly, and I provide caution to all members, including to the Member for Peace River, but this is not a point of order at this point in time. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, at 2:35 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Gestures**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under 23(j). Though it doesn’t explicitly say here, I suspect, to “uses abusive

or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder” I would add in there gestures. At the time noted for the point of order, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud clearly gave me the middle finger in the middle of this Chamber. There is precedent for this in the Chamber before, on a member on our side of the House. That was pointed out, and that member apologized. I believe that such actions and decorum are not worthy of this Chamber and certainly don’t represent the good people of Alberta, that we represent. I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to apologize for that gesture and refrain from using that kind of activity and making those kinds of gestures in this Chamber going forward.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Apologies, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud sits behind me, I am not aware of any gestures that may have been done in this House, so I cannot weigh in on this particular point of order.

**The Speaker:** I will accept the member’s argument on its merits. I can speak specifically to situations in the past where this accusation, allegation, and activity has taken place in the Assembly. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood of the day certainly had used an inappropriate gesture, including the middle finger, directed at members of the opposition at that time. While the member denied it at the time, members of the Assembly came to believe that it was true, with some confirmation by the Sergeant-at-Arms, and that member subsequently apologized. I hope that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud will be reflective. If she did use those sorts of gestures, she ought to apologize to this Assembly; if she didn’t, I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Orders of the Day, Ordres du jour. And I can assure members that those orders will continue in committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the 2023-24 main estimates schedule the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for the consideration of main estimates. This afternoon at 3:30 the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Education in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Technology and Innovation in the Grassland Room, starting at 8; the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, starting at 9; and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors in the Grassland Room; starting at 10:15.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:48 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 8, 2023

Day 15

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms



### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good afternoon.

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let us pray, hon. members. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### International Women's Day

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, today we mark International Women's Day, a day to celebrate the collective achievements of women here in Alberta and across the world. As legislators we have an incredible opportunity to lead change and take action to drive gender equality. Women who sit in this Chamber have contributed significantly, lending their voices to this and other important issues every day. In 1917 Alberta made history when they elected the first two women to serve as representatives anywhere in the British Empire. They were Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams. From Irene Parlby, the first woman to hold a cabinet position, to Helen Hunley, the first female Lieutenant Governor, women continue to speak out and to lead change. We must continue to reinforce that women's voices are welcome and needed as we celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements that they have made.

Today, as you may have noticed, we have an all-female table as well as a group of incredible caucus staff which we have invited to join us in the galleries for this afternoon. We're also the only province with a female Premier and Leader of the Official Opposition. I want to take a moment to thank our caucus staff as well as my female caucus members in this Assembly for all of the ways you have contributed to making this province an incredible place to live.

Please join me – and stand in the galleries – as we recognize International Women's Day.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm pleased to rise and introduce a friend, soon to join us, Ms Cynthia Moore. When Cynthia arrives, we will welcome her to the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery are two guests from the wonderful constituency – this is in the script – of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I'm pleased to introduce them on behalf of the Speaker. Please welcome Mr. Greg Skoworodko and his daughter Ms Lauren Skoworodko, a grade 7 student who is currently learning about the Alberta Legislature. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. I can assure you that the Speaker would butcher your last name worse than I did.

We have a school group joining us here today. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature the grade 6 B, D, and M classes of St. Theresa Catholic school. This school is famous for its Ukrainian bilingual program. And a special shout-out to Aubrey: I'm really good friends with her mom, Leanne. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has a guest.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you. I'm so glad today, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two special guests in the gallery today, Bekinkanyiso Khumalo and Pinky Mathema. They live in the constituency of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. They've just moved there from Nunavut and are wanting to open a diabetic treatment clinic in my riding. Thank you so much for joining us. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you my friend Jennele Giong. Jennele is a former ethnic outreach co-ordinator for the UCP caucus, a former UCP nomination contestant, and is currently a business owner and a senior adviser to the Calgary Chinatown Development Foundation's important work to revitalize Calgary's historic Chinatown. Thank you, Jennele, for your tireless work for your community. Please stand and receive the warm welcome.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and happy International Women's Day. I'm very happy to rise today to introduce my very dear friend Scott Silva. Mr. Silva wears two hats in our community. He's the executive director for the Strathmore Wheatland Chamber of Commerce and the director of business and development for a private real estate group in Strathmore. Thank you so much to the minister of affordability for meeting with us today, and thank you, Scott, for all of your incredible hard work in making our community what it is today. Please rise. Let's give him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Ms Gray:** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of the Assembly the all-women crew who support myself, my House team, and all NDP MLAs each and every day: Jodi Learn, Annie Wachowich, Parul Kanwar, and Emma Pyke. I believe some of them may not be here yet because we asked them to finish the notes and run them in to us. But for those who are here, please rise. Welcome here on International Women's Day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So great to have all of you here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. I'm so happy to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly just a few of the amazing women that we have in our caucus and in our offices: Catherine Harder, Laura Paquette, Ashley MacInnis, Elizabeth Strange. Please join me in welcoming them all here today on International Women's Day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We love our staff.

## Members' Statements

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Child Care

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. As a mother I know that safe and affordable child care is critical to ensuring women could get back to work and participate in the renewed Alberta advantage. This is a particularly important message on International Women's Day as a majority of caregivers in our province and the majority of child operators are women.

To support these women, our government has negotiated an agreement to increase accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care spaces across Alberta. We are also protecting Alberta's world-class and diverse child care system, which includes both private and not-for-profit options. Our government values choice, Madam Speaker. That is why we support the ability of Alberta parents to choose the child care provider that best meets the needs of their family, and that is why we are making sure that parents have access to thousands of more affordable, inclusive, and high-quality spaces. On behalf of our entire government I want to thank all the women who make our province's child care sector world-class. From business owners to workers, women are making Alberta's child care sector inclusive for families, and women are making our province a great place to live and work.

Going forward, our government is fully committed to supporting licensed child care operators, the majority of whom are women, as we work together to deliver child care for Alberta children. We are investing \$32.8 million in new funding to help child care operators across the province with immediate relief from inflation. We're also investing more than \$4 million through a one-time payment to cover the cost of mandatory benefit contribution increases for the last few months of this fiscal year. We're hearing from child care operators who've expressed how much of a world of difference this new support is for them and Alberta families.

These operators are leaders. They're integral to the social and economic fabric of our province, and on International Women's Day we say thank you to all the caregivers across the province.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

### Women's Equality and Government Policies

**Member Irwin:** Women are the backbone of our communities, our families, our city, our province. They're unrelenting agents of change. They're activists, they're community leaders, and they're the reason I'm so proud to be here today marking International Women's Day. It's pretty great to be standing here in the Legislature beside my wonderful and fierce female colleagues, before a gallery filled with women and an all-women clerk table.

Alberta is the province it is today because of the labour, energy, efforts, and advocacy of women, but the weight of this day is also not lost on me. This government has not made the last four years easy for women. They killed the ministry for status of women, a historic ministry that we created and that we can't wait to bring back. They abandoned women in budget after budget, they denied supports needed to support women experiencing domestic and sexual violence, and they've consistently failed to meet the unique needs of women and gender-diverse folks in this province.

**1:40**

I'm also acutely aware of all the women who aren't here today, who've lost their lives due to misogyny, anti-2SLGBTQ-plus violence, racism, and colonialism. I'm committed and we're

committed to doing everything we can to make our province safe and equitable for women and gender-diverse people.

But today, despite all the challenges and the work still left to do, I feel hopeful. It's hard not to because every day I meet women who are determined, who are inspiring, who are getting stuff done. I was just part of the NDP's historic commitment to protect women's reproductive rights in this province, and I feel hopeful today that in May Albertan women will go to the polls and vote for the party that supports them, that is filled with MLAs just like them, and that wants to see them thrive, that they will vote Alberta NDP. Our promise to them and to all of you is that we will work every day as a government, just as we did the last time and just as we have as an opposition, to advance women's rights.

Happy International Women's Day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The birthday girl, the hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

### Women's Equality

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As parliamentary secretary for status of women it is an honour to rise in this Chamber in celebration of International Women's Day. For 2023 the theme is Embrace Equity. We do that by celebrating, respecting, and empowering women every day, by creating opportunities and removing barriers so women can achieve their greatest potential, by championing women role models and leaders in our communities present and past, Alberta women like the Famous Five, who stood before the Supreme Court of Canada so women would be considered persons in the Constitution: Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby. I remember in elementary and junior high school doing many book reports and presentations on Nellie McClung.

Madam Speaker, the Alberta dream serves as an equal opportunity for everyone to pursue financial prosperity in the best place in the world to work, play, volunteer, and raise a family. The realization of this dream is an indicator of the considerable progress we've made as a society, and in this Chamber I see many powerful, determined, accomplished women who are fighting for their values and beliefs and stand as representatives for their constituents. I'm honoured to be part of a government that has put forth initiatives that support women in all aspects of their lives.

Alberta's government is committed to empowering women and girls to succeed in a fulfilling career of their choice, including fields where their gender has traditionally been underrepresented, such as STEM fields and skilled trades. STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – are industries that push innovation, our economy, and our society forward. Alberta's government wants to empower and encourage women to pursue careers in STEM.

Alberta women bring invaluable strength and dedication to our communities and our economy. When they have opportunities to fully participate in our economy, Alberta thrives. By empowering women, Alberta continues to help create an equal and better future for women and girls.

Happy International Women's Day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

### Holi

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Holi is a wonderful custom and celebration, and I extend the greetings from the government of Alberta on this colourful celebration we call Holi. The festival of Holi marks the beginning of spring and the end of

the winter and the blossoming of love. It is a day to meet others, laugh, play, forget, and forgive. The festival originated in India but since has spread through the diaspora of the Indian subcontinent as well as the western world and Fiji. We understand the importance of festivals like Holi to Albertans, and we want to show our support for this beautiful festival.

Holi, also known as the Festival of Colours, is a vibrant and joyful festival celebrated world-wide. The festival is powered by a variety of colourful traditions, each with their own significance. One of the most well-known aspects of Holi is the throwing of coloured powder known as gual. The practice represents the celebration of diversity and the triumph of good over evil. During Holi people of all ages come together to play with colours, throwing them at each other and covering one another in vibrant colours. Another important tradition of Holi is the lighting of bonfires on the night before the festival.

Holi holds a special place in my heart. It is a time to celebrate the rich culture and traditions of my heritage and to come together with loved ones to embrace joy, love, and unity. The government of Alberta is proud to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our province and contributions of our community. May this festival bring joy, happiness, and prosperity to you and your families. Let us all come together to celebrate this beautiful festival and to embrace the diversity that makes our province and our country so great. Happy Holi to everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Prescription Contraception Coverage

**Ms Hoffman:** Today is International Women's Day, and I'm so proud to be part of a caucus that's making real commitments to advance the causes of women's rights across our province. Earlier today I joined the Leader of the Opposition and the other women in our caucus in committing that an Alberta NDP government will provide universal coverage for prescription contraception. That means that Alberta women can get oral hormone pills, contraceptive injections, copper and hormonal IUDs, subdermal implants, and Plan B, all with absolutely no out-of-pocket expense. This will save Alberta women hundreds of dollars every year. For someone buying the pill every month, this program would save them up to \$10,000 over their lifetime.

But, more importantly, providing free and universal access to prescription contraception keeps Alberta women in control of their own bodies, their own lives, and their economic future. In the words of our leader earlier today, this is good health policy, this is good economic policy, and it's the right thing to do. This is the kind of good government we can have when we commit to gender parity in our caucus, among our candidates, and in our cabinet, all of which the UCP have utterly failed at.

So on International Women's Day know this: Alberta's NDP will always stand up for women, with women, and for the rights of women. Alberta's NDP embraces equity. Albertans can bring that promise into government in just a few short weeks. We can elect a stable, competent, and caring government, one that's focused on good health care and affordability, and that's an Alberta NDP government.

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

### Allergy Awareness

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My first private member's bill, Bill 201, the Protection of Students with

Life-threatening Allergies Act, unanimously passed in this Assembly earlier in this 30th Legislature. As of January 1, 2021, Alberta became the first province in Canada to have Epinephrine in every school. This rollout would have not been possible without the staff at Alberta Health and Alberta Education. Because of their hard work, schools across this province have access to life-saving medicine.

I'd like to specifically thank Food Allergy Canada. They provide free online training through their allergy aware program; it covers anaphylaxis in the community, school, and child care settings. Two thousand people completed the program in 2019 and 14,500 in 2020. Programs like this are critical because there is still so much about anaphylaxis that people do not understand. Children are bullied, people are ashamed to talk about their allergies, and if you're not careful, your allergies can take your life.

Due to the luck of the draw, I have another private member's bill coming up. As many of you know, my advocacy around anaphylaxis is deeply personal and important to me. My son, my daughter, and myself all have severe allergies, and as a child my daughter almost died from a severe anaphylactic reaction. I've decided for this upcoming private member's bill to also focus on this issue. As planned, it will allow Epinephrine to be available outside of our schools in public spaces in case of emergency.

There will be no requirement to carry Epinephrine, but entities would be allowed to carry it in the case of emergency. This is currently the case in B.C., New Brunswick, and 35 of the 50 U.S. states. By reducing red tape in this area and following these many jurisdictions who have already made the change, we can ensure that Albertans across the province who suffer from anaphylaxis have the support that they deserve. Public spaces where this will be allowed would include colleges, universities, airports, and recreation centres.

My hope, with the support of all my fellow MLAs, is that this will be . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

### Sexual Assault Economic Costs

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to speak on International Women's Day, and I want to speak about the economy today but not in a typical way. Sexual assault, sadly, is common and the statistics overwhelming. According to StatsCan there were more than 34,200 reports of sexual assault in 2021, an 18 per cent increase from 2020 and the highest level of reported cases since 1996. Despite its increasing prevalence the economic costs associated with sexual assault continue to be either minimized or completely disregarded. The costs are well over \$100,000 per person, minimum, not to mention the economic insecurity, loss of jobs, impact on schooling, and the effects of attaining any sense of stability or economics otherwise. It's time to speak out about the economic costs of sexual assault. This is not an incidental relationship, and it impacts all of us financially and professionally. This is lost human capital.

Imagine that your size or gender or sexuality leaves you vulnerable to being controlled or raped. Imagine you are a student and the perpetrator shares a campus with you even if they've been charged. Charged perpetrators in Alberta on a student or work visa are allowed to wander freely. Every time they are summoned to court, they are not required to enter a plea, and the case gets pushed down the road.

A person raped: the perpetrator is caught and charged and then given a promise to appear. Meanwhile the survivor is subjected to

a rape kit, STD testing and AIDS testing, mental breakdowns, all the while being told to get over it and get back to work. The arrest and charges should matter, and where are the consequences?

Thank you to those of you on the front line for doing the work. Thank you to all of you in here who are doing their level best to help. I am tired of being told that sexual assault and rape doesn't impact the economy. It does. Safety impacts the economy. Women alone are 51 per cent of the population, Madam Speaker. We are the economy.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we are very efficient today, and it is now time for Oral Question Period.

### 1:50 Oral Question Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to kick us off.

#### Executive Council and Women's Equality

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud to have been part of Alberta's first cabinet with gender parity, and our leader has made it clear that if we form the next government, Alberta will have at least 50 per cent women sitting at the cabinet table. The member opposite can't make that same promise. More than half of Albertans are women, but under this Premier they've been governed by a cabinet where men outnumber women 4 to 1. Why did the current Premier continue with the Jason Kenney model of limiting women's voices around her cabinet table?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm delighted that we have such strong women in our cabinet. I'm delighted that we have an environment minister who is going toe to toe with the guys in Ottawa, standing up for our energy industry. I'm glad that we have a Municipal Affairs minister who is doing an incredible job of managing our relationship to improve it with Calgary and Edmonton. It wasn't all that great for a number of years. I think she's done a terrific job. I'm glad she's tackling some of the tough issues like unpaid municipal property taxes and unpaid landowner leases from our energy companies, and I fully expect that she's going to keep on driving that one forward. I'm delighted that we have an immigration and multiculturalism minister who is just . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** She named four because there are only four.

Our ministers that we had for the status of women did important work to move Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions towards gender parity, ensuring that whenever decisions are made about people's lives, half the folks around that table are women. The member opposite created the largest, most bloated, expensive cabinet in Alberta history. Albertans could probably live without a minister for red tape reduction, and we could definitely survive without two ministers who don't even have a portfolio, but why did the member opposite decide to abolish the ministry for status of women?

**Ms Smith:** We have two voices talking on the status of women. Our Minister of Culture represented us very well in Ottawa and managed to get us matching grants for I believe it was over \$50 million worth of programming. His voice at the table was welcome because we are bringing more men into the discussion about

domestic violence if we're going to solve it. Plus, I'm delighted that we have a parliamentary secretary on the status of women, who adds an additional voice and is constantly bringing issues to the table to make sure that they stay front and centre. I think that we've done a terrific job of representing women's voices.

**Ms Hoffman:** In Alberta's NDP we get half the seats at the big kids' table.

Alberta's NDP takes women's rights seriously, and we work to advance them every single day. I am very proud that our leader has made the commitment that an Alberta NDP government will provide free universal coverage for prescription contraception. This can save a woman who buys the pill up to \$10,000 over her lifetime. But, more importantly, it keeps women in charge of their own lives, bodies, and economic destiny. To the members opposite. There's nothing like this in your fake budget, that's male dominated. Why won't the Premier fully support women's participation in the economy and every part of her cabinet?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Madam Speaker, the Alberta government supports protecting choice for women accessing reproductive services in Alberta. We've got coverage for many contraceptive drug and health products. It's available to Albertans who are enrolled in government-sponsored drug and supplemental health benefits. It includes oral contraceptives, injectable contraceptives, intrauterine devices, and others to support women in their reproductive health choices. The women's choice program allows Alberta women to . . .

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

#### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Member Irwin:** Our Alberta NDP team is so proud to commit to Albertans that we will make prescription contraception universally available with no out-of-pocket costs. Our plan tears down barriers, it supports Albertans, it's good health policy, it's good economic policy, and it's the right thing to do. These are the good things that happen when strong, progressive women lead. My question to the Premier is simple. Why is she so opposed to universal coverage for prescription contraception?

**Ms Smith:** I'm not sure why the members opposite are wanting to give a subsidy to private health insurance companies, because the vast majority of prescription drugs are covered under private plans. Essentially, having the government step in and taxpayers step in would offer a subsidy to those insurance companies. We want to make sure that everybody has reasonable access to pharmaceuticals. Through a combination of private insurance and public insurance they have access to the full range of drugs. We also have supports, of course, for our most vulnerable.

**Member Irwin:** Well, you've got \$20 billion for your friends but not a few million for millions of Alberta women.

Our neighbours in British Columbia have introduced similar policy, and this follows New Zealand, Australia, the U.K., and some Scandinavian countries as well. When B.C. announced their policy, so many Albertans reached out to me and asked if we would do the same. I told them, "Well, not with the UCP government; that's for sure," but Albertans can choose to have universal coverage for prescription contraception if they choose an Alberta NDP government in May. A whole lot of Albertans want this. Why doesn't the Premier?

**Ms Smith:** As I said, Madam Speaker, there is a broad range of coverage already available through public and private health plans. The experience that I have seen in watching those programs that are publicly funded is that they actually provide a narrower range of choices. We want to make sure the maximum number of choices are available for women to support their reproductive choices, and that's the reason why we continue to support a mixed system like we have.

**Member Irwin:** For someone buying the pill every month, this new coverage will save them up to \$10,000. These are huge costs for Albertans. Our commitment for universal coverage for prescription contraception builds on our plan for family health teams as well. Our offer to women and to all Albertans is easy access to your health care professional, close to home, when you need it. That's the Alberta I want to live in, that's the Alberta we all want to live in, and that's what we're offering to Albertans. Will the Premier agree that she's offered nothing to Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Madam Speaker, I accept that there are probably a certain number of women that may not have coverage through some plans. We want to do everything we can to make sure someone has access to a private health plan. We also want to make sure that they have options through Alberta Blue Cross. Maybe I should just mention that we've got a nongroup plan available through Alberta Blue Cross so that people would be able, if they're not currently covered, to access that. We want to just make sure everybody has the appropriate coverage. We have that in Alberta.

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

#### Wage Growth and Tax Policies

**Ms Gray:** Madam Speaker, Albertans are working harder and harder but falling further and further behind under the UCP. Every day I hear from Albertans who are struggling to put food on the table and keep up with their bills. Income taxes, fees, tuition, auto insurance, and utilities have all gone up dramatically under the UCP. At the same time, Alberta has some of the slowest wage growth in Canada under the UCP. Why is this government making a bad situation worse by piling on costs while Albertans' real wages shrink under the UCP?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Madam Speaker, I am always perplexed when the NDP talk about how concerned they are about taxes, considering that they raised taxes 97 times when they got elected. The hidden agenda as well of the members opposite: they campaigned and didn't even tell the public that they were going to implement a carbon . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.  
The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** They didn't even tell the public that they were going to implement a carbon tax. Now we can't get rid of it, and their boss in Ottawa, Jagmeet Singh, who's propping up the Liberal leader – they intend to increase the carbon tax 300 per cent, which will increase the cost of everything. I also should mention, Madam Speaker, that we brought the tax rate down for corporate taxes to 8 per cent after they raised it to 12 per cent and chased investment and jobs and people out of Alberta.

2:00

**Ms Gray:** Under the UCP we see the slowest wage growth in Canada. Alberta had the highest wages in Canada when the UCP came into power. Now provinces like Quebec and B.C. are catching

up. Last year wages in B.C. increased by 3.4 per cent and wages in Quebec increased by 4.1 per cent. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Gray:** Here in Alberta they barely increased 2.5 per cent, well below current inflation. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Gray:** And the UCP Finance minister's response? He told Albertans to get a better job. Is this really the best the UCP can offer? Or maybe it's time everyone on the government side of the House changed to a different job.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We were doing so well.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Madam Speaker, the reason why they're focusing on growth rate is because they don't want to focus on the actual level of average weekly earnings in Alberta, which is the highest in the country. It is over \$1,200 per week, \$65,000 per year. The reason why people are flocking to Alberta is that they know that there is opportunity here. There were 13 consecutive quarters of people leaving this province under the NDP, and their job-creation plan was: go get a job in British Columbia if you don't like it here. They're coming back, and they're coming back for the jobs.

**Ms Gray:** You know, Madam Speaker, Alberta had the highest average weekly earnings under the NDP as well. It is the UCP that are putting it at risk. Last election the UCP promised their corporate tax cut would fill office towers in downtown Calgary and boost wages for Albertans. Sound too good to be true? Yes, it was. Downtown office vacancy rates are the highest in the country, corporate profits are leaving the province, and we have the slowest wage growth in the country. Study after study shows that corporate handouts never reach working people. In other words, trickle-down economics do not work. They are a trick.

**Ms Smith:** Highest average weekly earnings in the country, and I would remind the members opposite: 183,000 jobs lost under the NDP, 13 consecutive quarters of people leaving our province. We have turned that around completely. In fact, when I had a courtesy call with Premier Doug Ford, he said he was so angry about our Alberta Is Calling campaign; he wished that we would stop it, and the reason he wished we would stop it is because it's so effective. People are coming here because of the environment we've created, there are jobs, it's affordable, and they're happy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the last set of leader's questions.

#### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Ganley:** The UCP is just full of bad ideas, and they're hiding most of the details until after the election. When will we find out about the UCP's risky plan to take us out of the Canada pension plan? After the election. When will we find out about the costly and dangerous plan to create their own police force? After the election. When will we find out more about Smith's \$20 billion royalty handout? After the election. Why . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member. Order. You know as well as I do that the use of names of members is not allowed in this Chamber. Perhaps rephrase your questions. You have 11 seconds to finish.

**Ms Ganley:** When will we find out more about the Premier's \$20 billion royalty handout? Why is the Premier trying to hide the biggest pieces of her agenda? Doesn't she know that Albertans don't support her risky ideas?

**Ms Smith:** Well, I'd like to know when we're going to find out about the members opposite's secret agenda to increase corporate income taxes again. They keep talking about that, saying that we're still going to maintain a competitive tax environment but don't want to rule out tax increases. I can tell you that the only place the taxes are going in this province under a UCP government is down, but I don't think that they can say the same on the other side. In fact, if they want to show how serious they are, they should phone up the boss, Jagmeet Singh, and ask him to oppose the federal increase in carbon tax, which is going to increase the tax by 300 per cent and increase the cost on everything.

**Ms Ganley:** Albertans hate this \$20 billion royalty giveaway. They hate it because Albertans believe we should all be responsible for [interjection] cleaning up our own messes, and this is the opposite. It's irresponsible, it stinks so bad they can smell it in Saskatchewan, and there's no policy justification. The ones provided by the UCP are conflicting, inconsistent, and defy logic. The Premier's friends will benefit from this; Albertans will not. If the Premier has any evidence to disprove this, will she table it today or admit that it's a scam?

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Ms Smith:** Madam Speaker, a number of years ago all of our junior oil and gas companies were distressed. I know the members opposite know it because it was Sequoia and Trident that went under after their tenure in office, leaving 9,000 wells that got handed off to the Orphan Well Association. Why is that? It's because when you have active wells and a company goes belly up, then it ends up falling to somebody else to pay for it. We believe that we've got to find a way to enable companies to clean up their liability. This is part of the reason why we've put a mandatory spend in place. They're going to have to spend \$740 million to clean up.

**Ms Ganley:** One of the authors of the Premier's \$20 billion handout now works in the Premier's office. The other instigator now runs a PAC attacking the NDP. Despite objections from economists, despite banks calling it anticapitalist, despite those inside her own cabinet being on record against it, it goes ahead. Policy this bad demands an explanation. From every single angle this looks like quid pro quo. Albertans deserve straight answers. They know this won't benefit them, so tell us, Premier: who's it really for?

**Ms Smith:** Madam Speaker, I would just like to fast-forward to where we are now, because a policy that was conceived three years ago under different circumstances is not the same as today. The policy that we have today is now that energy companies – we've seen an increase in oil and gas prices, we've seen an increase in profits, and that is why we are demanding that now is the time for the energy companies to address their historic liability, \$30 billion of liability. It's part of the reason why we have demanded that they spend their own money this year to spend \$740 million on reclamation. It's going to keep on growing up.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

## Support for Women

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate women's achievements and a day to recognize the perseverance of women around the world. We know that Indigenous women and girls suffer domestic violence, addictions, and suicide at rates disproportionately higher than levels in the rest of the population. To the Premier. Please tell this House what this government is doing to support women and families, including First Nations and Métis women in Alberta.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. The safety and well-being of Aboriginal women is our top priority. We have a Premier's council on missing and murdered Indigenous women that I have met with, and they're giving me recommendations on what we can do to be able to address those issues. If passed, Budget 2023 includes \$5 million in new funding to support Alberta's response to the ongoing missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited individuals. Our government also implemented Clare's law in April of 2021, and we have since received 600 applications seeking to access information on current and former partner history of . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for providing those insights. Given that the work to promote the health and safety of Indigenous women is incredibly important and given that, unfortunately, domestic abuse is not just limited to Indigenous women but something experienced by women from all communities and from across the province, could the Premier please elaborate on the support available to all women across the province, including those in rural and remote communities and women from ethnic and cultural minority groups?

**Ms Smith:** Thank you again to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. We have increased the funding for women's shelters this year by \$3.8 million, for a total of \$55 million this year; \$9 million for family violence prevention services; and, of course, we've got our recovery communities, first one in Red Deer, and we're going to be establishing those with half or more of the beds dedicated to supporting women. We also have \$17.1 million for sexual assault centres. We provided \$20 million to civil society groups. I could list off a whole range of them: the Nigerian Canadian Association of Edmonton's family wellness project, Next Step Ministries, and many more.

2:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Indigenous women make phenomenal contributions to our economy and bring a unique perspective to entrepreneurship and given that Indigenous women entrepreneurs make incredible contributions to our province and country as restaurant owners, artists, and oil and gas logistics providers, to just name a few, could the Premier please tell our province about the supports available to bolster Indigenous women in business and in the workforce?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This morning I had the pleasure to be at the Junior Achievement announcement, and they were making their International Women's Day event this year focus on support for Indigenous women entrepreneurs. We have appointed councils to support Indigenous women in Alberta, including the Métis women's and First Nations women's councils



on economic security. In addition, we have \$195,000 that we have increased to expand the next step to success program, which offers Indigenous entrepreneurs mentorship, training, and other supports. We also have the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women to help remove barriers to employment.

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

### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The UCP is failing rural Alberta again. Yesterday we learned from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta that the amount of unpaid taxes owed to rural municipalities was \$253.7 million. This is more than three times as much than in the 2019 survey. The failure of the UCP to address this problem is forcing some communities to either raise their taxes from their residents or cut services. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain why she has failed to address this growing issue?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, the nonpayment of taxes is absolutely unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. We agree with the RMA's assessment that the problem of unpaid oil and gas taxes to rural municipalities is absolutely unacceptable. We're actively looking at options to ensure taxes are paid as a condition of licence transfer. We will be in contact directly with delinquent companies reminding them of their responsibility to pay their taxes. Municipalities also continue to have the option of pursuing unpaid taxes through legal action or the insolvency process.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that in this Chamber there sit three former Municipal Affairs ministers who failed to get this done over their term despite the most recent former minister promising a hammer to address the problem and given that that same minister admitted a year ago today that his strategy failed and that it was time to try something new and given that the RMA president, Paul McLaughlin, has said that he's shocked that we're still having to discuss this issue, what does the minister say to rural voters who want to know where the money is?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, as I mentioned, we are exploring options to make sure that taxes are paid as a condition of licence transfer. That, in fact, is a request of RMA. We committed to work on that, and we are with the Minister of Energy and the AER. Now, we also implemented the special lien during fall 2021 which gives the municipalities priority over other creditors. We also provided RMA with grant funding to provide training and resources to help municipalities use this tool. We worked with the AER, strengthened the regulatory frameworks so that it has the option to consider company records for property taxes and service lease payment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the previous minister said that none of the tools that this current minister is using work and given that rural municipalities are owed over \$200 million in unpaid taxes and given that the RMA president, Paul McLaughlin, has described this as rural municipalities being forced to "subsidize

an industry in a massive boom period" and given that the Premier is pushing a massive \$20 billion giveaway to pay off companies to clean up messes that are already legally obligated to clean up, is the reason the UCP is refusing to act on unpaid taxes because they're too busy planning to hand out \$20 billion to their friends?

**Ms Schulz:** Madam Speaker, I know the member had her questions written in advance, but I'm going to just remind her that, as I said, we are exploring options to make sure that those taxes are paid, to make sure that that's a condition of licence transfer. That is, in fact, a request of the RMA, and we're working on that. More news to come on that soon. Now, our recent survey showed that payment plans or agreements with companies have already been put in place for municipalities to recoup \$48 million of those unpaid taxes. There is further potential for municipalities to recoup another \$28 million from companies that are still in operation. We continue to work with RMA on this issue.

### School Construction in Edmonton

**Ms Pancholi:** Twenty twenty-seven: that's the year the high schools in Edmonton public school division, the fastest growing school district in the country, will be at 100 per cent capacity. At that point there'll be no more space for attendance for area students in Edmonton high schools, and, yes, that factors in the spaces from the high school in southeast Edmonton that opens next year. The year 2027 is four years from now, and it takes three years to build a school, but there are no construction dollars for a new high school in this year's budget. How can the UCP look the parents of Edmonton in the eyes and tell them they don't think their kids need a space in their local high school?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again the members opposite are incorrect. In fact, out of the 58 schools that we announced in Budget 2023, Edmonton is receiving nine projects. Nine projects. I have to tell you that under the NDP, during their four years, they only constructed eight projects in Edmonton. We are already way above that: 18 projects.

**Ms Pancholi:** It's a skill to be that arrogant and wrong at the same time.

Given that I'm proud to represent the students and families and staff of Lillian Osborne high school – shout-out to the Legends – and given that Lillian Osborne is absolutely bursting at the seams – crowded hallways, huge class sizes, and last year they had to go to a lottery for students living in the area and this will continue for the foreseeable future – and given that is why Edmonton public schools made a new high school in Glenriding their number one priority, to take the pressure off Lillian Osborne, would the UCP agree that this is an insult to southwest Edmonton families to not fund full construction of a high school this year?

**Member LaGrange:** Madam Speaker, again incorrect. Incorrect. Nine projects for Edmonton. We are going to be building all of the top priorities for Edmonton public school division, and I'm so glad that Edmonton public school division this year was able to prioritize areas that are growing in Edmonton. We are continuing to build. Unlike the members opposite, we are actually addressing need through an auditor-approved gated process.

**The Deputy Speaker:** With great respect to not using preambles, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that I'm also proud to represent the students, families, and staff of Riverbend junior high school – shout-out to the Centurions – and given that I invite any UCP minister to drive by the school and see how it has become a sea of portables in an effort to fit all their students, the highest enrolment of junior high students in the city, and given that in their four years in government the UCP has only fully funded and built one school for Edmonton public, while the NDP completed 13 and began six more, and after shutting down Edmonton public out of their budget cycles for two years, can we agree that having a UCP MLA in southwest Edmonton has been a waste of time for Edmonton students and families?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Point of order noted at 2:17.

**Member LaGrange:** Madam Speaker, it is obvious the members opposite do not know how the capital plan works. The school divisions actually put forward their top asks. We have actually committed to building 58 schools across this province, nine of which will be in Edmonton. All of the top asks for both Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic – and in fact, as I said, the NDP only built eight when we're building 18.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

#### Women's Workforce Participation

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, and we are celebrating women across Alberta who contribute the skills, creativities, and innovation to help our communities and economies thrive. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development highlight for this Assembly some of the efforts of our UCP government to support Alberta women in skilled job training to pursue meaningful careers?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to share some of the work that we do to get Alberta women trained for their careers of the future. Through Alberta's workforce strategy grants we support projects to help ensure women enjoy economic prosperity. For example, we are very proud to sponsor and partner Higher Landing to deliver employment support services for women professionals, including coaching, workshops, and practice clinics. We also work with Canadian Women in Communications and Technology to help retain and advance women in Alberta's tech industry and create more inclusive workspaces.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.  
2:20

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear that we're investing in the training opportunities for women given that we see ambitions of women are moving beyond being an employee in industry. Can the same minister highlight some of the efforts that our UCP government is making to support Alberta women assert their skills to start their own business or lead their current companies?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta's government is supporting projects that help ensure women continue to lead in

Alberta's economy. Projects like the Hyper Drive: Women in Business Summit, led by Community Futures Grande Prairie, which connects women employers with experts to attract and diversify talent to their companies. We support Chic Geek Society, which runs a women in technology talent connector event to connect women in tech to Alberta tech companies, or the Community Futures Peace Country's Women in the North Conference, a series of events that bring training and networking opportunity to women business leaders in Alberta's north.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you to the minister through you, Madam Speaker. It is good to know how amazing it is that our government is taking steps to help support women succeed in business as leaders and employers given that women make up the majority of Alberta's population and the majority of our postsecondary graduates. Can the same minister highlight for this Assembly why Alberta women are so successful?

**Mrs. Savage:** Alberta women are so successful because they're contributing their skills and talent to fuel the renewed Alberta advantage. They benefit from our low taxes, no sales tax, and our business-friendly investment environment. But they also benefit and help ensure that Alberta has a young, vibrant, hard-working, world-class workforce. Alberta's women are taking the lead in making our province a wonderful place to live, grow a business, build a career, and raise a family. On International Women's Day I salute them.

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

#### Mental Health Services

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday I had the special privilege of standing with Karen Gosbee, the co-chair of Calgary's mental health and addictions community strategy, when she endorsed our family health teams policy. This strategy will ensure that 1 million more Albertans will have a family doctor and will ensure that patients' mental health needs are met, and it will address the stigma faced by those dealing with mental health. Will the minister of mental health join with Albertans like Karen Gosbee and agree that the Alberta NDP plan is the path forward to ensuring that Albertans will have the mental health support they need?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise in this House and set the record straight with regard to what we're dealing with under my ministry. If passed, Budget 2023 will actually give \$275 million. Now, that is a massive increase of over 200 per cent of what was \$87 million back in 2019 when the opposition was in power. This is an area of the work that we are doing as a government that is fixing a problem and a mistake that was made by the previous government, prior to us. They woefully underfunded this area, and we're fixing their mistakes.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that protecting and improving the mental health of Albertans is critical and given that every single Albertan should be able to access care when and where they need it, without exception, something that our policy addresses, and given that Karen Gosbee said when endorsing our plan that "increasing mental health... support through primary care will allow entire... families to be able to access [primary] care," will the minister get out of the way and support our plan?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. If we want to talk about individuals and the views that they have with regard to what our government is doing with regard to access for mental health and addiction, I would say: “We are pleased that Alberta’s government [continues] to make youth mental health a priority in this budget,” Bonnie Blakley; “We are pleased that in Budget 2023, the government has continued to place an emphasis on supporting the mental health of [all] Albertans,” Robbie Babins-Wagner; “The provincial budget demonstrates a commitment to help support vulnerable people who are struggling with mental health and addiction on their journey to housing and recovery,” Sandra Clarkson from the Calgary Drop-In Centre. And take a look at . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that our family health teams announcement builds on our commitment to provide Albertans with five insured mental health sessions, a simple and powerful policy move that this government has ignored, given that a survey conducted by the Alberta Medical Association found that 77 per cent of parents reported that the mental health of their children was worse now than before the pandemic and given that this is a crisis this province needs to tackle and requires all Albertans to come together to ensure that no one is left behind, will the minister acknowledge the mental health crisis and endorse our strategy, ensuring Albertans get . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise to speak on this topic, and I’m very pleased that the members opposite fully endorse our government’s approach to team-based care in primary care. You know, we reached an agreement with the AMA, and I was very pleased to do so through last summer. Part of that was actually putting models of compensation in place to be able to enhance team-based care. So not only family physicians but also others: nurse practitioners, assistant physicians, and mental health supports as well. We also helped support this through our PCNs, and we’ll continue to do so.

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

### Government Spending and Provincial Debt

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the 2019 provincial election the UCP promised to control government spending, but since taking office, this UCP government has seen fit to increase total spending by \$12 billion annually. Given that the UCP has also increased government’s total debt by \$15 billion and given the UCP plans to continue increasing spending to more than \$71 billion annually by 2025-26, to the Finance minister: would you care to retract your 2019 promise to control spending?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, it’s really easy to give advice when you don’t have the accountability of being in leadership. We’ve delivered on bringing Alberta’s spending under control. We set a fiscal anchor back in 2019 to align our per capita spending with that of comparator provinces. We’ve delivered on that commitment, and we’ve delivered two balanced budgets right through the fiscal plan.

**Mr. Barnes:** Madam Speaker, given this government has a spending problem, just like the last government, and failure to

control spending will hit our youth the hardest, given that total debt-servicing costs have risen by one-third since 2019 and are poised to rise by more than \$3 billion in the coming years and given that the recent budget requires \$16 billion in resource revenue to balance the books and given the 10-year average for resource revenue is \$8.7 billion, again to the Finance minister: will you admit that your unsustainable spending plan is a recipe for more debt, more taxes, and hardship for our youth?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House have put the Alberta government’s fiscal house in order. We have brought our spending to a sustainable trajectory, and with last year’s surplus we’ve paid down over \$14 billion of debt – over \$14 billion – reducing debt-service costs of \$560 million a year, year after year after year, funding that can be used for health care, for education, or reinvestment in the heritage savings trust fund.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given, for the sake of argument, let’s assume that through the magic of wishing this government’s pie-in-the-sky revenue projections do hold true, given that increasing spending could only further drive inflation and given that Albertans are already struggling with the rising cost of groceries and heat and electricity and fuel and virtually every other consumer product, again to the Finance minister: why are you budgeting billions in new and inflationary spending rather than providing broad-based income tax relief for hard-working Alberta families?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, we have brought taxes down in this province, unlike the members opposite. In fact, today Albertans have a \$20 billion tax advantage doing business and operating their households in this province relative to the next lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada, and we’re committed to ensuring that taxes remain low in this province. We’ve brought down per capita spending approximately \$700 per person. I would suggest the member opposite consider CPI and population growth and take a look as an economist would . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

### 2:30 Private Child Care Operators

**Mrs. Allard:** When the federal-provincial child care funding agreement was signed in November ’21, daycare costs were cut roughly in half. While I recognize this effort, it is critical that our made-in-Alberta plan provides fair and equitable inclusion of private child care operators based on our province’s unique mixed-market system, particularly since 67 per cent of child care centres are privately operated, accounting for roughly 80,000 spaces across the province. Alberta is on pace to lose over 80,000 for-profit child care spaces that do not currently qualify for funding. To the minister: when will this agreement include all private operators, that make up the majority of our child care spaces?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am always proud to talk about our government’s child care agreement, where we worked very hard to make sure that private operators, 70 per cent of spaces, that the members opposite, the NDP, were going to leave out – we fought for that. Instead of picking winners and losers, we fought for parent choice.

Madam Speaker, in the most recent agreement signed with the federal government, we’ve secured up to 22,500 additional licensed, affordable, and quality child care spaces in private child care facilities, which would provide employment opportunities for

thousands more entrepreneurs, often female, who open up these spaces and the amazing early childhood educators who work in those spaces to support families.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the minister, through you, for her answer. Given that it is, in fact, International Women's Day and given that the majority of private child care operators are women entrepreneurs and further given that subsidies will be extended to all private, for-profit daycares once Alberta's cost control framework is established, again to the Minister of Children's Services: can your ministry provide a specific timeline for the release of the cost control framework and how it will affect these private operators?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, we announced this cost control framework with the federal government just a couple of months ago. Right now our government is engaging with operators to determine the details of what that is going to look like, but I can tell this House that it will be implemented in 2023-24. We will continue to engage with child care operators. We need to hear their voices. We need to make sure that they understand the changes and support the changes that we're making and make sure that they continue to be viable options in our child care spaces given the support for the families that they serve. Further details will be shared in the coming months.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and, through you, to the minister. Given that some privately operated daycare programs in my constituency of Grande Prairie have expressed concerns and also that they will be closing as soon as June 1 if things do not change and given that the children on their wait-lists will now wait even longer for the flexible, accessible, and affordable child care that our government promised, not to mention the children that are served in those centres that may be closing, to the Minister of Children's Services: what is our government doing to provide support to families in my constituency and across Alberta and the centres that serve them while we wait for the \$45 million in new federal funding to be released?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, a number of those questions are coming because under the NDP 70 per cent of those spaces and private operators were completely left out. That happened in the province over to our west, also an NDP province, that had plans to phase out private operators. That is what has Alberta child care operators in the private space nervous.

Madam Speaker, to help more families access affordable, quality child care, Alberta is working towards creating 68,700 additional spaces, 42,500 in nonprofit programs, more than 2,600 in private, and these will be open by 2026.

### Cardiac Care in Lethbridge

**Ms Phillips:** Yesterday the people of Alberta were subjected to watching the Infrastructure minister explain why he can't build infrastructure. He blamed me. He blamed cities. He blamed some doctors. He even blamed pipelines. That was a new one. It was a hot mess express and an embarrassing mix of incompetence and flailing. He said: Lethbridge's need for expanded cardiac care was

a new thing. That's funny. Here's a report, that I will table after question period, from late 2018 on the topic. To the Deputy Premier: why won't he be honest with the people of Lethbridge about his failure to build health care infrastructure?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very happy to be honest with all Albertans and share with them that the NDP in 2017 approved a number in their budget for the Edmonton south hospital that was plucked out of thin air. They did no business case. They had no details, no needs assessment, and no functional plan, all needed steps before anything can be designed and built in this province. That's the order and why it's done. Not only that, but the site that the NDP picked had a pipeline underneath it. They didn't happen to work on any negotiations or on how they were going to build a building around a pipeline.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that yesterday the Infrastructure minister claimed that 2022 was the first time anyone had mentioned the expansion of cardiac care in Lethbridge but given that that is not true, that what the minister has said is not true at all, and given that our government committed to the work that needed to be done to move this forward and given that there's public record of that fact back to 2018 – here's another article that I will table; it's right here, Madam Speaker – where is the Deputy Premier getting his facts? Why doesn't he give answers based in reality?

**Mr. Neudorf:** I have given answers based in reality. I've talked to the regional director of Alberta Health Services south. Not until 2022 did the cath lab in Lethbridge become a capital ask of Alberta Health Services. Yes, as a concept it was talked about from 2018 onward, but until Alberta Health Services south zone elevates that and puts it on the capital plan, which they did not do until 2022, we can't act upon that.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that it's now 2023 and nothing has happened and given that I just provided the Deputy Premier with evidence that this issue has been researched and studied by AHS and advocated by Dr. Sayeh Zielke, a Lethbridge cardiologist – I know the hon. member knows her – and given that the evidence dates back five years, yet the Infrastructure minister keeps saying that he's never really heard of it, and given that our government agreed to this project after the reports came out in late 2018, yet it's all a complete surprise to the Member for Lethbridge-East, why can't this minister just pull himself together and answer this question truthfully? Why don't we have expanded cardiac services in Lethbridge in Budget 2023?

**Mr. Neudorf:** So very interesting to hear that this idea came up in 2018, when they were in government, and they did absolutely nothing with it. Now, as it comes on the list in 2022, I have been advocating with the Minister of Health for that. I've had many conversations with him, and he works through the chain of command as well, elevating it from Alberta Health Services south zone to the executive leadership team of Alberta Health Services Edmonton, and it's being treated with every serious consideration, like every capital ask. We're doing the job properly, something the NDP has always failed to do.

### Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

**Ms Goehring:** Yesterday I asked the Minister of Technology and Innovation why a digital media tax credit was not in the budget. He said that they need to do an economic analysis and ensure it's good

value for taxpayers. Of course we need to spend taxpayer money wisely, but Ontario, B.C., and Quebec all think it's good value. Digital Alberta, the industry association for digital media, thinks it's a good idea. It's year 4. Why hasn't the UCP gotten their homework done?

**Mr. Glubish:** Madam Speaker, of course the NDP don't care about proper process and doing homework. That's why they're over there and we're over here. I have made it very clear to all of our stakeholders in this space and I've made it very clear to the opposition and to the public that before we implement any kind of a proposal to give tens of millions if not hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to a specific industry, we need to make sure that it would be financially responsible and in the best interests of all Alberta taxpayers. The NDP don't have any evidence that that is true and that that would be the case, but we want to assure Albertans that we will prove that before we act.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that today in estimates the minister said that he needs to conduct an economic analysis before moving forward on a digital media tax credit and given that there was no analysis conducted on the UCP gambling away \$1.3 billion on Donald Trump's re-election or tens of millions on their failed war room and given that we have not yet seen any analysis around the UCP's \$20 billion giveaway to the Premier's friends, we know a digital media tax credit will support our economy. Why the double standard?

**Mr. Glubish:** Madam Speaker, I have been very clear about what our plan would be as it relates to a digital media tax credit concept, but what I want to point all members of this Assembly to is the fact that Alberta's tech sector is on fire. We are seeing record levels of investment coming to Alberta without a tax credit. We saw \$729 million last year, which was a massive increase over the previous year and an exponential increase over whatever was invested while the NDP were in power. Our policies are working. Our approach to invest in the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which is bringing five dollars into Alberta for every dollar they invest . . .

2:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that the UCP has strung the digital media sector along for the last three and a half years by promising to bring back the tax credit and failing to do so and given that the minister even had it in his mandate letter and said last fall that it was still a priority and given that the minister is stalling and throwing up more roadblocks despite clear evidence that a digital media tax credit will attract jobs and investment, will the minister stop playing games and just admit he has broken his promise to bring back a digital media tax credit?

**Mr. Glubish:** Madam Speaker, I don't know how many more ways to say it, but we have promised to Albertans that if we are going to bring in something that costs hundreds of millions of dollars over the next number of years, it has to be done responsibly. The NDP say that just because it's done somewhere else, it's a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. That is false. We need to do the economic analysis to demonstrate that this would be a good investment for every Alberta taxpayer, not just for the folks who would be recipients of these programs. I have committed that we will do that homework, and we will take the time to do it right instead of rushing blindly in and throwing taxpayer dollars around, as the NDP are wont to do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period. We have also concluded Members' Statements, so I might ask for your indulgence to hang around for a few more minutes while we complete today's ceremony.

### Notices of Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good to see you in the chair.

I rise to give oral notice of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, sponsored by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 9

#### Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Mr. Nally:** Madam Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two documents to table. One is from October 5, 2018, indicating that "AHS report shows need for better cardiac services outside of Calgary, Edmonton," and one document, dated October 1, 2018, is headlined: "Lethbridge doctors hope life-saving cardiac treatment comes to their hospital soon."

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Justice, "Abridged version of the speech delivered by Canada-Ukraine Foundation Board member and Ukrainian-Canadian community activist, Bohdan Romaniuk on February 24, 2023 at the Calgary Vigil commemorating the first anniversary of the War in Ukraine"; and pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act a report entitled Statutes Repeal Act – 2023 List.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. There were two points of order called today, the first point of order at 2:05.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Parliamentary Language

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At 2:05, while the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was asking questions, the Member for Calgary-Hays was heckling, yelling, shouting, booming, "You're making it up." And he did so multiple times. I waited until the member's question was fully asked before I raised this point of order because this is clearly counter to 23(h), (i), and (j) as well as the practices of this House. In multiple rulings, including November 16, 2021, and June 11, 2020, the Speakers have been extremely clear that shouting, "You're making it up" is unparliamentary. It is a form of calling a member a liar, and you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a clear point of order, and I rise for your assistance. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would argue that this is not a point of order, that it is a matter of debate. Whether or not what the member opposite was saying is or is not factual is for the people to decide and for the members on this side to answer those questions. I don't find this a point of order. Some might agree – in fact, many might agree – that what that Member for Calgary-Mountain View was saying was made up. I encourage, you know, members, of course, to maintain the highest level of decorum in this Chamber, but this is not a point of order; it's a matter of debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, there are a lot of notes here, a lot of things that were said during this session. I was hoping that on International Women's Day things would go so smoothly for your Madam Speaker here. However, here we are.

I did not hear the heckle in question, so unfortunately I could not make a ruling. As such, if those words were heckled, there has been previous ruling in which that would be a point of order, and the member would stand up and apologize in this Chamber. So this is a learning opportunity. We'll take this moving forward. Let's watch our heckles. If the Speaker does hear it, that will be the ruling at that time. I do not find a point of order because I did not hear it.

Let's move on to the second point of order. The Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, if members on this side of the Chamber had said something that was unparliamentary, I would expect that they would apologize, unlike members opposite who do things that are unparliamentary and don't apologize, be it off the record.

But I do have something on the record today, Madam Speaker. At the point noted, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, in what was a preamble, which is in itself a point of order, said the following, and I do have the benefit of the Blues: "It's a skill to be that arrogant and wrong at the same time." Now, the member went on here, as I have the Blues, to go on and ramble about other matters, but of course being out of order as a preamble.

This is certainly contravention of Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). This is not the first time that member has said these kinds of things in the Chamber that are unparliamentary, whether it's on the record or off the record. I could certainly go in the big green book and find lots of precedents where this is a point of order. I would suggest that that member, with it not being the first day on the job, should recognize that she is doing her constituents a grave disservice by acting in such a poor and disrespectful manner. I ask that that member apologize herself in this Chamber to all members for being so disrespectful both to us as members of this Chamber and to her constituents and all Albertans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Government House Leader can make demands, but I'm afraid it is not his decision, and I would argue to you that this is not a point of order. The member did not say "the minister is." The member did not say "she is." The member did not say "you is" or "you are." She would never say "you is"; that was my error.

In fact, Madam Speaker, using the term "arrogant" has been found to not be a point of order on numerous occasions in this House, including December 5, 2022, and June 7, 2021. Other Speakers have found this not to be a point of order but have issued cautions. I do not think that this is a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Maybe a new Speaker makes new rulings. No; that's just a Speaker joke. Oops. Don't make the joke. Don't sing the song. Don't wear the hat. Okay.

Hon. members, this certainly is different than the previous point of order, which has been dealt with and concluded, but you brought it up, and these words are on the record. While certainly not helpful language in this Chamber and I would really caution members to refrain from this kind of language in the future, I don't find this to be a point of order.

This matter is dealt with and concluded.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You can't call a point of order . . .

**Mr. Schow:** On Standing Order 13(2). Yes, absolutely.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, okay.

#### **Point of Clarification**

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Speaker, I don't believe that the explanation you've given is sufficient, with all due respect. I feel that this is a point of order. While the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did not specifically say "the Minister of Education" or "you" or "that member" or whatever poor language that was used, it was clearly directed at the Minister of Education, and I will say that it was in the middle of a preamble.

**2:50**

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies, hon. member. Standing Order 13(2) is used to clarify, to ask for clarification of the Speaker's ruling. I did provide my remarks on why I made such a ruling. I think it is not helpful language in this Chamber. It wasn't specifically pointed. While in a loose way I would argue that it is – and it will not be tolerated in the future – it is not considered insulting language directed at a member in this Chamber, and that's why it is not a point of order at this time.

Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01 the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for the consideration of main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will continue consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education in the Rocky Mountain Room.

The Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:52 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 9, 2023

Day 16

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
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Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
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Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
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Rehn  
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Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
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Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 9, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, as is the tradition of the Assembly, we take time to pay tribute to members and former members of the Assembly who have passed away.

### Mr. Milton Pahl October 30, 1943, to March 1, 2023

**The Speaker:** Milton Pahl was elected as a Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on March 14, 1979, and was re-elected November 2, 1982. On November 19, 1982, he was named to cabinet as the minister responsible for native affairs, a position which he held until 1986.

Born in Hanna, Alberta, Mr. Pahl was a boxer in his youth, winning many Canadian and U.S. championships. He gave up his boxing gloves for school after his last match in the division trials to compete in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Mr. Pahl completed two degrees at the University of Alberta, a bachelor of arts in economics and a master of business administration. This set the stage for his successful career in business, involving management consulting and ownership of oil field related businesses. In 1992 Mr. Pahl received the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada medal, which honours those who have made a significant contribution to their community. Mr. Pahl passed away March 1, 2023, at the age of 79.

In a moment of silent prayer and reflection I ask that you remember Milton Pahl each as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by the hon. the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Members, seated in the Speaker's gallery today is a familiar face although maybe not today. He is the former Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the hon. David Dorward. He is accompanied by Mr. Scott Hill, founder and former president of Play On! Canada. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today to introduce 12 officials from the College of Alberta School Superintendents on behalf of the hon. Minister of Education, the Hon. Adriana LaGrange: superintendents Scott Morrison, Rita Marler, Clint Moroziuk, Wilco Tymensen, Andrea Holowka, Dwayne Zarichny, Daphne Mai'Stoina; deputy superintendents Greg Miller, Shan Jorgenson-Adam; chief superintendent Robert Martin; chief executive officer . . .

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the Deputy Premier's introduction; however, introductions need to be kept to 20 seconds. My apologies to those who have joined us. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to all members of the Assembly I'm honoured to introduce Karolina Gruszowski, who is a social work student at MacEwan University who is doing her practicum at my office. She is also the proud mother of two and an immigrant and is dedicating her career to helping the most vulnerable. Please join me in welcoming her. Thank you, Karolina.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bryan Goehringer He's a friend of mine, but he's also a great community mobilizer and leader and has had a number of different leadership roles with a number of great not-for-profits in our community, including the Parks Foundation, Ambrose University, the Mustard Seed, and most recently Wood's Homes. Please rise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and, through you, to all members of this Assembly J.P. and Danielle Fortin from explore Nordegg. I had the privilege of joining them yesterday on a tour of the Legislature and for dinner at the Skål reception. I would like to thank them for their incredible work that they do for Alberta's tourism sector and the offer to come tour with them. I can hardly wait. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to welcome Mr. Glenn Miller, a special constituent of Lethbridge, to the Assembly. Glenn is being presented an honorary distinction by His Excellency Patrick Van Gheel, ambassador of Belgium to Canada, and Ms Lori Schmidt, honorary consul for Belgium in Edmonton, on behalf of the Kingdom of Belgium later today. Glenn is a retired military veteran with many accolades, awards, and distinctions to his name. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

## Members' Statements

### New Democratic Party Policies

**Ms Renaud:** Yesterday the St. Albert business community hosted the leader of the Alberta New Democrats at a chamber luncheon. I was excited for local business leaders to hear about our vision for a better future. What they heard, in brief, Mr. Speaker, was that an Alberta NDP government has a vision for the future, an Alberta where we can support communities by giving them the resources and tools they need to properly support local economies and infrastructure, where we build a resilient jobs economy that is securely built on a diverse foundation.

An Alberta NDP government will create good-paying industrial jobs while targeting growth in emerging industrial sectors. St. Albert business leaders also heard our leader's commitment to an exciting project, the development of the Lakeview business district. The success of St. Albert's three existing light industrial and commercial business districts supports the creation of a fourth, the Lakeview business district. An NDP government will work with the city of St. Albert right away with the goal of bringing this new district online for development by 2024. This would unlock 7,000 jobs and new growth for employers in advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, clean tech, health sciences, and more.

This is great news for the city of St. Albert, and we're just getting started. Stable, predictable funding to municipalities isn't just a talking point; it'll be a commitment. An NDP government will put a stop to the cuts. No more cuts. No more downloading of expenses to municipalities. We will trust science and facts when we make decisions on investment to rebuild our public health care system. An Alberta NDP government will rebuild our public system so that nobody has to pay to see their family doctor, so that we can all access public health care when and where we need it.

There's a lot at stake this May. So, Mr. Speaker, St. Albertans can rest assured that an Alberta NDP government will always be focused on them and what's important to them. There is a better way forward. Join us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has a statement.

### Affordable Housing

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the end of the UCP's first of many terms in government, more Albertans are taking pride in the ability to unlock doors to their very own homes. I'm proud to be standing here today to talk about affordable housing. Affordable housing does more for individuals and families than simply provide a place to sleep. Affordable housing serves a variety of Albertans, whether they be seniors, low-income families, individuals in recovery or transitioning out of homelessness, women and mothers fleeing domestic violence, and the list goes on and on.

Affordable housing often serves as a place for an individual or a family to have a fresh start, and we are proud to be providing that. I am honoured to serve as the MLA for Airdrie-East, and today our government made an investment in our community. Today it was announced that Alberta's government is providing \$54 million to support an increase of more than 600 affordable housing units right across Alberta. I'm so glad to see that \$5.5 million of that funding is supporting projects right in Airdrie.

Mr. Speaker, you have to ask yourself: how is this different than when the NDP were in office? Well, let me tell you. When the NDP were government, they made imaginary announcements that had no impact on Albertans except for negative ones. The difference

between us and them? Not only are we announcing the money for housing, but we're actually building it, too.

**1:40**

Our government is cleaning up the mess made by the NDP as they increased the wait-list for affordable housing by 76 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's a huge increase, but our government is fixing it. Albertans do not trust the NDP to build housing that meets their needs. That's why they elected our government. Over \$1 billion in support for housing over the next three years is getting the job done.

### Canadian Culture

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, the debate about multiculturalism is complex. Canada is growing with people who are looking for a fresh start in this amazing nation. Immigration is at an all-time high. The investments to support multiculturalism are substantial. If I could focus on one aspect, though, it would be on Canadian culture. There's a culture here, and it's an amazing one. The people that built the foundations of culture did it in times when the world was very segregated, when there were no jet planes that could move people across the world. It was a time when exposure to other cultures amounted to words in a book.

So to the woke mobs, people who claim to be so enlightened that they feel empowered to tear down statues of Sir John A. Macdonald, who rename streets like Dundas, and who denounce Christmas because it may offend a non-Christian: you're doing it wrong. My parents came to Canada after leaving postwar Japan and Philippines. They came to a country that had a culture of peace and tolerance, of freedom of the individual, and an environment where anyone could succeed if they put in the effort. They didn't expect to see much of the cultures that they left and came with an attitude of when in Rome, dress like a Roman, an attitude most people should take when they visit any nation out of respect for local cultures.

Recently I was made aware of things that happened at a recent election from another culture. There was active stalking of voting stations for a democratic election, with supporters who would whisper in the ears of voters to support a particular candidate. It's an act that's usually discouraged here in Canada, where people are supposed to be able to approach a voting booth with no fear of reprisal or undue influence.

I also discovered that another foreign act is to make promises of government contracts in return for support. At first I said that no one would dare do that here, but then we heard that a Liberal MP did just that. No wonder we see that trickling down to our local levels. The role models are there in this federal Liberal government. I do not wish to see a Canada where corrupt practices like immoral influencing of elections takes place. That is Justin Trudeau's version of Canada, not mine.

So to the woke mob out there: wake up.

### Social Workers

**Ms Sigurdson:** March is National Social Work Month in Canada. It is a time to celebrate the social work profession and recognize its significant contributions to making a positive difference in the lives of Albertans. The Alberta NDP caucus not only recognizes social workers; we are social workers. The members for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, Calgary-Buffalo, Edmonton-Castle Downs, Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Manning, and myself, Edmonton-Riverview: we're all social workers. We've attained our credentials and worked in the profession.

The theme in 2023, social work is essential, highlights the challenges we have faced as we come out of the global pandemic.



Social workers are more essential than ever as we witness the hardships, pain, and suffering of individuals and communities during this time. We are essential to navigating systems such as those in health, education, and social services. We are essential to advocacy, which includes celebrating diversity and antiracism. Social workers collectively work towards a just and equitable society united by diversity and strengthened by our goals for inclusion and allyship. Every day social workers support people in navigating complex systems. We are uniquely positioned to identify and address systemic gaps, provide key services and programs, and strengthen communities.

Albertans have an opportunity this spring to elect a government that is committed to lifting up our communities. As a proud social worker and New Democrat I will be working to elect a government that will protect public health care, make life more affordable, create good-paying jobs, and ensure integrity in leadership. Happy social work month to my colleagues and friends.

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

### Bail and Sentencing

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to be part of a team that accomplished what it promised. Despite challenges, we managed to take care of emergencies, dealt with a financial crash, and succeeded in getting Alberta back on track. Alberta gives hope in Canada and lives up to its motto of being the place for the strong and free. We have a caring people with grit and determination, a robust economy, a balanced budget, plenty of jobs, and we'll skirt by a recession simply because of determination and intestinal fortitude.

However, there is a frustration in knowing that despite all we can do, we can never do enough on the files that are managed by the feds. As an MLA we lobby our ministers, who, in turn, work with their colleagues to lobby the federal ministers, which may have some effect.

However, when it comes to crime, it's no surprise that the Liberal government has a serious disconnect with reality. The catch-and-release system they have created by way of sentencing and bail terms is having serious consequences. Mr. Speaker, it's utterly appalling. A constituent of mine's daughter, 30 years old, was abducted on her way on the highway going to work. Two masked individuals forced her to the side of the road, assaulted her, dragged her into the car, and literally tried to kidnap her. She managed to stick her leg out as the assailants slammed her leg in the door repeatedly, and she managed to fight her way out and get back to her truck.

Another constituent, driving his 15-year-old daughter on the way home, was pursued and struck repeatedly from behind by another vehicle. The offending vehicle was stolen and was driven by a person who has been known to police, a frequent flyer, if you would. The father pulled off the highway. The suspect continued ramming into their car, got out and attempted to assault the man with a hammer, tried to abduct his daughter, and then tried to assault the daughter. The daughter had to jump out of the moving vehicle. The individual was caught, bail set at a zero value, and released the next day.

Good folks in Alberta are paying the price for a system that consistently favours criminals. We must look at what we can do to protect ourselves because the justice system managed by the federal government, where ideology rarely meets reality, is simply not cutting it. Albertans, Canadians deserve better. Stay vigilant, watch out for each other, and vote in somebody else who can take care of business.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Spruce Grove-Stony Plain Constituency Update

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last four years it has been my absolute honour to serve and represent the constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. As my first term is coming to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of our government's major accomplishments in my riding.

In terms of funding and investment, I am very proud of what we have been able to contribute and the incredible differences made in the area that almost 60,000 people call home. An \$18 million grant to the city of Spruce Grove for the new events centre; over \$6 million in grants and investments for the Meridian Housing Foundation; over \$15 million in transportation infrastructure expansion investments, to name a few. Over \$65 million in school projects or upgrades, including the development and completion of the Stony Plain central replacement school project, the completed modernization of the Woodhaven school project, and a recently completed new francophone school right in the heart of Stony Plain.

Serving as an MLA has also given me the opportunity to meet thousands of residents and hundreds of business owners, an aspect of my job that I will always cherish. The residents, business owners, community organizers, and volunteers in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain truly have an unparalleled commitment to their communities. This commitment has resulted in millions in community facility enhancement and improvement funding for organizations across the riding, which will benefit future generations of residents in the area.

Personally, I've been honoured to advocate for and support children in finding their forever homes and to push for extended producer responsibility on behalf of municipalities, environmental groups, and all Albertans. I'm extremely grateful for my 13 years of elected service at both the municipal and provincial levels and for what we have been able to accomplish thus far.

Looking forward, I'm optimistic for the future. I'm excited for the opportunity to continue serving the fine residents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and trying to make our area the best place in the province to live, work, and play.

Thank you.

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

### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's rural municipalities are owed over \$268 million in unpaid taxes. Municipalities can't take on debt, so when they're faced with a shortfall, they only have two options. They're either forced to pass this burden on to their citizens through property tax increases, or they have to cut services.

Mr. Speaker, that's just not fair. But you don't have to take my word for it. Rural municipalities are saying it themselves. The RMA president, Paul McLauchlin, said: "Ignoring property taxes doesn't just hurt the municipality, it hurts rural communities and places an unfair burden on other rural businesses and residents."

This government has had over three years to do something about these unpaid taxes. However, under their watch the debt has tripled. When I asked the government about their failure, their response was: we're actively looking at options. I am embarrassed for the members opposite who represent those rural communities and have to return to their town councillors, their Reeves, their constituents with that type of response, yet another cost that this government would put on the feet of rural Albertans.

But it gets worse. Rather than solving the crisis growing under their watch, this government came up with a different plan, to give \$20 billion to the Premier's friends. This debt is a black eye on the UCP, and their \$20 billion giveaway is an insult to rural Albertans. Every member of this Chamber knows it, and if the members opposite feel that my statement is unfair, then I might suggest that what they want to do is what they're forcing their constituents to do: wait for an Alberta NDP government to solve yet another UCP rural Alberta failure.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

#### Health Care System Capacity

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the current Premier thinks she can talk her way out of the health care crisis that she and the UCP created, Dr. Fabreau, a front-line doctor at the Peter Lougheed Centre, tells the truth. He says that "the UCP's new health-care slogan 'Help is On the Way' feels insulting." He goes on to say that one of his colleagues recently told him that "help is not coming, so we have to help each other." Can the member opposite tell health care workers the truth, that under the UCP his help is nowhere near on the way, that it's just more chaos?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hon. member for the question. Help is on the way, and it's coming, and it's coming now. In part of Budget 2022 we increased the budget by \$600 million, with a commitment for \$1.8 billion over three years. In part of Budget 2023 – I'm hopeful the other side will help pass this – is an additional \$960 million, almost \$1 billion, for Health. We are investing in capacity in our health care system. We are ensuring that Albertans get the health care where they need it and when they need it. We're getting results, and I'm happy to talk about that in the next answer.

**Ms Hoffman:** Dr. Fabreau writes: "Our progressively shattered army of nurses, physicians and staff are giving up. We've lost waves of exceptional nurses." This is the real harm that the UCP has done to Alberta families by chasing away the front-line health care workers, that we all rely on. There are 34 Alberta hospitals partially closed due to staffing shortages today. Some of those have been closed for three years. Pregnant mothers are being forced to drive for hours in winter in labour to give birth far from their home. How can the member opposite tell those expecting parents that there is no crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated previously that we're getting results. I want to make one comment about the question that the hon. member made, saying that, you know, we are driving staff away. That simply is not the case. We have more doctors, more nurses, more paramedics, more health care workers in this province than ever before. If we even just look at doctors, Q4 of last year in comparison with Q4 of the year previous, an additional 254 doctors. Our investments in human resources and the investment of money is getting results, driving down EMS response times, emergency department . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** It's doctors and nurses who are saying it, Mr. Speaker, and I know who I trust when it comes to the UCP or actual doctors.

Thanks to the UCP war on health care workers, there are entire cities in Alberta where you can't find a family doctor accepting patients. No laughing matter. Families in Red Deer, Lethbridge, and the entire Bow Valley have nowhere to turn but an overwhelmed emergency room. I'm looking forward to an Alberta NDP government connecting a million Albertans with family doctors and a family health team, and that's when the UCP chaos in health care will finally end. But for the moment does the member opposite still want to say to the families in Red Deer, Lethbridge, and the Bow Valley that there's no crisis?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we fully appreciate the challenges in terms of recruiting staff. These are not only challenges that we're facing here in Alberta, but in fact it's being faced by jurisdictions around the entire country and in the first world. But there is hope. I'm very pleased, given the work being done by AHS and working with the colleges, that 17 family medicine physicians have committed to the community of Lethbridge. As of March 9, 10 physicians have begun practising, and as they work through their CPSA practice readiness assessment, it is anticipated that three will begin in March and April and the remaining between May and later this year. We are making progress. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has the call.

#### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Member Irwin:** Yesterday the Alberta NDP made a historic announcement that we will provide universal coverage for prescription contraception. Sadly, the Premier and the UCP think Albertans should continue to pay out of pocket for the health care that they need. After our announcement I heard from so many women about how this policy would be life-changing. Vicki wrote to me to say, "I literally had a hysterectomy because it was free and my prescription for an IUD was [500] dollars out of pocket." Does the Premier want to tell Vicki that she thinks this is an acceptable choice for Albertans to be forced to make?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We all agree that Albertans and Albertan women need access to contraceptives. The issue at hand here is simply a policy disagreement with how best to approach that. We believe that we should remove barriers to access, like ensuring that low- and fixed-income Albertans have access under their government-sponsored health benefits. In fact, because of public and private health care coverage, most Albertans have access to coverage for prescription contraceptives. We approve of this approach, and we approve of the need, and we're delivering.

**Member Irwin:** I would suggest the minister listen to some of the Albertans who've reached out to me, like Cassandra, who wrote to me saying that "while it [might] be hard to believe for some" – like the Health minister – "health insurance is a luxury many people just can't afford." Cassandra went on to say that universal access to contraception will absolutely change lives. We know this Premier and, clearly, this Health minister want Albertans to get used to paying for the health care that they need. On this side of the House we could not disagree more. I have countless stories to share with the Premier, the Health minister about how this policy will change lives. Are you willing to listen?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We fully agree that there should not be a barrier. Income should not be a barrier for Alberta women to be able to access contraception. In fact, we have a number of programs in place to be able to support low-income Albertans in this regard. Contraception is listed in the Alberta drug benefit plan, and we have a number of low-income plans, including the Alberta adult health benefit, the Alberta child health benefit, the assured income for the severely handicapped, income support. We will continue to support these plans and ensure that low-income Albertans have access to contraceptives.

**Member Irwin:** The minister just isn't listening to me or to the countless Albertans who've reached out. Aimee from Calgary wrote to me saying that she "spent . . . over [\$6,000] on hormonal birth control alone." These costs are overwhelming to Albertans already struggling with affordability, but the Premier thinks this is a sign of the system working, and clearly the Health minister does, too, and they have no problem forcing people to pay out of pocket for essential medical services. Does the minister really think it's okay for Aimee to pay \$6,000 just to meet her basic health care needs?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated to the hon. member, we fully support and we agree that Albertans need access to prescription contraceptives. The difference is that while on that side of the House they want to actually pay for everything, even including for people who can afford it and people who have private plans already in place to do that, on this side of the House we want to ensure that everyone has access. We will support the low-income individuals to do that, so with the additional funding that we have, we can actually continue to fund the expansion of our health care system and make sure that Albertans get the services that they deserve.

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

#### Industrial Development in St. Albert

**Ms Renaud:** Yesterday we promised that an Alberta NDP government will break ground on a new business industrial park in St. Albert next year, which will support local business development and create 7,000 new jobs. We'll partner with the city of St. Albert to service the Lakeview business district near Ray Gibbon Drive, preparing the area for development and new business growth. Why didn't the government support this important job-creating initiative for the businesses of St. Albert?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of northern development.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I did listen to that announcement, and I thank the member for the question. I was kind of surprised because it sounded a lot like corporate welfare based on the announcement. You know, I'm surprised there's any air left in this place with the sucking and blowing coming from the NDP. I did have a chance to sit down with that group, and I talked to them specifically in relation to how we can remove regulatory burdens and how this government can help to assist and keep the best interests of Albertans in mind, because, of course, there's only one taxpayer, and that's Albertans. We have to manage their money properly and fairly, and we'll do just that.

**Ms Renaud:** Oh, that member's view of corporate welfare is weird.

The city of St. Albert has made servicing the Lakeview business district one of their top priorities for economic development. However, the district was not funded in the government's budget despite the project potentially accounting for half of the city's new jobs that will be created over the next decade. This UCP government has ignored the economic centres of cities and towns across the province. If the UCP really cared about jobs and investment in St. Albert, why didn't they fund this project in their budget?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I remember four years of the NDP being in power in this province. Now, I don't know if you remember it, Mr. Speaker, but they brought in 97 tax increases, and then – surprise – they brought along a carbon tax, a tax on everything. They're not here to help businesses; they're here to shut down businesses. That's why we lost 183,000 jobs in their four years of government. That's why we saw net migration numbers flee Alberta. That's not happening under this government. In the last 14 months: over 100,000 new jobs, net migration at record numbers. We're not going to take any lessons on how to govern this economy from them.

2:00

**Ms Renaud:** Storytime is over. Now for fact. Ray Gibbon Drive was actually funded by an NDP government because we recognized what it would open, the corridors and opportunities that it would open. And you know what? Investment in the Lakeview business district is critical for this community. The best part is the proof of concept. It's already there in St. Albert. Three light industrial and commercial business districts have been a roaring success, and we need to get to work on the next one. If we already know this project will create jobs and St. Albert has been asking for it, instead of the rhetoric and storytime, why didn't you simply fund it?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it's so refreshing to hear the NDP talk about creating jobs, but I don't know what they thought they were doing when they added \$51 billion in debt. That's what they did in their four years. Our Finance minister just put forward a budget to pay off \$13 billion after \$51 billion from them. I can't imagine a better way to go for businesses than to reduce their taxes and reduce their obstructions.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to work with St. Albert. We're going to work with any jurisdiction that comes forward with a good plan. And you know what? It is a good plan, and we're going to help them with their regulatory approval and anything else we can help, because after four years of NDP rule they need something different, that's for sure.

#### Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Leader of the Official Opposition promised that, if elected, an Alberta NDP government will reinstate the interactive digital media tax credit, that was cancelled by this UCP government. At the announcement Scott Nye from Digital Alberta said that jobs in the sector doubled in just a short period time when we had the right incentives in place in Alberta, which included an interactive digital media tax credit. But the UCP continues to drag their feet and break their promises. Why has the Premier abandoned this sector?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that under our leadership the Alberta tech sector is on fire. We are seeing exponential growth in investment in Alberta's tech sector, no thanks to the NDP. Last year alone we had \$729 million invested into Alberta tech companies. It was an absolute record-smashing

year, and that is because of the actions that we have taken as a government to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in the country and one of the most competitive in North America. Businesses and investors and innovators are choosing in record numbers to come and make Alberta their home, and we are proud of our track record.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Mr. Nye also said that Quebec, Ontario, and B.C. dominate the sector – they do so by aggressively courting companies, emboldened through tax policy choices that attract companies and talent to their tech ecosystem. He went on to say that without a digital media tax incentive, we are simply not competitive enough, and in fact without these incentives, jobs are leaving Alberta. The industry is saying that we aren't competitive in this sector under the UCP and we are losing jobs. Why is the Premier okay with this?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, apparently Quebec, Ontario, and B.C. don't know how to create jobs without subsidizing them, but in Alberta we do things different. We create conditions that make Alberta the most attractive place to put your capital to work, to grow your business, to hire people, and to attract people from all around the world to come and call Alberta home. We're proud of that track record. That's why we're seeing record levels of investment in every sector in the economy, including the technology sector.

By contrast, let's look at the year 2017. Under the NDP there was only \$37 million invested in technology; under our leadership \$729 million last year alone. I wonder which plan . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps saying that he needs to conduct an analysis of the tax credit, but just a few days before the budget the Premier said on her radio show that it's good for jobs and would support downtown Calgary. She broke that promise only 72 hours later, when the budget came out. Even the minister has talked about the importance of the digital media tax credit when they endorsed the Premier in her leadership campaign. But without action, it's just words, and the UCP has failed to act: four years of empty talk. Why has the Premier repeatedly broken her promises to this sector?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, talk about a failure: let's look at the four years under the NDP, where 183,000 Albertans lost their jobs because of their disastrous policies, taxing everything that moved, bringing in a carbon tax on everything, that made life more expensive for everything. Our track record is clear. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are being created because of our policies and because of our responsible management of Alberta's economy. Hundreds of millions and, actually, billions of dollars across the entire economy are being invested right here in Alberta because of our leadership. The choice for Albertans in the next election is clear. If they want growth, vote . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has the call.

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today our government announced a whopping \$54 million in affordable housing projects across the province, 17 projects that will benefit low-income families, seniors, women fleeing violence, and many more Albertans in need of support. Now, given that I represent a constituency with a large, growing population, can the Minister of

Seniors, Community and Social Services talk about this investment in affordable housing and what type of impact it will have on the constituents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to that member for the question as well as his advocacy. This announcement today of \$54 million means that 600 new units of housing are going to be built across Alberta. That means 600 more families, individuals, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and many more are going to be able to unlock their door for the first time. These are shovel-ready projects, which means that people are going to be in their new home very, very soon. This means for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, with this \$14.7 million investment, that more people in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain are going to be able to stay in their communities where they've built their lives and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a big thank you to the minister. Given that under the NDP we received nothing but empty promises when it came to affordable housing and given that our government has taken real action to address the needs for communities large and small in Alberta and given that my constituents would like to hear about how our plan to build affordable housing today is different from the NDP's plan when they were in government, to the minister: why is your plan effective in providing affordable housing options for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think probably the best word to describe why this plan is working is "partnerships." We're working with the federal government, municipal governments, but we're also working with the not-for-profit sector and many other community partners to get more housing built. These partners have been successful, and that's why it's working. Under the previous government housing needs went up by 76 per cent. It's going down under this government. Our plan is working.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given that we're seeing a critical demand for affordable housing across the whole province, especially as a result of the 76 per cent wait-list increase under the NDP, as mentioned, and given the number of individuals and families still waiting for housing, could the same minister please tell the Chamber about the progress being made and what we're spending for Albertans in need of housing supports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are investing in housing. Not only have we built housing, but we're building housing. There are more units to come. Our budget represents a billion dollars over the next three years to address this need, to increase the supply. Our stronger foundations program announces 25,000 affordable housing units and supports for people across this province so that those who can't afford a house will have a home, a

place that they can call home and be safe in and have dignity and respect. This is great news for Albertans.

### Red Deer Regional Hospital

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, for the past week Albertans have watched this Infrastructure minister make all kinds of excuses for his failure to get anything built. But yesterday Red Deer doctors reported that the situation at their hospital has deteriorated. A transition plan is needed to protect patient care. Now, the Alberta NDP has committed to delivering the Red Deer hospital, but the UCP's failure to get any progress on this project is taking its toll. So I have a simple question for the Infrastructure minister, and the people of Red Deer would appreciate it if he could answer rather than making excuses. Will construction of the Red Deer regional hospital begin this year? Yes or no?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Very happy to report to this House that, yes, construction will begin this year. The RFP for design is going to be complete by the end of March. Design is the first step in construction. That is coming together with a functional plan to be designed and built to meet the needs of the people in Red Deer and central Alberta. I'm very glad that we've put this capital project back on the plan after the NDP removed it, and we are going to get this hospital built. We've got the money in the budget. We've got the plan in progress. We're looking forward to that design.

2:10

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that construction will start when there's a shovel in the ground and given that surgical facilities are sitting unused due to staffing shortages and central Albertans are being sent elsewhere for surgeries because of critical shortages in local OR support staff and given that these shortages are the direct result of the UCP's war on front-line health workers and given that this government seems obsessed with pillaging public hospitals for the staff to work in private, for-profit clinics, will the Health minister stop spinning and simply tell the people of Red Deer: will their hospital be fully staffed this year? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As we've chatted numerous times in this House, there is a challenge in terms of recruiting health care workers across Alberta and, quite frankly, across the country and much of the First World, but we are having success. I indicated earlier that we have 254 more doctors in Alberta in Q4 last year compared to Q4 the year previous. We have a health action plan to be able to attract and retain doctors and nurses and health care professionals across the entire province, and we're working on that.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Health minister admitted yesterday that there's been no progress in increasing anaesthesiologists in this province and given that after four years of failures and driving the system into a crisis that we are still in the midst of, Albertans know they simply can't trust this government with their health care and given that there are no family doctors accepting new patients in Red Deer, not enough staff in their hospital – and apparently we're not sure if we're going to see actual shovels in the ground on the hospital this year – who is willing to take responsibility for the UCP's utter failure to provide the health care needed for families in Red Deer and across central Alberta?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of our government's record in terms of investing in health care and increasing the

resources for health care: in Budget 2022 an additional \$600 million in that year, with \$1.8 billion over three years; an additional \$1 billion in Budget 2023 to expand health care. We have more staff than ever: we have more doctors, we have more nurses, we have more paramedics. Now, I recognize that we still need more staff and the system is still under strain, but we're working with Dr. John Cowell as part of our health care action plan. We're getting results, times are coming down, and we'll keep working at that.

### Misericordia Community Hospital CT Scanner

**Mr. Dach:** Imagine being rushed to a hospital in the middle of the night in critical condition and, when you get there, the CT scanner is out of service. Well, this is a recurring reality at the Misericordia hospital in my riding of Edmonton-McClung. Since February 25 it's been out of service again. The hospital had a stroke patient who had to wait more than eight hours for a CT scan that would have been available if that CT scanner was not out of service again, only to be transferred to a different site. Another patient waited more than eight hours to be transferred to a different site for a CT scan for a bowel obstruction. How can the minister justify this lack of critical, essential equipment?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that we need infrastructure and health infrastructure to be able to provide services for Albertans. That's why I'm very pleased that as part of Budget 2023 over three years we are investing \$4.2 billion for health care related infrastructure to replace, expand, modernize health care facilities and equipment across the entire province. There's an increase of \$120 million in new funding for the Alberta surgical initiative capital program for additional surgical capacity in AHS facilities. That includes an additional \$105 million in new funding for the continuing care capital program. And we continue to invest.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the medical staff are feeling hopeless, day by day watching patients sit in a waiting room chair or even lying on the floor for hours before being comprehensively checked because the equipment is not working, and given that things are as bad as they've ever been, not getting better, as the Premier would like to boast, can the minister confirm when the CT scanner at the Misericordia will be replaced, and can he guarantee that they won't be forced in this situation again? Look right in the camera, Minister. The ER doctors over at the Misericordia are watching right now.

**Mr. Copping:** Again I thank the hon. member for the question. I know our government is expending record amounts in terms of capital for the health infrastructure. In regard to the specific question about the scanner in the Misericordia I'll have to actually get back to the hon. member, which I'm pleased to do. I know that, you know, we are investing additional dollars to make sure that the capital and the tools are there for our fantastic health care workers to provide the services that they need to Albertans. On the question on the Misericordia I will get back to you. But we do have funding for the budget, and we expect that as we give the funding back to AHS, they'll make the investments they need to keep the system running.

**Mr. Dach:** I'll take the minister at his word, Mr. Speaker.

Now, given that Albertans at the Mis are seeing shortages of specialists, surgical backlogs, and ambulance crews stretched so thin that they might have to leave patients in the waiting room to respond to another life-saving call and given that the least this government can do is ensure that hospitals like the Misericordia have equipment that works and stays working, can the minister

explain to Albertans how he can claim with a straight face that there is no crisis in health care? Will he apologize to these patients who are being impacted by these ongoing UCP failures and immediately order a new CT scanner for the Misericordia? Twenty billion bucks to oil companies; we need a couple million for a CT scanner.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said to the hon. member, my office will get back to him directly in terms of the capital plan for the Misericordia because I don't have that on me right now, but I am very pleased at the progress that we're making on our health care action plan. As you know, we appointed Dr. John Cowell as our official administrator to focus on EMS wait times, reducing the surgery list, and reducing emergency department wait times. Our 90-day report, which we released a couple of weeks ago, is showing progress. We've had a decrease in EMS wait times, for example, from 21.8 minutes in November 2022 down to 17 minutes in January 2023, and we're continuing to make . . .

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Last year in this House the minister learned about the Fort McMurray firefighter who fought the catastrophic Horse River wildfire and was then denied WCB coverage when he developed kidney cancer. He has since passed, and the family is still appealing to the WCB four years later. The minister also heard about a Leduc firefighter who fought the Fort McMurray wildfire and who had to go through the appeals process after being denied coverage for their cancer. Since we know the minister is aware of these cases, can he explain why presumptive coverage is only on a go-forward basis in Bill 9 and won't apply to these heroes and their families?

**Mr. Jean:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the firefighters and other emergency services personnel that continue to help us every day and did fight the Fort McMurray fire. We are the first province in Canada to offer event-specific presumptive coverage. We were the leader in Canada, and – it's true – other provinces have tried to catch up. We are again going to be the leader, and there's more good news to come. We have just recently announced that we have done away with and, first of all, accelerated the WCB, the Workers' Compensation Board, application process for all of the firefighters in Fort McMurray. Firefighters don't need to prove the cancer was job related to apply.

**Ms Gray:** Not all of them, Mr. Speaker. Given that presumptive WCB coverage proposed in Bill 9 will only apply to the current list of cancers in the firefighters' primary site cancer regulation and given that this regulation was last updated when I was the labour minister, and we made sure that Alberta had the most up-to-date and comprehensive coverage in Canada, and given that Yukon, B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, and Newfoundland are now covering several cancers that Alberta does not, why hasn't this minister listened to firefighters, listened to the latest science, listened to the Official Opposition, who have made this commitment, and ensured that Alberta firefighters have the coverage they deserve?

**Mr. Jean:** It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP were in power during this fire and subsequent years and they did nothing on it. We are doing something, but what we're doing is on an ongoing basis. We have to make sure the science backs up all of the applications and make sure that WCB is going to cover those applications that are necessary. Nothing is more important than those emergency services personnel that continue to serve us. This is an ongoing file,

and as I mentioned in the previous answer, there will be some more good news coming forward in the near weeks.

**Ms Gray:** Given that cancer is the number one cause of firefighter line-of-duty deaths and given that some firefighters who fought the catastrophic Horse River wildfire in Fort McMurray were exposed to a career's worth of toxins in a single week and given that firefighters are proud to serve and protect their fellow citizens and deserve not to have to fight the WCB for support while they're fighting cancer, will the minister commit, like the Official Opposition has, to expanding presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters and ensuring all firefighters who have been diagnosed with cancer since the Fort McMurray wildfire are covered?

2:20

**Mr. Jean:** As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, there's more good news to come in the near future. The member is going to have to be patient. Frankly, they never got it done during their tenure in government. We are getting it done, but we're getting it done on a couple of bases. We're making sure, first of all, that firefighters are going to be covered when and if they need to be covered by WCB, and we're making sure that we have the scientific evidence to back it up. Finally, we're going to be the number one jurisdiction in Canada again. That is my word on that file.

### Budget 2023 and Calgary

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP is only funding the construction of one new school in Calgary. This is an insult to students and parents across the city but also to the people of northeast Calgary, who badly needed this investment. As a direct result of this failure to invest, parents from northeast Calgary will be sending their children on longer bus rides to schools far outside of their communities. Why did this UCP government abandon families in Calgary and, in particular, in northeast Calgary?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, I can't understand the concern of the member opposite. You know, under the work being done by the Minister of Education, we are providing more schools in Calgary than the members opposite did when they were in government, okay? Those are the clear, objective pieces of information. In addition to that, we are also providing more funding to education than the members opposite did and, in fact, at any other time in Alberta history. Over \$8 billion in funding to education priorities.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that my constituents have also been hammered with the high cost of living and especially the high cost of groceries, insurance, and utilities – and it's really taking its toll on family budgets – and given that this government has ignored the Official Opposition's call to investigate high grocery prices, insurance, and utility costs and given that Alberta is leading the country in food insecurity right now, can the government explain why they're ignoring this cost-of-living crisis and my constituents?

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:22.

The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are proud to come forward to support Albertans at this time of great inflation, increased cost of living, with the largest, broad-based, and targeted support program in Canada, and that includes supports in all the areas that the member opposite highlighted. Utilities: we came forward with over a billion dollars in electricity rebates, providing up to \$500 per household, to 2 million homes, farms, and small businesses. We

suspended the fuel tax, saving drivers 13.6 cents per litre, including GST, on every litre of gas and diesel until June. We've done even more for our seniors, parents with children, and the most vulnerable: \$100 a month for six months to off-set inflation.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the UCP's affordability program is clearly focused on a looming election and is going to expire in June, meaning that the UCP is planning to abandon these Albertans right after the election, and given that despite inflation and the cost of living remaining far too high, the budget did not lay out any new support measures or a real plan to address it, will the minister explain to Albertans why this government is comfortable abandoning these families right after the election?

**Mr. Jones:** Despite fearmongering from the members opposite, the affordability initiatives continue well past June. Our fuel tax relief: Albertans will continue to save up to 13.6 cents per litre on gasoline and diesel whenever oil prices are high. Natural gas price protection has become permanent. Whenever gas exceeds \$6.50 per gigajoule, they'll get a dollar-for-dollar credit on their natural gas. AISH, income support, the Alberta seniors' benefit, the Alberta child and family benefit have been indexed annually. They will increase with the cost of living. Personal income taxes have been indexed. That'll continue, rising with the cost of living. Alberta parents will continue to benefit from affordable child care.

Thank you.

#### Energy Company Liability

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, this UCP government is refusing to tell the truth about the full details of the Premier's plan to dole out \$20 billion to her friends and insiders. The Premier is desperate to push this \$20 billion giveaway despite criticism from Scotiabank, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, landowners, health care workers, and, well, Albertans across this province. Will the environment minister, who opposed R-star, do what the Premier is afraid to do and tell Albertans why this \$20 billion gift to her friends and insiders is a horrible plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of the environment.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is out for consultation a proposed program which is very different from the former R-star program. I'm not involved in those consultations. They're under development. In the meantime nothing is in the budget to spend any money – not a single cent of money – on that program or any others related to an R-star program. It's under development. They're making something out of absolutely nothing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Twenty billion is hardly nothing.

Given that the environment minister expressed opposition to the Premier's flagrant abuse of power with her desire to give her friends and insiders \$20 billion and given that the Premier is planning to take public money, hand it over to the oil companies to do the work they're already legally obligated to do, and she's doing it at a time of high oil prices, and given that Mark Dorin, director of Polluter Pay Federation, views the Premier's R-star program as being, and I quote, against the law, does the environment minister believe that R-star violates the polluter-pay principle?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities has risen.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta energy companies are required to meet annual mandatory closure spends, and it's working.

Police report that 15,000 wells were cleaned up last year alone. This year \$700 million is earmarked for this important work, a 60 per cent increase over last year, and it's on its way to \$1 billion in industry-wide targets for 2027. We will continue to support our world-class and responsible energy sector while also ensuring that they continue to fulfill their reclamation obligations.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that there are 170,000 unreclaimed sites throughout Alberta that need to be cleaned up and Daryl Bennett of Action Surface Rights said, "It's . . . regrettable that the taxpayer is left to fund these programs and that royalties . . . be reduced," and given that the Premier's R-star program violates the polluter-pay principle, will do damage to the reputation of Alberta's energy sector, and will see her friends and insiders pocket \$20 billion, will the former Energy minister tell the Premier to do the right and honourable thing and abandon this scam?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will know that the use of such language with respect to a scam or otherwise implying that somebody may be breaking the law is unparliamentary, and I would expect him to govern himself accordingly in the future.

The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the members opposite are in unfamiliar territory; it's called a surplus. On one side they say that the only reason we're in surplus is because of our world-class energy sector, but the problem for them is they've also made it clear that they want to shut that sector down. You can't have it both ways. You can't say that Alberta thrives and provides world-class health care and education because of our energy sector and then want to shut that same sector down.

In terms of \$20 billion, perhaps that's the \$20 billion of investment they chased out of our province in a couple of years, or it's the \$20 billion of debt they added to our balance sheet in a couple of years. That's actually in budgets. The \$20 billion you're talking about doesn't exist. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

#### Affordability Plan

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Making life affordable for Albertans continues to be a top priority for our government. We will continue to aid Albertans in achieving financial security by a variety of means. Our affordability action plan has already provided support to seniors, AISH recipients, and families who are struggling with inflation and affordability. To the minister: please provide an update on the progress of the implementation of this plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The affordability action plan supports all Albertans, especially those with low and middle incomes, through a suite of measures designed to provide both targeted and broad-based relief. Low- and middle-income households are eligible for an estimated \$900 in broad-based relief, with additional targeted supports of \$600 over six months for low-income families, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans. For Albertans with the lowest incomes we've also recently provided increased support to food banks and low-income transit programs, and our plan is working. According to economists inflation in Alberta is easing more than elsewhere as a result of our affordability measures, including the suspension of the fuel tax and our electricity rebates.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the affordability action plan includes measures to support Alberta homes, farms, and small businesses, can the minister elaborate more on how these measures are going to have a positive impact on small businesses, which have been particularly hard hit by the inflation and related economic challenges?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small businesses are receiving support through the affordability action plan. Many small or home-based businesses and farms are receiving up to \$500 in electricity rebates. Businesses and their staff continue to save 13.6 cents per litre, including GST, through our fuel tax relief, and their suppliers are also benefiting from this relief, which helps literally drive costs down. Many small and home-based businesses and farms are also benefiting from natural gas price protection. Small-business owners and entrepreneurs are also eligible personally for up to \$900 in broad-based supports for their household and up to \$600 or more over six months in affordability payments if they qualify.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the member.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the action plan also includes initiatives aimed at improving access to affordable housing and supporting vulnerable populations, including Indigenous communities, can the minister provide an update on the progress of these initiatives, including any plan or ongoing collaboration with local governments and community organizations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Today is a good day for Albertans as we just announced 600 new units of affordable housing here in Alberta. That was a \$54 million investment. It's great news for Albertans. We've also recently announced \$14 million in regard to Indigenous housing and partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations to improve access for Indigenous Albertans to affordable housing. We are investing in housing. We have built housing, we are building housing, and we will continue to build housing going into the future. That's demonstrated by a billion-dollar investment in affordable housing over the next three years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Member Loyola:** The most recent budget tabled by the UCP did the same as every single budget by this government has done: it failed communities desperately in need of a hospital. The south Edmonton hospital is critical to the health and well-being of families in my community. Unfortunately, when asked about the project, all we heard from this Minister of Infrastructure is excuse after excuse after excuse. To the minister: why does this government refuse to support families in south Edmonton and build a hospital? What's the excuse this time, Minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. We are committed to building a hospital in south Edmonton. We've got \$630 million in the budget to do just that. We're going back and doing all the work that the NDP failed to do. We're doing the planning. We're doing the functional plan. We're delivering what they failed to do in their years in office. We're committed to Edmonton. We're committed to building this hospital.

**Member Loyola:** Given that yesterday the minister started blaming a pipeline that he apparently had no idea existed four years into this government's mandate and given that there are pipelines criss-crossing the entire province and we build over them all the time and given that this pipeline has been there for decades, for as long as this hospital has been planned, how is it that this minister is only just now discovering this? Did he only look at the plans for the first time yesterday?

**Mr. Neudorf:** It's hilarious coming from the NDP, that they're the ones who picked a site to build a hospital on top of a pipeline. Anybody who knows anything about pipelines, which obviously the NDP don't, knows you can't build on top of that. You're required to do a right of way. You're required to do a negotiation, work that they failed to do. We are now doing that work. We're committed to building a hospital for Edmonton, and we're doing it right by going through all the steps, doing the plan, and delivering for Edmonton and all of Alberta.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the Minister of Infrastructure was unable to answer when construction would begin before the budget and given that weeks later he still is unable to provide a straight answer on what day construction will begin, dismissing concerns and making more excuses, and given that the site of the south Edmonton hospital is a completely bare, snow-covered field, with absolutely no visible movement on actual construction, will the minister admit to families in south Edmonton what they can see with their own eyes, that this government has failed to build the south Edmonton hospital?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Construction will begin as soon we're done fixing all the messes left behind by the NDP. Again, failure to plan, failure to do any design, failure to do any work . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. member had his opportunity to ask the question. The hon. minister has an opportunity to answer it.

The Minister of . . . [interjections] Order. [interjections] No, no, no. It's not funny. I'm so tired of some members on this side of the House immediately after my direction responding in such a manner. You might not like me, but don't be disrespectful of the chair.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, again, we will do the work that the NDP failed to do. We will build a plan, we will get a design, and we are committed to building this hospital for all the people of Edmonton and Alberta.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** I will provide additional comments as well because I understand that there are members who are upset when some members of the government side heckle. I have been keeping a tally today of the total amount of heckles from both sides, and I can assure you it is not on the side of the government that is providing the heckling.

**An Hon. Member:** What? No.



**The Speaker:** I cannot even begin to understand why you would provide your encouragement immediately following a reprimand of the members opposite.

We are staring down the pipe of a very long pre-election month. I hope that as members go home to their families, they will consider that later this week.

### Arts and Culture Funding

**Ms Goehring:** Since taking office, this government has failed Alberta artists and cultural sectors. From day one there have been cuts, artists have been ignored and belittled, with the Premier's office even finding it laughable to consider having an artist's voice on a committee discussing the economic future of this province. It's clear that this attitude remains as the only metric that this minister has for artists in this budget is talking about connecting arts and philanthropy. Will the minister apologize for the UCP legacy of cuts and insults to the creative sector?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate that. Budget 2023 invests in the arts, culture, and heritage, in nonprofit and sport sectors to ensure continued economic growth. Budget '23 provides \$307 million to the Ministry of Culture. There is \$136.3 million in capital grants and \$170.8 million in general operating. This government continues to invest in the arts – we're proud of our arts programs here in Alberta – and we will continue to do so.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that when asked about supporting Alberta's cultural sectors, the minister and the UCP talk a big game but given a choice to step up and really support arts and culture in downtown Calgary, who were hoping this province would support their efforts to revitalize the downtown of our largest city – zero dollars, Mr. Speaker – and given that artists and workers in the sector can't live on the boastful words of the minister, especially when he continues to leave them out to dry, can the minister explain why he failed to stand up for artists in Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. We had an overall increase in spending of \$38.6 million; that's a 14 per cent increase from Budget 2022. We continue to invest in the arts. We are concerned about Calgary and our investments there. We have invested in downtown Calgary, and we will continue to. The members opposite, I think, need to remember the failures that they've had when it comes to what they've done to support the arts in Alberta.

Thank you.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that despite the boasts of the UCP, artists are still struggling and feeling unsupported by this government, who time and time again delivered cuts, insults, and neglect even through the most difficult periods of the pandemic, and given that an Alberta NDP government will recognize, celebrate, and support the creative industries in our province, can the minister explain why this government refuses to do so?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Look, the last few years have been hard on all small businesses, including those in the arts. That's why this government provided more business support and

support for the arts than virtually any other province during that time. But let me explain what it takes to continue to provide support. Our government has positioned this economy for competitiveness, investment attraction, job creation, and opportunity. Ninety-two thousand new jobs in 2022, 25 per cent of all the jobs in Canada: that's progress.

2:40

### Rural Health Care

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans are facing issues in health care. Shortages of doctors and nurses have left communities unable to provide the health services that our cities generally take for granted. Expecting mothers in rural communities can face hours of travel to get to the obstetrical care they need. I have young children, and I understand the stress and anxiety families experience when their child or elderly relatives get seriously ill or injured and the local hospital is either closed or they have to wait hours upon hours just to consult a physician. Can the Minister of Health tell the Assembly how the government will address the shortage of . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health has the call.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We know there are challenges, particularly in rural Alberta, in regard to health care workers. This shortage is not only here in Alberta, but it's across the entire country. Even though we have more doctors, more nurses, more health care professionals than we've ever had before in this province, we still don't have enough and they're not all in the right places. That is one of the reasons why we formed MAPS – it's modernizing Alberta's primary care system – with a particular focus on: how do we provide services in rural Alberta? This, combined with our health worker action plan, will provide the services that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that many rural physicians, primarily due to burnout, are now only working part-time hours, leaving other physicians to work 70 to 80 hours per week to serve their communities, and given that most of the full-time rural physicians are not taking new patients into care and given that these circumstances are causing wait times hours long in the emergency rooms at the hospitals and outside walk-in clinics before they are even opening their doors, to the minister: what initiatives is the government taking to ensure our rural communities have the staff needed to meet the demand for patient care and enough physicians so people can get in to see . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government has already taken a number of steps in this regard. I was very pleased that we reached an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association with a focus on general practitioners, particularly family practitioners, and with a particular focus in rural areas. We are continuing to invest \$120 million for rural, remote, and building recruitment and attraction of physicians outside of the major cities, and that's part of Budget 2023. Also, we're expanding our medical schools with a particular focus on rural areas, and I'll talk about that in a moment.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that rural Alberta is experiencing a growing need for quality health care, especially specialized care, and given that for many rural residents a trip to the city to get specialized care will further exacerbate the condition and stress they

are already dealing with and given that this situation causes additional strain on the doctors and nurses in city hospitals, who are not necessarily built to meet the needs of the neighbouring communities, can the minister tell the House what this government is doing to shorten wait times for critical procedures and to support patients in rural Alberta so they don't have to continue to leave our province or the country for medical care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Once again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his interest and his passion in representing his constituents on this item. You know, having health care workers is the first step, and part of the Alberta health care strategy is to be able to do that, and we're starting to have success in that. Also, I want to talk a little bit about the Alberta surgical initiative program. Part of that program is investing \$237 million over three years in the capital initiative, which includes \$120 million in new funding to support projects in 14 communities across the province. This means that we can provide the surgeries closer to people at home so people have to travel less.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has an introduction.

#### Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move first reading of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Speaker. I have tablings, two of them, documents I referenced in estimates yesterday, the first one being the case for an Alberta highway trust company. That is a document produced by the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association to talk about creating a permanent procurement agency, that would require a realignment of roles within the ministry.

Secondly, a map from the 511 public bus service website, produced by the transportation ministry, showing bus routes in Alberta in 2018, five years out of date, many of which don't operate anymore.

**The Speaker:** My apologies and for the benefit of *Hansard*, I called Edmonton-Decore, but I meant Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Getson:** Just one tabling here with the requisite copies. It's for post-SARS-CoV infection, so the SARS virus and how it has a systematic review and meta-analysis.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Insurance Act the Automobile Insurance Rate Board annual report for the year ended December 31, 2022.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and I'm pleased to announce to the House that the point of order has been withdrawn.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Evening Sitings

22. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing on March 20, 2023, and for the duration of the 2023 spring sitting of the Fourth Session of the 30th Legislature, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) Government Motion 22 is not debatable.

[Government Motion 22 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

##### Bill 8

#### Alberta Firearms Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Justice to move second reading of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act.

If passed, this act would clarify the Alberta government's role in regulating firearms. We're doing this in a way that puts Albertans first. We're looking at regulatory powers to provide additional tools to stand up for Alberta and protect provincial jurisdiction when it comes to firearms.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of confusion from Albertans about how firearms are regulated in the province and indeed in the country. This is why Alberta needs its own firearms legislation. It needs to empower Alberta to advocate more strongly for the rights of law-abiding firearms owners. The act would define the Alberta Chief Firearms Officer's role in administering the federal Firearms Act. It would also make the Chief Firearms Officer responsible for engaging with and advocating on behalf of law-abiding firearms owners in the province.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

I'm happy to say that Alberta's Chief Firearms Officer already has strong relationships with Alberta's lawful firearms community and has been a tireless advocate on their behalf. Defining this part of the role in the act will strengthen this relationship building even

further, and it will give the Chief Firearms Officer an official mandate to advocate to the federal government.

2:50

With the chief firearms office still in relative infancy, this role can be further defined in regulations if needed. To increase the Alberta chief firearms office's visibility and accountability to the public, the act includes a requirement for the office to produce an annual report. This legislation is focused on defining and strengthening the role of the Alberta chief firearms office. It contains tools that would enable Alberta to leverage its jurisdiction over firearms, to enhance public safety, and preserve public confidence in firearms control. Specifically, Alberta could create regulations regarding who can be involved in the seizure and confiscation of firearms.

Also, through regulations, Mr. Speaker, Alberta could establish expectations that firearms owners are fairly compensated for seized firearms or that seized firearms undergo forensic and ballistic testing, when deemed necessary, to ensure evidence is not destroyed if it appears to have been used in a crime. Regulations could also be developed, if needed, to prevent municipalities and municipal police forces from entering into funding agreements with the federal government. I would like to emphasize that none of these measures are fully developed in the act. What I'm pointing out is that a provincial firearms act gives us the flexibility to quickly develop responses to federal government intrusion.

This legislation would allow Alberta to clarify and protect our role in regulating firearms and better advocating for lawful firearms owners. It would reduce confusion and increase accountability for the Chief Firearms Officer's role while providing the flexibility to further define the role if needed, and it would create tools that enable Alberta to protect its areas of jurisdiction over firearms.

Mr. Speaker, the activities of our law-abiding firearms communities are essential to the economic vibrancy and cultural heritage of the province. Firearms owners are hunters or those who lead a traditional way of life. They are sport shooters and collectors of items of Alberta and Canadian cultural significance. They are cowboy mounted shooters. They are ranchers. They are farmers. And there are more than 680 firearms-related businesses in Alberta and more than 127 approved shooting ranges. These individuals and businesses deserve clarity, accountability, and advocacy to protect their property rights, and this government is doing that. That is why this legislation is so important, and that is what this legislation aims to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak to second reading? I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise yet again to help support lawful firearms owners not only in Alberta but in Canada. Bill 8 is the Alberta Firearms Act. I really appreciate the minister bringing this forward.

I'm just going to give the folks at home here a little bit of a preamble just to understand what's going on here. Here's literally the act that's going to define what we can do in the province with our chief firearms office and also give us the framework to allow for realistic regulations to take place to help protect firearms owners' rights.

Whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to advancing public safety while respecting the property and civil rights of law-abiding Albertans;

Whereas the Government of Alberta recognizes the need for an evidence-based firearms program in Alberta that respects the values of Alberta's lawful firearms owners;

Whereas the federal and provincial governments share jurisdiction over the regulation of firearms in Canada.

Let's sort that one out. It's similar to everything else in our Constitution. It's kind of like calling that pop fly in centre field when it goes up. We actually share the responsibility, so we are saying that again:

Whereas the federal and provincial governments share jurisdiction over the regulation of firearms in Canada;

Whereas federal jurisdiction over firearms is governed by the Firearms Act (Canada) and the Criminal Code (Canada), and the Government of Canada operates the Canadian Firearms Program to oversee its regulatory framework relating to firearms;

Whereas a province may opt in to administering the Canadian Firearms Program by designating a chief firearms officer;

Whereas the Firearms Act (Canada) gives a province that designates a chief firearms officer the flexibility to administer the Canadian Firearms Program in accordance with the specific needs and circumstances of [that] province.

So that's pretty key, Mr. Speaker, right there. Once we've established the CFO, the CFO then can manage the act.

Whereas in 2021, the Government of Alberta, following the recommendations of the Fair Deal Panel, designated a chief firearms officer for Alberta to administer the Canadian Firearms Program in Alberta in a manner that respects the values and priorities of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this is a key element here: understanding how Albertans use those firearms, respecting our culture, our rights, and our freedoms out here in the west, and how we deal with that out here.

Therefore His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, enacts as follows.

So that's where we get into the act itself.

Now, how did we get here? I'm not going to go through since 1960 and talk about all the other things that took place, but I do want to do a little bit of the wayback machine here simply in our time in this House.

Firearms have been – I've said it in here a number of times before – the canary in the coal mine when it comes to rights and freedoms and overreach by the federal government. When we first got here, we went and did the Fair Deal Panel. We engaged Albertans right across the province in all different areas, both rural and urban and everything in between. It was time and time again that folks said: the firearms rules aren't making sense; we've got a bunch of things that simply don't make sense. I had colleagues that didn't understand why some of us were pushing back on this until we took them to a firearms shop, a gun shop, and explained to them and had the owners of that firearms shop sit down with a bunch of different firearms and explain what was allowed, what wasn't allowed, and the rationale for it. It didn't make sense.

At that moment in time those individuals went out and got their PAL licence. They became lawfully administered firearms owners. There was an order in council that took place – well, actually, prior to that, there was this order in council that fired up after the Fair Deal Panel which overnight, all of a sudden, banned 1,500 firearms, including some coffee out there as well and airsoft rifles, which basically shoot pellets. Paintball guns: I think everyone has gone and done these things with these air markers or paint markers at some events. Those things all started becoming illegal. We really started paying attention to that.

With that, then we fired up a firearms task force. I was very honoured and privileged to be part of that as well. We engaged Albertans. I think we had over 70,000 engagements, people that were on calls. Seventy per cent of the participants there were firearms owners, 30 per cent not, and of those 30 per cent, more

than 90 per cent wanted us to do something. They understood those values and beliefs.

Anecdotally, with this last pass on Bill C-21 when it came out, Bill C-21 in its title – it's a federally regulated item. The order in council was kind of the shot across the bow. It showed that, quite frankly, whoever was administering this was more concerned about getting votes in the greater Toronto area, wherever there were high crime locations, and that folks didn't understand the difference between the firearms and how they're used, not to mention our actually very fulsome process to be given the honour and the privilege simply to own firearms. Like, anyone in here who has a PAL licence in their pocket: you're getting screened by the RCMP every single day. That's a fact. When you go out and buy these, you have to have all of these licences, administration in place to start off with.

Bill C-21 – and here's the interesting part of this. Allegedly – I shouldn't say "allegedly." But, tongue-in-cheek, here's what their bill says. "A comprehensive strategy to address gun violence and strengthen gun laws in Canada: Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)."

So the certain consequential firearms – and this is directly from their thing: a national freeze on handguns. That was it. All of a sudden they were verboten. New red and yellow flag laws: well, that's always interesting. Combating firearms smuggling and addressing trafficking, which none of their legislation really does, because again, if they were taking care of that, already they would have empowered Canadian borders and customs and flowed money over there. Prohibiting mid-velocity replica air guns. Mid-velocity air guns: these are the things that your kid would learn how to shoot. My nine-year-old daughter at the time in the backyard: all of a sudden she can't have her pellet gun, the things that you use for safety and training. So, yeah, coming into force.

Now here's the bait and switch that they did. This was an evergreening thing. They kept throwing on more and more firearms that no one could make sense of. And here was the best blunder of all recently. They go out and they put in an amendment just before it goes to the Senate and essentially said in such, Mr. Speaker – and I know you're writing down notes here, so you can take this home to your constituents as well – that they essentially banned every centrefire rifle out there.

**3:00**

The way that they did that – for folks that don't understand at home, it wasn't about the calibre at this point. It was literally anything that had a box magazine that was detachable. Any box magazine that was ever made that was detachable that could fit into the magazine well of a firearm that had anything more than five rounds: all of a sudden the entire rifle became illegal. Then they made an exception, because a lot of our Indigenous, First Nations people have rifles that have an attached magazine. Then they said, "Well, those are exempt except for," and then they specifically listed the most common rifles out there that people use for sustenance hunting. They tried to ban everything, getting past the House, went back to the Senate, and that's when everyone started really paying attention to this.

Now, interestingly enough, I met a Member of Parliament that was from the Bloc Québécois on a conference. We're casually talking about this, and I asked him: "Why in the heck are you guys propping up this Liberal government? Like, why are you guys doing this?" He said, "Well, it's only assault rifles." I asked him what that was. Well, he couldn't tell me what it was because, again, he keeps going back to a soldier's rifle, and that's not the case, so all of a sudden they have this construct.

I said, "You're a rural Member of Parliament that represents the Bloc Québécois." He goes: "Well, actually, I'm from Montreal. I ran an election out there and then, you know, a paratroop candidate." I said, "Well, let me help you out, partner," and I opened up my phone, showed him a picture of three different rifles. I said: "Tell me which one that you're not allowing my daughter to go shoot tin cans with in the backyard. Tell me which one I'm not allowed to go shoot predators that are coming onto my property that are coming after my livestock. Tell me which one I can't go out anymore and hunt my moose or my deer with in the fall." Well, obviously, he couldn't tell me.

I gave him some really salient advice, I think. I said: "Partner, you're representing rural Quebec. I know tons of folks from rural Quebec. We get along with Quebecers like peanut butter and jelly, believe it or not. Knock all the political conjecture away. We talk about rural things, and we talk about that environment. We get along like peanut butter and jelly. These folks are going to string you up by your toenails because you're going to be taking out of their gun cabinets things that they use for recreation, everyday usage, going out and doing their hunting, their way of life. So you'd better think about this, why you're propping up this guy to buy some votes in Montreal." It was sobering to him. He thanked me for that.

These were the folks that were going out and trying to support something because – well, bait and switch – they were fed a pile of BS that wasn't making sense at all, and that's where they went on the Firearms Act. With us putting this Bill 8 in place, it's kind of like that pop fly, Mr. Speaker. We're saying: hey, this is ours. It's written into the act already. We have the ability to do this. We're going to put our CFO in place, which we did, and then allow that CFO that framework. That CFO can do the reporting back to us on an annual basis. They can tell us what's happening in that area. They can help the safety, and moreover they can also advocate for proper firearms use.

When we talk about culture out in Alberta here, we're disproportionate in a number of things. We're disproportionate in how much we earn. We're disproportionate in how much we pay and we send down east. We're disproportionate in a number of things. Lo and behold, we are also disproportionate in the number of firearms that we use, that Albertans own from all walks of life, whether it's handguns or air rifles or shotguns or anything else.

We've been blessed with an amazing province where we can bounce back and forth, whether it's in Calgary, as an example, and your shooting community down there – and the firearms manufacturing industry: second to none. We have some amazing rifles here, some amazing builds that take place. People can literally go from Calgary and, within a few minutes outside their back door, be out in some beautiful, pristine country. They can go to a skeet range or go to a gun range, or they can go out in the fall and stumble around like most of us out there for an excuse to get out in the country, and maybe we don't even let off a round to shoot that duck to bring home, that, you know, we'll have. This is a way of life. We've been brought up with that.

Albertans own the second-highest number of firearms classified as restricted or prohibited by the federal government. Again, these things keep changing all the time. A lot of lawful firearms owners bought these, and they've been changed. The federal firearms ban targets an estimated 30,000 firearms for confiscation in Alberta. Those are the ones they know about, and therein lies the other challenge. If their own act itself is talking about public safety, instilling this act and these orders in council have quite the contrary effect. The national statistics show that these violent acts and gun crimes and everything else in the big cities are going up. They

haven't gone down. Nothing has changed. In fact, if you're looking at stats, we'd be making it worse.

Over 341,988 who have possession and acquisition licences, holders in Alberta – there are a couple of million of us across this country. Again, Alberta hitting way above its weight class: 127 approved shooting ranges, more than 680 firearms-related businesses.

I had testimony in here a number of times and did some videos as well. People that are diversified, diversified economies, taking their different skill sets – Alberta Tactical is one of them. I remember the gentleman down there, speaking to him a couple of years ago. Very innovative designs, beautiful, beautiful stuff that they produce, high accuracy, beautiful rifles. I mean, if you're walking into the store there and you're leaving, you know, anything less than \$3,000 or \$4,000 on the table, you probably haven't picked up anything. It's beautiful, beautiful stuff. People work very hard to be able to take their hard-earned money and buy something that they can recreate with and enjoy.

They came up with some new designs to get around some of the silly, bonkers gun rules because people wanted to use these. This guy, his background: he was actually in law enforcement, and then he got into fabricating and machining, and he had issues with welding fumes, and he ended up having a gun shop and – I don't know – selling these things all over the world but all over the province, for sure, and employed a bunch of people.

I've got EM Precision Rifles. They're just right outside of Leduc and Nisku, and they also have another shop over in Spruce Grove, over there. Again, they're having to change what they're doing again. Some folks that bought their firearms: now they're having to resurface and reface and retool them to make them fit within these parameters. They're not just going after, again, anymore the black firearms. They're not going against the black rifles. They've taken everything with these last, sweeping changes.

I made a promise to some folks out in Cardiff when that incident took place, and I've spoken here about it before. When that incident took place down in Nova Scotia, when that individual went out and caused harm, I made a promise to the folks – and we were planting an oak tree in memory of her sister that passed away during that – that our government would actually do something to help promote safety, that we would do something to get to the root cause. She didn't want a ban on firearms; she wanted governments to actually do something for public safety. That's what we're trying to do here, address the real issues, not the window dressing for elections, not this BS of pulling on heartstrings on folks that don't understand.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I would just maybe caution you a little bit about parliamentary language in the House. I know we like acronyms and abbreviations in government, but maybe just choose your words a little more cautiously.

**Mr. Getson:** Oh, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. First day back on the job here getting up and talking again. I apologize. It was the one that started with "b"? Okay. Just to make sure I don't do it again.

Obviously, you can tell that I've been out in the constituency, out with the farmers again, too, and the truckers and all the fellows there. Actually, that's pretty toned down compared to some of the language we had. They were pretty concerned about what was taking place with the federal government and how this is going to work.

Over at the gun show in Spruce Grove or, actually, Stony Plain that took place this weekend – and I'm, I think, the only elected official that shows up there at these things. God bless the folks that go to gun shows: you've got everything from arts and crafts, you've got the memorabilia that takes place, and you've got the little

granny there. There was one lady: she was showing me her scrollwork – and it was on a scroll saw – you know, whether it's a deer and using some antler horns, and then she had some flowers and other things. I'd asked her about some of the pieces at her booth, and she said: "Well, my husband did those. He's one of the scroll sawmen that worked on these." I said, "Well, where's he today?" She goes, "Well, he passed a couple of years ago, but I still have his artwork, and I still have his firearms."

That's part of the legacy that folks don't remember here again as well, and I spoke to that. You know, there's an old deer rifle that my grandpa used way back when. According to these new laws my grandfather's rifle will now have to be destroyed. It's no longer allowed. Some of the characters that I've met over the years, too – I have a few pistols that are the same thing. They've got a family legacy and a history.

It was a gentleman by the name of Wayne Huddleston: he passed. Some of the most fun times that we had together were going out in the backyard and sighting in our rifles and getting ready to go for that deer season. So his BAR rifle that he had, that .306: no longer. Folks making these decisions for simple political rhetoric somewhere else that are going under the auspices, rather than that b-word, of actually changing something: they're not. They're not doing a lick. I would break my promise to that lady about her sister if I didn't stand up here and support that.

**3:10**

Now, we had a couple of motions as well, and I'm hoping that members opposite support us on this today. I really do. I honestly, genuinely do. We had a couple of motions. It was prior to Bill C-21, and everyone stood up here and regaled with stories. I remember the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talking about his own experiences in going out and shooting as well, and everyone supported it. We were all unanimous. Once that bill came out from the feds, we had a second motion on it. The opposition members all voted against it. I'm hoping that we can drop it. Again to the Speaker's comments earlier today, we're going into an election cycle, and we all know that. We can drop the gloves and a bunch of things.

But I honestly, genuinely hope that you stand up for the constituents in your communities, the white-collar folks as well. Disproportionately, it's a number of doctors and lawyers that own those pistols. Disproportionately. Anyone that really wants to stand up for rural and talk about rural in here: stand up for the rural folks that have their firearms as well, those legacies, things that they remember from their families, these traditions.

It's a passing of the torch, as it were, that we go do that, that we continue to have and support our Chief Firearms Officer, who has done one heck of a job. When I'm the politician at the booth, the thing that comes up – and if Teri is not there herself, everybody comes up and says: "What a great job that CFO is doing. What a great job to see these folks out here talking about the rules and regulations and applying it and standing up for us. What a great thing to have such a vocal advocate for firearms rights and also education on it."

It was also interesting to see the kids, like, when you're at these firearms shows and you have stuff there, which little guys would come up. I had some inert firearms sitting at the table just for conversation pieces. It was really cute. There were, you know, the cousins coming up, and one cousin was from the city, and the other one is from the country. The city cousin wants to come up and immediately grab it. And the first thing that, you know, the two-year-old, by the height of the two fellows there, would show – his older cousin from the country goes: "Uh-uh-uh, don't touch it. You don't know if it's safe." Number one. Number two, he asked, "Can

we look at this?" I said, "Yeah." And he goes and reaches out to his other cousin and goes: "Never touch the trigger. Always make sure it's safe. Always prove it's safe. And never put the muzzle anywhere that wouldn't be safe." This little fellow is all of about 11 years old.

Those are the things that take place when you have the lower calibre ones, the air rifles and those types of things. That's ingrained in the kids when they're bringing it up. It's kind of like Cinderella and that spinning wheel. If you take these away – that's the other part – then you're going to take away tons of history: you know, the grandpa's story of spending time with the grandson or the granddaughter because Dad is busy working or Mom is busy working, but the grandpa can go and do that, and they can spend time together. Some of the best memories of folks coming up: no different than that lady.

It was all day long like that, folks coming up and thanking us. They were asking what was in Bill 8. At that time I couldn't tell them, but I kind of said: here's conceptually what we're looking at. It was just accolades. I was at a church event last night. Some little old lady comes up – God bless her, just a little spark plug – and she says, "Are you that guy that was at that gun show?" "Yeah." She goes: "Well, my nephew was over there. He said to come and talk to you. I can't believe I'm running into you here." They're good folks. They're from Edmonton. I met them in Edmonton. I didn't meet them out in my backyard.

But these are the things that'll be taken away from us, Mr. Speaker, and why this bill is so important. I hope that what I can convey is that there are opportunities and chances for us to work together regardless of political backgrounds and everything else. I sure wish we can do the right thing for all of us.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has 15 minutes to speak to second reading.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 8. I also heard that the member opposite urged us to stand up for our constituents and issues facing them. Certainly, I will try to do that as well as I speak to Bill 8. If I talk to my constituents – I do meet them on a regular basis; I do go out door-knocking; I do go to many events; I'm there especially on weekends – what I do hear from them on a fairly regular basis: they are concerned about the crisis in health care. They're concerned about longer wait times in emergency rooms. They're concerned about rising, skyrocketing grocery prices, which are rising well above the inflation rate of 8 per cent. They're concerned about skyrocketing insurance costs. They're concerned about skyrocketing utility costs. They're concerned about new schools in northeast Calgary. They're concerned about guns and gang violence in their communities. They're concerned about drugs and overdose deaths in their community.

Instead of focusing on those priorities of my constituents, which are also shared by many Albertans across this province, this government and this Premier continue to pick fights with the federal government and are hell bent on pursuing costly and incompetent strategies such as dismantling the RCMP and replacing it with an Alberta police force, such as pulling Alberta out of the Canada pension plan.

Bill 8 does nothing to address the priorities of my constituents. It does nothing to address the challenges that Albertans are facing. It does nothing to address the challenges with gang-based violence, military-style assault weapons, gun violence in this province, in particular in Calgary and northeast Calgary. Last year alone there were 100-plus shootings in Calgary; 40 per cent of them were in the

northeast quadrant of the city and involved illegal guns. People do want this government to focus on public safety, to address the rising gun violence. Instead, they're constantly being consumed in never-ending political games.

The government claims that this bill will establish the most comprehensive provincial firearm framework in the country, but we believe it may overstep since the government doesn't have all the details, all the information of the federal plan. This bill is intending to presuppose the outcome of federal changes we are yet to see.

Part 1 of the bill expands the mandate of the Chief Firearms Officer but leaves all the substantial details relating to this office – their duties, their powers, their mandate – to regulation so they can decide behind closed doors. If they really want this office to have a clear mandate, then all those substantial provisions should be included in this legislation so that we can debate the merits of those powers, the mandate of that office. But, clearly, the government didn't do the homework.

The bill also talks about licensing but again doesn't give any details for us to be able to compare how this regime will be better than the one that was in place or is in place. All the substantial details are left to regulation.

This section also talks about an annual report, and interestingly that section will not be proclaimed till April of 2025. That annual report will be due once the section is proclaimed, meaning that there won't be any report at least until April of 2026. So the UCP cannot be taken seriously when they talk about reporting and transparency, and their legislation also shows that.

**3:20**

Part 1 does talk about the Chief Firearms Officer, but it doesn't talk about public safety at all. As I mentioned, there were 100-plus shootings in Calgary alone last year, and we don't see anything in this piece of legislation that will address the proliferation of guns in our communities and the gun violence that comes with it in our communities.

Part 2 of the bill is also concerning. It gives this government, the responsible minister broad and sweeping powers to seize firearms beyond what federal legislation or what their regulations are suggesting now. Essentially, government is giving itself power to seize whatever property they like, and if they stand against seizure and overreach of Albertans' property rights, Indigenous hunting rights, why would they need such broad, sweeping powers? Again, there is no substantial provision here for us as the opposition or Albertans to know what that regime will look like. It will be all decided through regulations which we are yet to see. Speaking of Albertans' priorities, I think I would want to know what the other side is telling Albertans about this provision, this new regime, and what they are hearing from them. In short, every aspect of this bill is left to regulations.

Still, the government must know something because they are expanding the office of the Chief Firearms Officer from 30 to 70. They must know something, but they are again hiding their plans from Albertans. Again, someone on the other side needs to explain to us, needs to explain to Albertans why we need such a huge expansion, yet they're unable to share their plans with us and why they see this as a priority as opposed to addressing the crisis in health care, as opposed to addressing the cost-of-living crisis, as opposed to addressing the challenges Albertans are facing under this UCP government.

Also, we didn't hear whether any municipalities or any Indigenous groups were consulted, including those who have direct service agreements with the RCMP. There are 47 of them, municipalities, and 22 First Nations. None of them were consulted. That's what we heard from officials. In the last 18 months no

municipality, no Indigenous groups were consulted. Then they are putting in provisions that will hamstring the municipalities from accessing any federal grants of funding for enforcement, including in this act. Still, they didn't consult any municipalities. That's disrespectful to those municipalities. That's disrespectful to those Indigenous communities.

One more thing is there; that is, a broad immunity clause that gives government, their employees, the minister, the firearms officer, anyone involved in seizure broad immunity. The question I must ask is this: if the UCP are so convinced that their bill is good and it has public backing, why do they have to protect themselves so thoroughly? Why? This clause goes against all the conventions and traditions of government accountability. This is government protecting itself from lawsuits that may follow this government's overreach and actions. They know that. This kind of clause is heavy handed and unjustified.

Again, there were a number of questions with respect to consultations, consultation with Indigenous communities, about any legal analysis, whether there was any legal analysis done. That was the question we asked officials as well. If government has done any legal analysis on that and they want to be transparent, they want to be trusted, they want to be taken seriously, they should share that analysis. If they have done any analysis on section 35 Indigenous rights, they should share that with Indigenous communities. They should share that with all Albertans.

For the reasons I outlined, the bill as it stands now: we cannot support this bill. It is less about firearms and public safety and more about the UCP fund raising off it for the coming election. There are no substantial provisions included in it so that we can analyze the merits of this bill. Every single detail is left to regulations. There are more than 68 provisions that give government reg-making authority. That's not good governance. That doesn't give Albertans any certainty. This is just governing by fiat, and you will do whatever you think is appropriate behind closed doors through regulations. There were no consultations, no legal analysis, no section 35 analysis, how it impacts Indigenous peoples' rights.

Again, this bill may help the UCP to fund raise, but it helps with nothing else. It's not focused on the priorities of my constituents and Albertans across this province who want this government to address the health care crisis, longer wait times, shortages of schools in their communities, drug and gang violence in our communities, and issues of cost of living. That is what we are hearing every single day from our constituents, from Albertans, across this province, and Albertans certainly deserve better than this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to second reading? I see the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my great pleasure to actually rise in support of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act. I'd have to say that by engaging in the real property rights tour that went around the province and seeing the abolishment of adverse possession by the Minister of Justice and now this bill, he is definitely rising to be one of my favourite ministers when it comes to legislation being passed in recent months.

Now, this bill is something that should hopefully be of reassurance to all of Alberta's legal firearms owners, including a great many in my riding. I just want to speak to a couple of the comments by the previous member, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. He talked about what's relatable, standing up for our constituents. He said that this not a priority and that it does nothing to support the

priorities of the people within our ridings. Now, I would say that's not true at all. I think this really is about standing up for the rights of individuals within our ridings, and that's why it is so incredibly important.

3:30

I'm a proud Albertan who values the unique heritage and culture within Alberta, and I'm willing to speak first-hand of the importance and the tradition of responsible and legal firearm ownership within our province. I really believe, like many in my riding of Highwood and throughout the rest of Alberta, that this is a key component of one of our liberties, that we should be able to enjoy. I'm an avid hunter, and there is nothing, in my mind, that's more Canadian than getting out into the wilderness and being able to hunt and enjoy that. Now, for many I think this holds very true, including those within our Indigenous communities in Alberta. I know the previous Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall talked about that there was no consultation with Indigenous communities. Well, the recent moves from the federal government: not one Indigenous community that I've spoken to that were consulted on that as well either when they started going down this.

Moving on, there is a lot of support within my riding and for other folks, including several thousand members of the Alberta Federation of Shooting Sports. Ownership and responsible use of firearms also provides an opportunity for sport and recreation for many. I think it's important to point that out. Many of the firearms-based organizations also offer the opportunity for youth to learn and interact with firearms in a safe, educational, and engaging environment. I know that with my kids I've made a real focus to be able to take them and educate them on safe firearm use, and I think that's essential. I think a lot of the reasons people push for continued moves on firearms is a lack of knowledge and a fear around them, but this is not based on fact when it really comes to what's happening.

When you talk about, you know, the crime issue, the former member talked about wanting to be able to deal with the violence in their communities and the use of guns and gun-related violence. I think it's really important. This has been one of my positions, and the reason for the push-back against the federal government was that the guns being used in these illegal situations are not coming from legal firearm owners; these are coming across the border. This is misdirected. When you talk to our enforcement, law enforcement, border patrol, the guns are coming across the border, and that's where the focus should be. If we want to drive down gun violence and get guns out of the hands of criminals, we need to focus on exactly that.

Now, we have already extremely strict regulations related to obtaining a firearm, and the basis of the culture around this is responsible and safe use. Now, this is something that's always a core tenet of any form of firearms-based recreation. Just like other Canadians, Albertans are proud, law-abiding, and responsible firearm owners. I think there is a point at which we need to stand up for those responsible firearm owners. Right now there are 340,000 legal permit holders, and I do believe there were over 30,000 additional applying last year, that are qualified in Alberta. With that, they go through one of the most comprehensive mandatory firearms safety courses in order to be able to do that.

Additionally, as a part of pre-existing federal firearms legislation, Alberta firearm owners remain under strict stipulations regarding their criminal status. I know that when I went through my course for my PAL to be able to become a law-abiding firearms owner, there were extensive background checks. I actually am very proud, and I think most firearm owners are, and they support this.

Further yet, our province's strong culture and connection to firearms ownership is something reflected within our own economy. We have more than 127 approved ranges and 680 firearms-based businesses. Legal firearms ownership is clearly of an economic significance as much as it is of cultural significance to Albertans. Now, small-business owners and manufacturers in the firearms industry have identified Alberta as the place they want to come to set up and provide their services from, and that speaks to the new, renewed Alberta advantage that this government is creating, so I do believe this is an important bill to be able to put forward.

The previous member said that there are a lot of priorities. Yes, there are, but he makes it seem as though it's an either/or. We can work on the priorities. We have an excellent affordability package that has been put forward. The Minister of Health is working on an action plan to bring back strong health care and strengthen our health care here in the province. We have the ability to do more than one thing at a time, and I'm glad that this is going forward along with all the other excellent initiatives that this government is bringing forward.

However, you know, when you look at the last two years in relation to this bill and what the Trudeau government has done, it has put this industry under risk, and there are a lot of individuals that run these businesses that are very fearful of what's going on. This is really in relation to a lot of the fearmongering of the NDP-Liberal alliance. I know 2021 saw an order in council rush through that was punishing legal owners and users of handguns. This trend continued into last year, where we saw the real possibility that a large portion of the firearms used by Canadians to hunt would be banned. Now, thankfully, despite this attempt, as many things do with the Trudeau government, it quickly developed into an abysmal failure. That being said, the Trudeau government has made it known that they are going to continue to attempt to disarm and punish legal, law-abiding Canadian gun owners.

Now, this message is something that continues to be a cause of concern among those lawful firearms owners across Canada as well as many that reside here in Alberta. With more than a quarter of a million legal firearms owners in the province and with tens of thousands more licensed here every year, there's no doubt in my mind that Alberta is one of Ottawa's primary targets in its campaign of fearmongering and persecution around firearms. The previous member said that this government is picking a fight. We're not picking the fight. Ottawa picked the fight. We're trying to stand up for Albertans.

Now, misinformation, confusion, incompetence, and blatant ignorance of the Trudeau government surrounding firearms ownership has created a dangerous situation in which the average legal firearm owner finds themselves persecuted while illegal firearms continue to flood into the country and the criminals that use them are allowed to walk free. As I mentioned before, if you want to focus on crime and crime prevention or reducing gun-related violence, then Trudeau should be focused on putting that money towards protecting the borders and stopping the illegal flow of firearms across them. It would seem that the Trudeau government does not care that Alberta gun owners, like the rest of Canadian gun owners, are law abiding, responsible, and they're undeserving of this threat and punishment. Legal gun owners are not the issue in Canada, nor Alberta, and as such should be permitted to continue using and enjoying their firearms in the safe and responsible manner that they do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if passed, Bill 8 would ensure that protections are put in place, pushing back against Ottawa's irrational and misguided persecution of law-abiding gun owners. Under the Firearms Act this government would stand side by side with

Alberta's legal gun owners, and we will be able to say to them that you're not alone in this fight, that we'll be there to support you. The Alberta Firearms Act would achieve this by expanding the role of our province's Chief Firearms Officer from not only administrating but advocating for and protecting gun owners within Alberta. Furthermore, Bill 8 would see Alberta's Chief Firearms Officer made accountable to this province's government through the requiring of a yearly report. In addition to improving the role and responsibilities of the CFO, Bill 8 would also enable this government to respond quickly to instances of overreach by the Trudeau government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to be clear in saying that I am in strong support of this bill. I look forward to speaking to it again as we continue to push this bill through the House and just want to once again thank the Minister of Justice for putting this forward and finally standing up and standing with legal firearms owners in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great privilege today to rise and speak in support of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act. The bill before us today is quite personal to me. When I was a child, myself along with my brother would often accompany our dad on hunting trips. Usually dad hunted for bird game, so we'd spend a fair amount of time in a duck line, dressed in bright-red jackets, oversized rubber boots, freezing as we would wait for the first ducks to land. The first group of ducks would land on the slough, and we would wait, hold our breath, careful not to make a sound lest we be discovered and scare off the birds. A few more ducks would trickle onto the slough, joining the group, and then a few more would land. My dad would then take aim, take his shot and then another, and then my brother would join in. I remember many times when I was watching my brother and I would get excited and anxious to take a shot, begging my dad: just let me fire once. But that wouldn't happen until I became a teenager, at which point I was able to demonstrate to my dad that I was responsible enough to fire my first shot.

In those many years before I shot a real gun, my dad taught me all about gun use and safety by showing me the ins and outs on a pellet gun. I shot the pellet gun at many targets, becoming more accurate and comfortable over time. I remember vividly the day my dad first led me to shoot my real firearms. After years of patience and learning he loaded up the gunny sacks, his guns, shells, our dog, and myself. We drove in his red Dodge truck to the slough at the southern quarter of my grandparents' farm. Before handing me the gun, my dad went over the dos and don'ts of gun use. We then walked into the blind, and I was on top of the world.

Every time my dad and I went hunting or target shooting, he always made me go through the drill for gun safety and proper use. My dad and I were never threats to society. We weren't criminals. We were simply two people who bonded over this great hobby. Though my father is gone, the memories we made together hunting I will always cherish.

Mr. Speaker, this hobby and this story aren't unique to only our family; we're just two of the many Albertans and Canadians, including many of my constituents in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who legally own a gun. Today there are over 340,000 licensed gun owners in Alberta with countless stories just like ours. On average 30,000 Albertans complete mandatory firearms safety course training each year as a first step to obtaining their firearms licence, and in 2021 that number jumped to 38,000.



Gun ownership in Alberta won't just go away despite what some might hope. In fact, Alberta is home to 147 approved shooting ranges and more than 680 firearms-related businesses. Gun ownership in Alberta isn't just about the ownership of the possessions; it's truly a way of life. That's why it's so disappointing to see that our federal Liberal government is so intent on scapegoating and punishing the many law-abiding, licensed gun owners in Canada and ultimately taking this hobby away from us.

Mr. Speaker, legal, licensed firearms owners, like my dad, are not the problem. Legal firearms owners contribute so much not just to Alberta's economy but to the cultural heritage of our province, and taking their guns isn't making Alberta any safer. It is time that we stand up for the interests of Alberta's legal gun owners and take a stand on behalf of all Albertans.

This is why I am so proud to be speaking on this bill today. If passed, Bill 8 will provide stronger support for the thousands of law-abiding firearms owners in Alberta. It would legally codify the role of the Alberta chief firearms office in administering the Firearms Act, and, importantly, this bill would expand the scope of the chief firearms office, including engaging with and advocating for Alberta firearms owners.

Additionally, this bill will require the chief firearms office to issue an annual report. Albertans deserve transparency and accountability, and this annual report will provide exactly that while also spreading awareness of the work of the chief firearms office. Of course, perhaps most significantly, Bill 8 will allow Alberta to defend our areas of jurisdiction over firearms.

When the federal government interferes in our province's jurisdiction, we need to have the flexibility to respond to the situation on behalf of Albertans. This bill gives the Alberta

government the tools we need to do that. This includes the ability to prevent municipalities and municipal police services from directly entering into funding agreements with the federal government. This includes possibly the ability to regulate who can participate in the seizure and confiscation of firearms. This includes the ability to codify Alberta's expectations of fair treatment of firearms owners surrounding the confiscation of firearms. It also includes the ability to regulate safety and integrity of any program that involves the handling of a large number of firearms.

Albertans elected us to stand up for their interests. By passing Bill 8, we will have the tools that we need to do exactly that. That's why this is so important, to pass this bill. I encourage all members of the Assembly to support the hundreds of thousands of law-abiding firearms owners in Alberta and to vote in favour of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 8?

I'm prepared to call the question. The Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Schow:** Waive.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 13, 2023.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:47 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022-2023)**

**Activity to Thursday, March 9, 2023**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 cA-33.8 ]

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft.*), 342-49 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 361-72 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve.*), 421-25 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 430-31 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 446-50 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c19 ]

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 325-29 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 375-78 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c23 ]

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 321-25 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 372-75 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 392 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 426-29 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c17 ]

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 314-21 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 392-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 429-30 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c20 ]

**Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 309-14 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 349-54 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 399-408 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 409-21 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 431 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 450-51 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2022 c22 ]

**Bill 7 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No.2) (Schow)**

First Reading — 329 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 378-79 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 398-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 425-26 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c21 ]

**Bill 8 — Alberta Firearms Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 503 (*Mar. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 536-43 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 9 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Nally)**

First Reading — 523 (*Mar. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 536 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft.*), 354-60 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 289-97 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 445-46 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2022 c18 ]

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-303 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., adjourned*), 480-87 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 487-92 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 205 — Official Sport of Alberta Act (Lovely)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 206 — Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sabir)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 13, 2023

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
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Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 13, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Madison Gramlich. I'd invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
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.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Commonwealth Day

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today we celebrate Commonwealth Day along with the 10th anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter, a document signed by Queen Elizabeth II on March 11, 2013, that demonstrates the values and aspirations that unite the 56 member nations and the 180 parliaments and Legislatures of the Commonwealth. We are geographically and culturally diverse, yet we are unified in our shared commitment to democracy, peace, human rights, and equality.

For the first time in 70 years we recognize our significant union without the leadership and guidance of Queen Elizabeth II, who made considerable contributions to the Commonwealth during her reign. Her legacy lives on in our union and His Majesty King Charles III as he now presides over the Commonwealth.

While it is steeped in tradition and its roots stretch back generations, the Commonwealth's focus is on what lies ahead. This year's theme, Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future, is very relevant in an era where global issues and conflicts continue to persist. Please join me in acknowledging and celebrating Commonwealth Day 2023.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, seated in the Speaker's gallery today is an incredible young woman who I had the opportunity to meet just a little bit ago. She led us in the singing of our national anthem. Madison Gramlich is nine years old, lives in Slave Lake. Her passion for singing started at the age of five, and she has performed for many audiences, most notably opening Slave Lake's All-in

concert. I would ask you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. minister of community and social services, is your guest here yet? I don't believe so. Perhaps we will come back to that. I don't see her there.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Actually, I have two guests to introduce, so I'll do this one first if that's . . .

**The Speaker:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce two incredible human beings, Brad and Jennifer Bartko. In 2021 Brad started Disability – Accessible by Design with the mission to make public and private establishments barrier free. Please make yourself known and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice has a school group today.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly grade 6 students from Lycée international de Calgary. This is a bilingual school located in the constituency of Calgary-Elbow in the quiet neighbourhood of Altadore. They are visiting Edmonton this week to participate in the School at the Legislature program and to learn about the provincial government. Accompanying the class are three teachers: Julia Mills, Julien Battaglia, and Bilyana Raycheva. And a special shout-out to Elliott McKay. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Merci, M. le Président. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you 55 students from Our Lady of the Prairies school, l'école Notre Dame des Prairies, in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung. They're joined today by teachers Ms Sydney Brunelle, Mme Alicia Bussière, professeures dans le programme d'immersion française, and teacher Wieke Steynen as well as Ms Mariah Allarie, a therapeutic assistant. I ask that we please rise and give them the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a home-school association group from my constituency. I've had a very interesting discussion with them over lunch. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today and introduce some of Stony Plain's finest young students joining us from the SML Christian Academy and their incredible teacher, Tricia Shane. I had the pleasure of meeting with this group earlier today and can tell you that the future of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is in very good hands. Students, please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I'd like to introduce the parents of our anthem singer, Lacey and Shawn

Gramlich, who is the interim mayor of Slave Lake, and their daughter Breeley along with their grandparents, Laurie and Danny Schmode, as well as their uncle Scott Sinclair, who is the UCP candidate for Lesser Slave Lake, and his daughter Sloan. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ashley Lundstrom, Camille MacRae, and Marta Szylo. They're working in my independent and constituency offices. They're also joined today by a good, long-standing friend of ours, Mariam Ahmed, who I actually officiated the wedding for last summer. These people have been solid for me and immensely supportive over my tenure as an MLA, and I'd ask them to please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce, through you, two close friends of mine, Ontario's brightest girl, Marisa Maslink, and well-known Albertan Hadyn Place, who is a proud Albertan. Alberta is calling is working, and as of yesterday they are engaged to be married. But let us remind them: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others." I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome and best greetings from all my colleagues.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House Muslim community leaders from across the province who represent the National Council of Canadian Muslims. They came to meet with MLAs to discuss Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination and hate. Thank you so much for joining us today and for all the work that you do. Please rise and be recognized by this House.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the other members someone that is very close to me, my daughter Sahej, and my niece Simran. If I could ask Sahej and Simran to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for introductions. My apologies to those who were unable to introduce their guests today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

#### Alberta Is Calling In-migration Campaign

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have some great news for Canadians: Alberta is calling again. Last summer Toronto and Vancouver heard about the renewed Alberta advantage: no provincial sales taxes, highest average weekly earnings in Canada, the beauty of the province that we know and love, affordable housing, an economic powerhouse that's leading Canada in job creation and economic growth. And, wow, did they ever get the message. In the third quarter we saw almost 33,000 Canadians come to Alberta to find a better life. We remember the opposition telling people to move to B.C. for a better job. Well, in the third

quarter so many people listened when Alberta was calling that B.C.'s net interprovincial migration was negative for the first time since 2013. And the best part? Most of them came to Alberta.

This time we're taking a different approach. We know the industries that are looking for additional skilled workers, and we know where the Canadians are that want those jobs. So we're reaching out to Atlantic Canada and inviting them to trade the ocean for the mountains, and we're reaching out to areas in Ontario where the unemployment is higher and offering them a chance to see a hockey team get out of the first round. While they were having lunch, the ads started to appear: come to a province where you earn more and keep more of what you make, come to a province where you don't have to leave town to enjoy river valleys and nature, and come to a province where you can afford a great lifestyle, not just a life.

Most banks are picking Alberta to lead Canada's economic growth this year, and with Budget 2023 we are ensuring that the necessary health care and social supports are there for Albertans. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is calling again, and we can't wait to meet the people that listen.

#### Hate-motivated Violence against Muslims

**Mr. Sabir:** Today our caucus met with members and leaders from the Muslim community, and I acknowledge that many of them are in the gallery this afternoon. We heard their concerns about the rise in horrific incidents of Islamophobic violence and the need for real action to address it. Over the past years we have seen a significant spike in hate crimes and attacks on Muslims in Alberta and across Canada. A man entered a mosque with a gun, killing six defenceless worshipers and injuring 19 in Quebec City, an entire Muslim family was run over by a vehicle and killed in London, Ontario, and recently several Muslim hijab-wearing women were assaulted right here in Alberta.

This rising violence has left many in our community feeling unsafe, yet this government has done nothing in response. The government's own Anti-Racism Advisory Council submitted its report almost exactly two years ago. Among its 48 recommendations were 11 reforms to the justice system, but this Premier and this government have chosen to do nothing. The UCP even refused to pass the Anti-Racism Act brought forward by the opposition, which would have mandated race-based data collection. Instead of working to protect law-abiding Albertans from hate-motivated violence, this Premier's priority is to meddle in the court system and try to help people charged with conspiracy to murder police officers. Instead of addressing the very real public safety concerns of people and preventing future hate-motivated incidents, this Premier is obsessed with spending hundreds of millions of dollars to create a UCP police force that nobody wants.

An Alberta NDP government will take on the important work of antiracism, including exploring strategies to address Islamophobia specifically. The Alberta NDP is proud to stand with the Muslim community and all faith and cultural groups to build a society that is safe for everyone.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a statement to make.

#### David Frank Friesen

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege to recognize so many amazing Albertans this last year with the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. While I was able to meet most of those recognized, there was one individual that I was unable to

know in person, so today I rise to recognize David Frank Friesen, a man who fought relentlessly for the truth. David Friesen made a significant contribution to the Canadian society at large, the Indigenous peoples, and the RCMP.

Mr. Friesen was an exceptional RCMP officer who dedicated his life to pursuing justice and righting the wrongs for the victims of abuse in residential schools at a time when many were content to ignore uncomfortable truths. In the late 1950s he was a trailblazer who started one of the first-known investigations into a residential school predator. In fact, he possibly was the only RCMP officer to initiate an investigation before the 1980s. Mr. Friesen understood that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wanted to bring us to a place where the cycle could be broken and trust could be renewed. Mr. Friesen took the first steps to take us from where we were to where we stand today, and he will not be forgotten.

When serving at Watson Lake, Mr. Friesen had discovered that Lower Post residential school boys were being harassed. He fought relentlessly for those innocent, vulnerable boys until 2021, when the residential school abuses became public knowledge through the media. His perseverance led to justice and vindication for the survivors 67 years later. A full exposé of Mr. Friesen's story was published in the December 11, 2021, issue of the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, and pursuant to the truth being revealed, Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling had contacted Mr. Friesen with plans of meeting him to thank him personally for his heroism in seeking justice for residential schoolchildren from his band. Unfortunately, Mr. Friesen passed away on June 10, 2022, missing his opportunity for full disclosure.

We thank you, Mr. Friesen, for your impact that you have made on all Canadians for generations to come.

### Capital Plan and Calgary

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, our government is investing \$23 billion over three years into public infrastructure through Budget 2023. We are seeing new school projects, modernized public buildings, new and updated health facilities, and maintenance and renewal of government-owned facilities. Budget 2023's capital plan is our government's commitment to Albertans to deliver on the much-needed projects in communities across the province. Rather, it's \$1.6 billion for new schools, \$2.8 billion for health facilities, \$287 million for major government facilities, or \$894 million for the maintenance and renewal projects.

Budget 2023's capital plan has something for everyone, especially in Calgary. Over the next three years Calgary is receiving almost \$3 billion in capital planning, which is 13 per cent of the total capital plan for the whole province. As part of the school planning, there is the modernization of Annie Gale school in Whitehorn, northeast Calgary; preplanning funding for an addition at Bishop McNally high school in Falconridge, northeast; and a new high school in Cornerstone, northeast.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of kids are waiting to get into charter school in Calgary northeast. As part of Budget 2023 we announced \$25 million in operating funding and \$47 million in capital investment over the next three years to support public charter school expansion and project programs in the education system.

The NICU project is receiving \$52 million over the next three years for the refurbishment and expansion for our most delicate and fragile patients. Along with this project, we have \$77 million over three years for Rockyview general health hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

#### School Construction Capital Plan

**Ms Hoffman:** Eight thousand more students going to school in Calgary, and only one new school actually funded in the UCP's budget. Mr. Speaker, despite enrolment growth quadrupling, the UCP chose to put handouts for their friends over schools for children. This means more crowded classrooms in the biggest city in our province. The parents of those 8,000 children chose public and Catholic education for their kids, and they deserve schools. So why does the current Premier care more about handouts to her donors than about building classrooms in Calgary?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that our government is investing \$377 million for 58 projects, including – they must have missed the extra one – 11 projects in Calgary, including a new K to 9 school in Nolan Hill, modernization of John G. Diefenbaker high school, a new high school in Rangeview, modernization of Annie Gale school, a new high school in Cornerstone, modernization of A.E. Cross school, modernization of Sir John A. Macdonald school, a new Saddle Ridge middle school, a new elementary school in Redstone, addition to Bishop McNally high school, and a new west Calgary high school. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Hoffman:** There is money for Preston Manning, but no schools in Cochrane. I guess school funding is one floor that the Premier just won't cross.

Mr. Speaker, there are zero construction dollars for Airdrie, Cochrane, Chestermere, and only one new school construction project funded in Calgary. George McDougall in Airdrie is so packed that the cafeteria has to double as a classroom. The board chair was incredibly frustrated and disappointed by this Premier's budget, saying that it's ignoring their space crisis. Will the current Premier admit that she can't be trusted to build schools and that a better plan is just to vote NDP?

**Ms Smith:** Fifty-eight projects, including 11 in Calgary, \$377 million. Let me just quote from Laura Hack, board chair, Calgary board of education. "On behalf of CBE students... and [their] families, we thank the Government of Alberta for [the] capital [plan] announcement... These [extraordinary and timely] investments in infrastructure are vital to support student learning opportunities [within] our system." Same with Cathie Williams, board chair, Calgary Catholic school district: the Calgary Catholic board of trustees is grateful for the capital projects announced for the Calgary Catholic school district, which includes full funding for the K to 9 school in Nolan Hill to serve this rapidly growing community.

**Ms Hoffman:** Fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, in this same story south of the city there's no money in the provincial budget for shovels in the ground in Okotoks. The high school is way over capacity, and the board chair said, quote: our students will continue to come to a high school that is overcrowded, which is negatively impacting their learning. Calgary, Cochrane, Chestermere, Okotoks: doesn't the

Premier think that these kids deserve better? Under the Alberta NDP we absolutely do.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:52.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite again forgets to do her homework, over and over and over again. We have announced a school in Chestermere, one in Cochrane, two in Airdrie, also in Okotoks. I spoke with Rocky View school division and with the community and reinforced the fact that when we say there's planning, preplanning, design, and construction, it will happen. All 58 of those schools will be built, unlike the members opposite.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has another set of questions.

### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, last week we in the Alberta NDP proposed a better health care idea: providing universal coverage for prescription contraception at no cost to Albertans no matter which method they choose. This policy would remove barriers, improve health outcomes, and save Albertans a lot of money, mostly women. The Premier called our plan a subsidy for private insurance and then talked about choice, a shameful excuse. Will the Premier admit that her choice is to make women pay more for health care?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we are glad that the bulk of women are covered by public and private insurance plans. In fact, I'm glad to have the members opposite raise this, because it sparked a robust conversation in our caucus about the kinds of things we might want to fund. What I hear women wanting funded is in vitro fertilization and assistance in being able to have babies, and that's something that I think we should have a robust discussion about in the next election.

**Ms Hoffman:** Women across the province are over the moon about the idea of having universal contraception covered. Jenna says: this is amazing; my insurance doesn't cover the contraception my doctor has recommended, so this would be game changing. Shelby says: I attend university, and birth control is not covered by my health care provider. Joanne says: this great plan makes me very happy; we don't have equality without plans like this one. Why is the current Premier always offside with things like equality, health care, and doctors' advice?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the other thing that we hear from women and families that they want is support for adoption, and that's the other thing that we put into our budget. Not only are we supporting families so that they can have a grant to be able to give a home to a child, but we're also making sure that we're equalizing the level of tax credit so that more people can welcome children into their homes. Those are the kinds of things that we're going to continue to support.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, these are Holly's words: "How can the Premier say that everyone has access to private insurance? This is an out-of-pocket cost for many people. Contraception is still only partially covered under most plans. The NDP plan to provide universal contraception is the only policy that will reach everyone. So thank you for advocating and standing up for women's health and rights. Contraception is a need for everyone, not just women." So how can

the current Premier find \$20 billion for her donors and not a penny for Holly's health care needs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what the member opposite is talking about. There's nothing in the budget that has that \$20 billion figure. They're making things up, as they are accustomed to doing.

Look, if we want to have a conversation about the kinds of things that could be covered, the kinds of things that we hear should be covered are things like the diabetes pumps. Those are one of the things that we announced that we were going to be covering, and there's probably a whole range of issues that we need to have a broader discussion about that ought to be covered. So happy to have that discussion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and Official Opposition House Leader.

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, our caucus has been standing in this House for more than a year calling on the government to listen to the firefighters who fought to save Fort McMurray during the wildfire. We've been urging this government to make sure firefighters fighting cancer don't also have to fight the WCB for the support they need. Bill 9 appeared to finally take action, but the bill won't help firefighters who've been diagnosed during these past six years since the fire, and we know of several caught in this unfair situation. To the Premier: why don't these changes help all impacted firefighters like they've been calling for?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are so pleased to be making changes to WC coverage for firefighters. We know that the fire in Fort McMurray was a particularly unique experience with nonstop fighting for 30 days, and they didn't have the ability to do the contamination procedures they normally would, so it put far more of our firefighters at risk. We were pleased to be able to cover that. As I understand it, extending the coverage retroactively would impact one or two cases, and in these instances Workers' Compensation already has a process to ensure the claims are settled appropriately.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the process that is already there is firefighters and their family fighting cancer, then having to fight the WCB and go through an extenuating appeals process. The right thing for this government to do is to make sure that the heroes who went on the ground and fought that wildfire, helped 80,000 people evacuate, and spent weeks in a toxic soup of chemicals, getting exposures to a career's level of toxins in just a short amount of time – they should have our support. It is common sense. Will the Premier change it?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I know it sounds like the members opposite and the government are not on the same page on this, but we are on the same page. In fact, Matt Osborne, president of the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association, said at the members' press conference this morning that Alberta is leading by establishing this kind of coverage for large, catastrophic events. I want to make it clear that this is a big step forward, and this is leading our nation. And he praised us for our openness to discuss. He also said that we greatly appreciate the work the

provincial government has done so far to address the critical issue for Alberta firefighters. So we're very pleased to be able to offer this coverage.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased Matt Osborne is here in the gallery listening to question period, and this is a good start. But the Premier is ignoring that we are leaving firefighters behind who've already been diagnosed, we are not including cancers that should be covered, and they have completely ignored respiratory illnesses which we know these responders are now suffering from. Will the government accept the amendment from the opposition that I will be bringing forward? Will the government update the cancer site regulation, and will you include respiratory illnesses?

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I will talk to our Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development because I know that he's been very close to this issue. He wanted to make sure that he was offering the appropriate level of coverage when he made this recommendation to our caucus and cabinet. If he believes that the amendment is worth supporting, I'm sure he will give us that advice. But I think it's important that we have now set the standard for the rest of the country, that when a catastrophic event like this occurs, this is going to be the presumption in our province, and we hope that other provinces follow suit.

#### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the government lifted the Alberta NDP cap on auto insurance on the Friday before a long weekend, hoping that Albertans would not notice, but they did because their premiums jumped 30 per cent, and for almost three years the UCP did nothing but watch as costs hammered Albertans. Now, just weeks before the election, the UCP claim that no new rate increases would be approved for the rest of the year; that was not true. In fact, an increase of 16 per cent was approved for new policies effective March 1. Surprise. Can the Finance minister explain why new drivers will be facing increases of up to 16 per cent under his fake freeze?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that the party who did nothing about automobile insurance were the members opposite during four years. All they did is bring a rate cap in, which was a Band-Aid and didn't deal with the systemic issues. Our government, through Bill 41, dealt with many of those systemic issues, and since the passing of Bill 41, insurance premiums have gone up 1.4 per cent per year. On top of that, we have asked the rate board to pause new approvals.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, when Albertans were struggling with up to 30 per cent increases, the Finance minister's only answer to them was telling them to, quote, shop around. End quote. But now as the government faces the judgment of Albertans, they're claiming to have put in the Alberta NDP rate cap, except it's a fake. In the real world drivers are watching their bills spike yet again. How can Albertans believe a word this minister says when he claims to freeze their car insurance, but their bills are skyrocketing?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, again, we've recognized that many families in Alberta are being pushed during this time of inflation, and that's why we've asked the rate board to pause rate increases effective January. The rate increases they're talking about were

approved last fall; just implemented now. We've asked since early January for the rate board to pause those increases so we can work with insurance companies and other stakeholders to find further remedies to deal with the systemic issues that are driving up insurance costs.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, just like when the UCP lifted the rate cap in the first place, the UCP are putting their friends and donors ahead of the people they were elected to serve. It's well within the power of the Finance minister to deny these 16 per cent increases. We could have had a real rate freeze; instead, we got a UCP fake. Why did the minister pick his insurance lobbyist pals over Albertans and approve such a punishing increase to Albertan drivers' car insurance? Sixteen per cent is not a freeze.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this government took real action with Bill 41, and those changes are having a real effect. Rates going up by 1.4 per cent per year over the last two years, that's progress. The NDP call a rate cap progress. If we would have left them in charge, it would have ultimately driven the province to a nationalized insurance system, which is what the socialists across the aisle want. They want a nationalized, socialized system; we say no. We're making progress. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

#### Alberta Is Calling In-migration Campaign

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, all eyes were on Alberta last summer when the Alberta Is Calling campaign caught the nation's attention. And, you know, I was up in Yukon last summer, and my Ontario counterpart let me know unhappily that he'd heard it on the radio while sitting in traffic on the 401. Today we just got news that Alberta is calling again, and I've got a question for the Premier. What made her decide to tell Canada that Alberta is calling again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, let me answer on behalf of our Jobs, Economy and Northern Development minister. He's doing such a fantastic job on calling out to the rest of the country. When we looked at the success of the first round of Alberta Is Calling, the decision was easy. When we put out the call to Toronto and Vancouver, we saw a huge surge of people visiting and requesting e-mail notifications about Alberta. In Q3 we saw record interprovincial migration flowing into Alberta. Thirty-three thousand Canadians sure make a difference when you change government. We remember what happened when the other guys were in power: everybody was leaving. We saw the opportunity, and we're going to continue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Premier: given that the previous Alberta Is Calling campaign focused on attracting folks from Toronto and Vancouver and given that the previous campaign worked, with tens of thousands flocking to our beautiful province, could the Premier tell us how this is going to be different than the first round and build on the success of the first Alberta Is Calling campaign?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that Premier Doug Ford didn't like that campaign very much because it was so successful. So I said, "Don't worry; next time we do it, we'll

make sure we're advertising into high unemployment areas," and that's what we're going to do this time around. We'll be going into Ontario, into Windsor, Hamilton, Sudbury, and other places. We're also going to be calling the people of the Atlantic Canadian provinces: Charlottetown, Saint John, St. John's, Halifax, and also more Canadian cities are going to be hearing from Alberta very soon.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, again to the Premier: given there are so many benefits to living in Alberta – low taxes, jobs for skilled workers, and our beautiful mountains, just to name a few – and given that Alberta has the best value proposition ever, what messages will she be sharing with Ontarians and Maritimers to inspire them to join us here?

**Ms Smith:** Oh, there are so many great things about Alberta – aren't there? – highest average wages of any province; highest workforce participation rate of any province; lowest taxes in Canada; no provincial sales tax; almost 100,000 jobs waiting to be filled; Canada's fastest growing economy; Canada's strongest job creator. We're calling it the renewed Alberta advantage for a reason, and we'll be telling them the most beautiful province in Confederation – that's what we are – is a place that they can afford a great lifestyle. We look forward to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

#### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For four years this government has been making life more difficult for our students. They have hiked tuition; levelled devastating cuts onto postsecondary; hiked fees, interest payments, student loans, and so, so much more. This budget doesn't go anywhere near to addressing the damage done by the UCP to postsecondary. Their own budget projects that student debt will grow by nearly \$2 billion over the next two years. Will the Minister of Advanced Education apologize to students now for making it so much harder for them to get an education?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Budget 2023 invests \$178.4 million over the next three years in major capital projects, in addition to three capital projects continuing from Budget 2022. It also invests in power engineering and instrumentation: lab development, \$11.3 million, \$2 million in '23-24, \$9.3 million in '24-25; in the University of Lethbridge, another \$3 million; in the University of Calgary, another \$5 million. Budget 2023 also invests \$73.9 million over this year to . . .

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that this minister's budget will take out \$1.2 billion cumulatively from the postsecondary system and only increases postsecondary this year by .6 per cent, given that the minister is still allowing tuition fees to climb next year as well, meaning that it won't help a single student until the Alberta New Democrats get back in government, given the number of times that this minister defended his policies of making education unaffordable through sky-high tuition rates, how can the minister be so proud of his achievements when he has caused so much devastation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite is not correct. In fact, we have targeted enrolment expansion: \$171 million to create nearly 10,000 new postsecondary seats and \$84.7 million to create over an additional 3,000 new seats; microcredentialling, \$2 million to create new microcredentials in PSIs; capital for SAIT, \$41 million; the U of C, \$59 million; MRU, \$88 million; work-integrated learning, apprenticeship expansion, SAIT expansion. I could go on.

2:10

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, despite the boasts of this minister and this government, Albertans see the record of this government for postsecondary loud and clear. Given that tuition and institutions are struggling under the weight of \$1.2 billion taken out of the system over the last four budgets and given that we know many students and institutions are worried about their ability to meet the needs of basic education, after four years of this minister making life tougher for students to seek an education, the message that I have for them is simple. Students, choose yourself a better government, an Alberta NDP government on May 29.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we have world-class postsecondary institutions in this province, and we have a minister, the Minister of Advanced Education, that's working with those institutions to ensure that we're delivering a sustainable advanced education system. We took over a system, left by the members opposite, that simply wasn't sustainable. Our institutions were delivering the highest cost education, and it was costing Albertans an excessive amount. We have worked with the institutions to bring about efficiency, efficiencies that will ensure our system is world-class and sustainable.

#### Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier wants Albertans to get used to paying for their health care out of pocket. We know this because she's said so repeatedly. On her weekend radio show the Premier again made this explicitly clear when she said that Albertans should pay out of pocket for regular MRIs to avoid things like stage 4 cancer. This follows the Premier's despicable comments where she suggested that those who have stage 4 cancer let it reach that point. Will the Premier finally apologize to Albertans with cancer that she's insulted, and will she commit to stop using cancer to push her plans to force Albertans to pay out of pocket for health care?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the member opposite is mischaracterizing our dispute with Ottawa over the funding of MRI and CT scans that are chosen on a voluntary basis by those who want to get a second opinion or have additional peace of mind. Any time a doctor will prescribe an MRI or CT scan, it is medically necessary. By definition "medically necessary" is 100 per cent covered by our system. We don't want to close an avenue, in the event that somebody else wants to get a second test or wants to be able to get a regular annual test, and that's what we're disputing with the federal government.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that under the UCP the wait times just to see an oncologist can stretch as long as 10 weeks, when the national recommendation is 10 working days, and given that Alberta is already short of and losing more oncologists, medical physicists, and radiation therapists and given the Premier chose to spend the weekend trying to scare Albertans that unless they pay



for their own MRIs and CT scans, they're at higher risk for cancer, will the Premier take responsibility for the Albertans who are waiting and worrying on her watch because they can't even see an oncologist for more than two months, let alone begin treatment?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the member opposite is talking about. I think what I have said very clearly is that if somebody has something wrong with them and a doctor gives a recommendation for them to get an MRI or CT scan, it is medically necessary, it is 100 per cent covered, and we are going to continue covering that. The dispute with the federal government is over a small number of scans that people choose to get voluntarily. We aren't the only province having this dispute. There are eight provinces that disagree with the way the government at the federal level is interpreting this, and we'll continue to fight it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given the Premier is wrong – no Albertan should have to pay out of pocket to get access to the best cancer diagnosis and treatment – and given that after decades of Conservative neglect and game playing our Alberta NDP government got the Calgary cancer centre built and given that it takes more than a facility to provide care and this Premier's reckless, misinformed comments about cancer diagnosis undermine Albertans' trust in the doctors we've managed to keep and make it harder for us to recruit the ones we need to fill the gap, an Alberta NDP government will make sure the CCC is fully staffed. Why is this Premier so obsessed with making that harder to do?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$166 million over the next three years to staff up the Calgary cancer centre, and we're looking forward to seeing the new services that are going to be delivered there. As for the surgical backlog, I can say that we're making great progress. We identified the number of people who are on the list longer than a medically recommended period of time. Look, the waiting list grew for nine different surgeries when they were in power. We're having them go in the opposite direction, and I'm hearing from Dr. John Cowell that he's expecting that we will have that waiting list, that surgical backlog, complete in 12 months. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The hon. Member for Highwood.

#### Biodigester Facility Proposal in Foothills County

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the Rimrock-Tidewater biodigester is a project that was scheduled to begin development at the beginning of this year, with operations fully commencing in October. To the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas: what steps are being taken to ensure the Rimrock-Tidewater biodigester project is meeting or exceeding environmental regulations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that. I want to thank the member for the question. Alberta Environment and Protected Areas has received an Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act approval application for this project. The application is currently under a robust regulatory review before it can be authorized to proceed. The review focuses on ensuring the protection and health of communities, residents, and the environment. It also ensures that appropriate pollution prevention and control technologies are in place.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this project will produce biogas and fertilizer and, as stated by its developers, reduce odours in the affected area, to the same minister: can you provide more details about the technology being used in the biodigester project and how it's expected to achieve its promise to reduce odours emitting from the feedlot?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer that one. The regulatory approval process includes evaluating the potential environmental impact, including emissions and odour. According to Emissions Reduction Alberta this project is designed to upgrade digestate from their on-farm feedlot to produce value-add fertilizer, peat, cattle bedding, and water recycle product. These products would be produced for Alberta-based greenhouses, mushroom farmers, organic farmers, conventional farmers, and cattle producers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that community engagement undertaken to seek input and feedback from the local area residents about the biodigester project, to the same minister: what actions have been taken in response to their concerns and potential issues raised at public town halls?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said, this project is currently going through our rigorous regulatory process, which includes evaluating the potential environmental impact, air emissions, and odour. In order to be approved, the project would need to demonstrate that appropriate pollution prevention and control technologies are in place. I want to be clear that land-use decisions are the responsibility of the local municipality. Any public concerns related to property value, traffic, noise, and light pollution fall outside of the provincial jurisdiction and should be raised with the municipality, in this case Foothills county.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is next.

#### School Construction Contracts

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to hand public dollars to their corporate friends while failing to invest in public education. The Minister of Education has stated the capital plan is based on asks from school boards, but we see time and time again negligible investments in growing communities like Edmonton-South. We know P3s are this government's favourite solution, but why is the minister committing tens of millions of dollars to wealthy private corporations through atrocious P3 school builds when boards are actually saying they don't want P3s, that are actually making schools harder to run?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. In fact, in the last round of P3s that was brought forward by my department, I changed tactics and decided to break them into individual contracts because it made more sense to do that for the geographic coverage over the province. We are doing that because it's best value not only for the school divisions locally but for the province as a total. We're spending tax dollars wisely and

finding the right project procurement method and the right contract for each school build according to the needs of that community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that school boards have told us publicly that no P3 contract is the right contract and that many young families continue to move into my riding in Edmonton-South, and that's expected to grow exponentially in the next five years, we know the current capital plan is not sustainable to keep up with projected growth. Can the minister explain to my constituents why paying millions of dollars to these private corporations through P3 partnerships is more important than just funding the schools and infrastructure we need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** I hate to disagree with the member, but, again, we're going to pick the contract that best suits the needs of those individual builds. Now, what they often confuse is P3, which is public-private partnership; we do that all the time. It's the bundling of projects with school boards that they're opposed to. Having worked in this region for 26 years, when you bundle them together, you don't get the same decision-making because it goes to different sites, and the answers might differ. That is what takes time. That is what school boards disagree with. That's why we don't always do that, and we only do it where it makes sense. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

2:20

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister clearly is not listening to school boards and is not listening to parents and given that this government keeps announcing all this funding for planning into these P3s but they're falling short of actually building any new schools, to the minister: when will this government put an emphasis on actually funding our public school system or will actually create a system that's equitable for all Albertans and not just for their wealthy friends and donors?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite doesn't know what he's talking about. In fact, it wasn't the actual build; it was the contracts that school authorities had issues with. Our government worked really, really hard to ensure that those contracts were, in fact, good contracts. From 2019 to now we've built or are in the process of building 16 schools. NDP in Edmonton: eight. Us: 16. I won't take lessons from the members opposite when we are building more than they ever will. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Arts and Culture Funding and Performance Measures

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, the way we measure ourselves matters. Targets matter. Goals matter. Whether it's a musician determined to write a song a week, a theatre aiming for five sold-out shows a month, or a government setting targets in their budget, thoughtful goals show people what someone actually cares about. That's why it's so alarming that in the Premier's plan for the Ministry of Culture she has slashed the government's goals for the arts, culture, and live-event industries. To the minister: what exactly is it about the arts that his ministry doesn't think is important, and why doesn't he

care about the well-being of the creative industry and its businesses?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that our Budget 2023 commits over \$28 million in funding to support the arts, including stable funding of \$25.6 million to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. That's in addition to the \$1.25 million sponsorship of tonight's Juno awards. I would encourage the members opposite, if they haven't heard of the Junos, to come on out tonight. It's going to be a lot of fun.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that almost 78 per cent of Albertans attended an art activity or event in 2019 and 2020 and given that even during the pandemic, when that number dropped to 31 per cent, the government's targets were set to have 70 per cent of Albertans participating in live events and given that artists, venues, and businesses are telling me over and over again that they are still struggling to get people out to their events, why is this government so determined to tell the arts community that they are giving up, washing their hands of any previous goals to encourage Albertans to enjoy arts and culture events?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, I couldn't disagree more with the member opposite. In fact, we're very supportive of the arts. That's reflected in our budget, which has over \$27 million to support the arts. As I mentioned, that includes the \$25 million that we allocated as well as the \$1.25 million to support tonight's Juno awards. Like I said, I'd like to one more time invite the members opposite to come out tonight and enjoy the Junos. It's going to be a lot of fun.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that the infrastructure, investment, and innovation that artists bring is a critical part of helping to diversify and create resilience in Alberta's economy and given that the arts and entertainment ecosystem generates billions in tax revenue, employs more than 250,000 people from technicians, to builders, engineers, and more and given that only the Alberta NDP recognizes the vital economic and social contributions of this industry, Minister, if these communities feel hung out to dry by a government that insults them and a budget that wants to stagnate their growth, can you really blame them?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, again, I couldn't disagree more. The 2019 performance measures reflect prepandemic levels in the arts, and I'm happy to report that we're actually seeing attendance come back to the arts. That's why we're making such substantial investments that we are of over \$27 million. We are proud of our arts community, and that is not going to change.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

### Grande Prairie Policing

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many in the House may be aware, Grande Prairie city council voted eight to one in favour of establishing a municipal police service last Monday. Many of my constituents have questions about this change. Some say that it was sudden when, in fact, the city has been actively examining policing options since 2018. Rural crime, police resources, and the reality of repeat offenders have all been identified as key issues in policing in our community for years. Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services explain the benefits of having a municipal police service in Grande Prairie and the expected outcomes for my constituents?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Unlike that side of the House, we actually respect the independence that was conducted by Grande Prairie and the independent report that they put out there to the people of Grande Prairie. What we're doing in Grande Prairie – that community is setting priorities for their community. They have increased oversight, they have accountability, they're meeting the needs of their community, and that is what is important when they are conducting independent reports like the one conducted in Grande Prairie. This will increase public safety, and I thank the member for that question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given the different components to start up a police service such as physical location, IT support, attracting personnel, and training and, further, given that in order to ensure a smooth transition to a municipal police service, the city of Grande Prairie has proposed a phased-in approach over five years, can the same minister explain how Alberta's government is supporting Grande Prairie through this transition to ensure that public safety does not slip between the cracks throughout the phasing-in period?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of public safety.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll be very clear; this is not something that is a transitional move that will occur overnight. This is going to take some time, and with that there are going to be start-up fees; there are going to be transitional fees. That's why this government is supporting the needs of the people of Grande Prairie by investing a \$9.7 million grant that will assist them in those start-up fees and those transitional fees, because on this side of the House we are responsive to the needs of the community and are respectful to the needs and the independence of Grande Prairie.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again through you to the minister. Given that the city of Grande Prairie had previously decided to undertake an independent study to review policing in the community and that this was not a decision about the RCMP but, rather, a decision on what service model would best serve the city going forward and further given that many other communities across Alberta are facing the same issues with effective policing in their communities as Grande Prairie has, can the same minister explain what our government is doing more broadly to help other communities across Alberta improve public safety and policing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question that she has provided here. You know, communities know their policing needs best. Unlike the members opposite, we're not interested in telling First Nations communities what to do. We respect their independence, and I can tell you there are five First Nations communities that want to have their own independence. I can tell you that on this side of the House we are going to respect First Nations communities, unlike the members opposite, and that's why in Budget 2023 we put aside \$8.4

million, if that budget is to be passed, to make sure that we respect municipalities in Alberta.

### Capital Plan

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing that this government won't say to explain their failure to build the schools and hospitals Albertans need. They blame doctors, they blame cities, they blame us, and they even blame pipelines; however, their own budget shows the truth. This UCP government simply can't get the job done. Over a billion dollars' worth of projects that they promised to get done last year didn't get done. Can the Infrastructure minister explain why he failed to advance so many projects, and will he apologize to those communities he failed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We are delivering critical infrastructure for all of Albertans. We are doing the work behind the scenes that needs to be done that the NDP failed to do in their four years in office. There is a consistent, laid-out, legislated process for every build to make sure that we are setting the needs of the community at the right level, making sure that their clinical needs are meeting those demands, making sure we do a functional plan so we build the right infrastructure for the right dollars in the right time so we build it well and serve all needs of Albertans.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that Albertans in my riding are asking why there is still just a snow-covered field where there should be a south Edmonton hospital under construction and given that we have heard all kinds of excuses from this Infrastructure minister and given that the budget tells the story that he hasn't even spent a quarter of the money for the hospital in 2022 that he promised in last year's budget, can the minister explain to the people of south Edmonton why three-quarters of the work he promised to do at this time last year has simply not been done?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Given that I wasn't in the chair last year at budget time – but we have set aside \$630 million in this budget to continue the work. We are committed to Edmontonians, to build them a hospital, to make sure it's rightsized, to make sure it provides the services that they need, and to make sure we do it right. We're going back and doing all the work the NDP failed to do, including getting rights-of-way and agreements with the pipeline operator who put it right under that lot. Good job.

2:30

**Mr. Deol:** Given that this year the UCP is funding the construction of only one new school in Edmonton, given that almost \$200 million worth of schools he promised in the last budget didn't get built, and given that growing communities in south Edmonton are calling out for more schools to save their kids long bus rides to and from distant and overcrowded schools, how can anyone take this Infrastructure minister at his word for this year's promises when he has clearly broken last year's?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, the members opposite should take yes for an answer. We are building schools in Edmonton, in particular in south Edmonton. Let me see: a new senior high in Glenriding Heights, a new K to 9 school in Edgemont, a new K to 6 in Rosenthal, a new elementary in Glenriding Heights, and a new junior high school in Pilot Sound, McConachie, as well a . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you. I just keep going on because there are so many schools we're building in Edmonton: a solution for Rundle Heights, a new K to 9 school in Heritage Valley, Cavanagh . . .

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

### Support for Vulnerable Albertans

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, every member of the UCP government should be hanging their heads in shame following the shocking news of the devastating conditions at the Calgary Drop-In Centre. Described as an absolute war zone by someone who depends on the centre, that description of the facility is evident from the photos inside that show broken toilets, water fountains filled with debris, and living space littered with garbage. How can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services allow Albertans experiencing homelessness to endure these conditions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. First of all, I just want to start off by applauding and thanking the numerous people that work in our homeless shelters across this province as well as those who operate these shelters. Without them, there'd be so many people out in the cold today. This is incredibly difficult work, dealing with crisis on a daily basis, so I wanted to make sure that we acknowledge these beautiful people that work in our shelter system, including my own wife, who's here with us here today. Our government is very committed to making sure that we resource our homeless shelters so that they can provide a high-quality standard of care.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that four years of the UCP have caused so much harm for Albertans as the government casually cut monthly benefits of tens of thousands of severely disabled Albertans, saying that they wouldn't find it onerous, and given that the Finance minister meddled with the dates of benefits to make his books look better, then cut benefits for the poorest Albertans by slashing income supports, and given that the UCP wants to pat themselves on the back for throwing money at issues they caused in the first place but, again, failed to make up for the deep well of harm that they've inflicted on Albertans, will the minister apologize to vulnerable Albertans?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, thank you again to the member for the question. This government is deeply committed to caring for the most vulnerable in our community. That's why we recently increased shelter funding by 10 per cent to make sure that we address some of the wage challenges for employees there. We're talking about the Drop-In Centre specifically. We just gave them \$3.9 million to address capital maintenance as well as building more housing, and we just put \$4 million into the Drop-In Centre to build medical detox so that we can actually deliver real results for people. This government is not only committed to making sure we address people in the immediate crisis of homelessness, but we're also creating pathways out of homelessness through recovery, through housing, and through so many other options.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this UCP government doesn't appear to understand what compassion means and given that someone less fortunate than any of us fears that speaking out about the inhumane conditions at the Calgary Drop-In Centre will jeopardize their access to supports they desperately need and given that staff at the centre say that a recent cold snap led to overcrowding concerns and

impacted the services at the centre, will the minister admit that he and his caucus colleagues are more focused on their political futures than they are on Albertans who are experiencing harm and homelessness?

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to hear the tactic that's currently being taken by the opposition. Again, I commend the many workers that work in this sector and the incredible care and compassion that they deliver, including the operators there. This government is doing significant work to increase salaries . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** . . . for those who work in the sector, a 73 per cent increase in this budget to add that. Under that government: nothing. Nothing. There were no increases at all for this sector. This government is delivering to make sure that there is support for people who are vulnerable in our community.

### Transportation Infrastructure in Lesser Slave Lake Constituency

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of representing the great constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. We are one of the largest constituencies by area in the province, which means we need roads and bridges that connect everything together so my constituents can go to medical appointments, work, visit family, or go to the grocery store. I've heard loud and clear from the people of the High Prairie area that we must take action to improve our roadway network. On behalf of these people I ask the minister of transportation to please tell the House what my constituents can expect from the 2023 provincial construction program from your ministry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. I'm happy to say that he can tell his constituents that there are 15 projects in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake that are included in the provincial construction program. The biggest one is 21 kilometres of repaving of highway 2A and highway 679. Also in the budget, rather than these record levels of investment, we're also seeing \$14 billion of debt being paid off. That takes about one year of the NDP's four years off the books completely of their massive spending and debt. Not only are we investing; we're also paying off debt.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has the call.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. The people in the High Prairie area will be delighted to hear about the upcoming provincial construction program. Given that my constituents around the Slave Lake area also heavily rely on a road and bridge network to connect them to the rest of the province, I ask the same minister to please tell the House how the 2023 provincial construction program will address the road and bridge needs of people around the Slave Lake area such as highway 88.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Wilson Creek culvert replacement on highway 2A is another important project in this riding, roadwork on highway 2 east of Mitsue road, 14

kilometres of repaving between Slave Lake and highway 754 as well as a bridge rehabilitation at the Lily Creek bridge. Overall, we're investing 62 per cent more in capital maintenance and renewal above the greatest year that the NDP ever put into capital maintenance and renewal. I don't know if the NDP could find rural Alberta on the map, but we're investing in historic levels.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for his ongoing efforts to enhance Alberta's transportation infrastructure. Given that the Smith Bridge, which is a critical link for the town of Smith in the municipal district of Lesser Slave River, has a detour of nearly 100 kilometres, it is vital to ensure that the bridge is replaced before it becomes unusable. I ask the same minister to please provide this House with information on any actions to address this issue and prevent the people of Smith from losing this vital connection.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Budget 2023 actually does commit to the engineering work on Smith Bridge, something that the NDP didn't do in their time in government. Budget '23 also has \$211 million for the Alberta waste-water and water program. That's a \$120 million increase for rural municipalities. Again, when you contrast that to the NDP and the restrictive labour agreements that they want to bring into Alberta – the B.C. NDP have done that, something that the NDP leader had to pilot project here in Alberta – that's something we will never see here with a United Conservative government in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Unfortunately, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. [interjections] I think that if there's a real challenge here, it's with the minister's answer, not the Speaker's ruling.

In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

2:40

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Red Deer-South.

### Alberta

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My son and I listened to Dr. Jordan Peterson in a packed Calgary Jubilee Auditorium. It was good. Dr. Peterson is from Alberta. He has lectured at the universities of Toronto and Harvard. He is a clinical psychologist. Dr. Peterson has raised concerns that Trudeau is narcissistic. He is right. Narcissism is defined as a mental health condition where a person has an unreasonably high sense of his own importance. Trudeau's words and deeds speak for themselves. Alberta should not be compelled to protect ourselves from our own federal government, yet in spite of them Alberta succeeds.

Recently I attended a French immersion school assembly in Red Deer. I asked the packed gym how many had moved here from another country. Half the gym stood up, and all began applauding. We love them and their courage to seek a better life in a new land. Mr. Speaker, why are record numbers of families coming to Alberta from all over the world? Is it because Alberta is a woke NDP socialist paradise? No. But is it because Alberta is the best? Yes. Is

it because Alberta leads Canada in economic growth? Yes. Is it because we have the highest incomes and lowest taxes? Yes. Is it because our government is not a fiscal train wreck with billions in surpluses and debt repayments? Yes.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a land of opportunity, of freedom and prosperity. We must be vigilant to keep it that way.

**The Speaker:** With apologies to the hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, we are mildly out of order, but we will proceed to him immediately. The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Publicly Funded Health Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier is obsessed with having Albertans pay out of pocket for health care. She just can't stop talking about it. Just this weekend she went on the radio to say that she'd like to see more Albertans pay out of pocket for an MRI or a CT scan. She said: it's a great preventative; if you pay for enough of them yourself – buy nine, get the 10th one free – maybe you'll identify an issue like stage 4 cancer.

But you know another great preventative, Mr. Speaker? A visit to your family doctor. Indeed, the Premier noted that these scans are covered when your doctor refers you. Unfortunately, thanks to this government's war on physicians, hundreds of thousands of Albertans don't have one. But let's not forget that this Premier is also on the record asking: "A regular checkup with your doctor. Is that really something that has to be covered 100 per cent by the government?" Well, for the record, yes, it is.

Then there are her comments from last summer: when you think about everything that built up before you got to stage 4, that's completely within your control, and there's something you can do about that that is different. Mr. Speaker, how cynical and out of touch can this Premier and the UCP possibly be? Whether it's a visit to your doctor, an MRI, prescription contraception, or a life-saving insulin pump, their go-to prescription for Albertans is for them to pay up. It's about as likely to work as the Premier's suggestion they take horse dewormer for COVID.

Mr. Speaker, we have a different plan, a real plan to strengthen and rebuild our health care system and ensure every Albertan can access the care they need, when they need it, close to home. Our plan for primary care will connect 1 million more Albertans with a family doctor and a family health team by supporting existing doctors and clinics and expanding their teams and funding 10 new clinics in communities of greatest need. We'll provide universal access to free prescription contraception, empowering women to take more control over their reproductive health and economic futures. An Alberta NDP government will provide more access and choice that doesn't require Albertans to reach for their wallet, and that's a promise.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

### Retrospective by the Member for Edmonton-South

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Edmonton-South I rise today with mixed emotions. On one hand, I'm excited for what the future holds for both my constituents and for the entire province of Alberta. On the other hand, I'm looking forward at the great work that remains to be done even after serving almost eight years in this place. It's been one of the greatest honours and privileges of my life to serve the residents of Edmonton-South, and I'm proud of the work we have accomplished together.

We have built new high schools, we've announced a much-needed hospital, and we've made significant infrastructure

investments on the ring road. We've also championed social justice issues like GSAs and the protection of our environment. But our work is far from over, Mr. Speaker. Our government must listen and care about the people we serve. We must ensure that every single Albertan has access to quality education, quality health care, and quality infrastructure. We must also protect our environment and stand up for social justice.

We all know that the current UCP government is failing in these areas. Instead of listening to the concerns of everyday Albertans, they're more focused on protecting the interests of corporations and their wealthy friends. They've chosen not to invest in our communities. They've chosen not to build new schools. They've chosen to attack doctors and nurses. They've neglected our environment and have been hostile to our marginalized communities.

But I am optimistic about the next election, Mr. Speaker. I'm confident that Albertans will choose a government that truly cares about their well-being, a government that will prioritize education, health care, and affordability, a government that will take action on climate change and cares about our communities.

As I see the end of this term as an MLA, I want to thank my constituents and all Albertans for their trust and support over the last eight years. It's been an honour to serve in this place, and I look forward to continuing to fight for a better Alberta in whatever capacity I can. I know Albertans will be making the same choice at the polls soon.

Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to table the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2022. Pursuant to section 38.1 of the Standing Orders I am tabling the required five copies of the report.

**The Speaker:** Opposition House Leader, do you have a tabling today? No? No tablings.

Are there other tablings?

I do have a tabling before me. I have an important memo that has been sent from the Speaker to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Infrastructure. It is a birthday note saying happy birthday to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. members, just prior to you rising, I understand that there may be a desire for unanimous consent to revert to introductions. I received a note from the hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services for a brief introduction, so this will be a unanimous consent request to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce my wife, Anita Nixon, one of the most compassionate, caring individuals that I know. She has dedicated her life to service for others. She is my strength, my pillar, and my inspiration, so I ask her to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** We are at introductions. Are there others?

Seeing none, I see the hon. the Opposition House Leader is rising. I believe she has a unanimous consent request as well.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of co-operation which we just saw, I rise to seek unanimous consent, in this case to waive Standing Order 41(5.2). Later this afternoon we will be debating Motion Other than Government Motion 504. The Official Opposition would be pleased to introduce an amendment that has been shared with the government, and with unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 41(5.2), we would be able to do that. We seek the unanimous consent and the goodwill of the House.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, given that this is the first time we've had such a request, I will just read for the benefit of the Assembly Standing Order 41(5.2) as this is a request for unanimous consent to waive this standing order.

An amendment to a motion other than a Government motion, moved after the motion has been moved, must

- (a) be approved by Parliamentary Counsel no later than the Thursday preceding the day the motion is [to be] moved, and
- (b) be provided to the mover of the motion no later than 11 a.m. on the day the motion is moved.

I will ask only one question. Is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent? If so, please indicate now.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** We are at Ordres du jour. Oh, correction. My apologies. Correction. I just get so excited for Orders of the Day every day that I missed my second favourite part, which is points of order. At 1:52 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." At the time noted for the point of order, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said, "Fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers." In this Chamber you can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. That'd be like me saying: being misleading is for bad tour guides, not for opposition leaders. That word is not acceptable; neither is "lying." To fabricate something, I suspect implying fabricating the truth, would be unparliamentary, and I argue that this is, in fact, a point of order and ask the member to apologize and withdraw.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(h) covers "allegations against another Member" specifically, and (i) also covers allegations against another member. What the Member for Edmonton-Glenora said was "fabrication is for welders, not for Premiers," so it was not directed at the Premier. It was a general statement that fabrication is left for welders; Premiers have a different kind of job. It's not directed at the Premier. It's not covered in 23(h) and (i), so it's not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

I am prepared to rule. While I appreciate the defence of the Opposition House Leader, there is only one Premier in the Assembly. It would be difficult to assume that it wasn't directed at anyone other than the Premier. As the Government House Leader

has noted, it's not possible to do indirectly what you can't do directly, and as such I find this is a point of order. You can apologize and withdraw on behalf of the member.

**Mr. Sabir:** I apologize and withdraw on behalf of the member.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter dealt with and concluded. Now we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

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

##### Bill 204

##### Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022

[Debate adjourned March 6: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the question.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and share my thoughts about Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. May I first extend my gratitude to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing forward this private member's bill. I'm pleased to support the bill as it's written because I think that it serves an important function that will be in the public interest and will certainly protect a lot of senior citizens from potential harm.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, as I understand the bill, this makes some changes to a previous bill, that was passed by our government in 2017, creating the silver alert system. The silver alert system will operate similar to the amber alert system but will apply in cases of missing adult citizens, generally senior citizens who are suffering from dementia. Some other changes that this bill makes: it specifically removes the definition of a mental disorder, and it's less prescriptive when it comes to identifying the circumstances under which the police may issue an alert, but it also limits a silver alert to an individual who is over the age of 55.

Now, in general, Madam Speaker, I think that, as I've said, these are positive changes that, if adopted, will improve the silver alert system, but I note that the silver alert legislation has never been proclaimed, and it is not currently in effect. Not only am I pleased to offer my support and vote in favour of this legislation, I urge the government to proclaim the bill, if it's amended as we see here today, as soon as possible because there are a lot of seniors whose lives and well-being could be protected if this bill were passed.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's, of course, no secret that our seniors population is growing. Certainly, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar I have the privilege of representing a large number of senior citizens who live in my riding. Statistically speaking, Edmonton-Gold Bar is one of the oldest urban ridings in all of Alberta when it comes to considering the age of the population, so seniors' issues are something that I hear a great deal about.

I'm pleased to see that the government caucus is making some amendments that will actually make lives for seniors better after making so many decisions that have made lives for seniors harder over the last four years. I know that one of the first things that the government cut in its first budget was the seniors' drug benefit plan so that seniors' partners who were under the age of 65 were no longer eligible for coverage under the plan, and that created a great

deal of hardship for the seniors living in my community. There were countless seniors who had partners under the age of 65 who were negatively affected by this and were scrambling to find drug coverage for their partners who were under the age of 65.

It's incredibly disappointing to me to see that this government hasn't restored that plan to its original form in spite of the fact that there is a considerable surplus. I can't think of anything better that the government could spend than to provide extended drug benefits to senior citizens and their partners regardless of their age, and I think that it's unconscionable that the government had decided so many years ago to eliminate those benefits.

One of the other decisions we see in this budget is that the government cut another additional \$100 million in drug benefits. I don't know why the government continues to attack seniors' drug benefits, especially in light of our financial circumstances these days, but it seems that the government is ideologically opposed to government providing services to seniors and to providing public health care.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just a reminder that we've been off the topic of Bill 204 for quite some time. Perhaps we could get back on topic. Please proceed.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Madam Speaker, I mean, this is the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act. It deals with seniors and protecting them. My comments are related to protecting seniors. Some of the moves that this government has made I think are fully within the scope of debate here, and I would appreciate the opportunity to continue making the points that I'd like to make and that my constituents would like me to make on their behalf.

You know, one of the other things that this government has failed to address is the issue of continuing care. We see that the government has failed to adequately support the Good Samaritan and has allowed the Southgate centre to close down, which is shameful.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I have the same concern I had last time. I stood up to provide some caution to you and your remarks. We're on Bill 204, which is the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. Please speak to the bill. Please proceed.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I am speaking to the bill, and I'm also raising some issues that a number of senior citizens who live in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar have raised and insist that I discuss here in the Chamber.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member, you are not here to debate the Speaker. I have asked you and provided caution on the remarks that you are making and the relevance to the topic that we are speaking on. You have one last chance to speak relevantly to Bill 204.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. If you insist on shutting down my voice and not allowing me to speak to senior citizens, I'd be happy to go back to the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar and let them know what happened here today.

3:00

On the issue of the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, as I said many times already in the few minutes that I've been up speaking, this is a significant advance in the protection of the health and well-being of senior citizens in this province. Unfortunately, it comes at the tail end of a government's term where we have seen a number of decisions that have made the lives of senior citizens harder. It's hard for me to accept that this

government is genuinely concerned with the well-being and health of senior citizens when this government has made so many decisions that have been harmful to senior citizens. As I said, we've seen the government cut off drug benefits; we've seen that in multiple budgets. We've seen issues with continuing care that have affected a number of seniors.

The issue of seniors living with dementia is one that I hear about all the time in my constituency, and it's shameful, the lack of facilities that are provided to seniors who suffer from dementia. I know many people in my constituency have a great deal of difficulty finding adequate care for their partners or loved ones who are suffering from dementia and have to rely on friends and family and people who are not adequately equipped or trained to look after their partners or loved ones with dementia, and there is no government help available for them.

I hear continually concerns about the services that are provided through home-care providers, particularly when it comes to caring for people with dementia. I know that many seniors living with dementia are forced to live at home because there are no adequate facilities for them to live in. Unfortunately, their families just do not get adequate home care for their partners or loved ones who are suffering from dementia. And when they do get home care, the home-care services that they provide are often inadequate. I've heard countless stories from people who are living in my constituency who have in name home-care services but in practice don't receive the home-care services that that they are expecting or that they deserve.

I know many people have partners or loved ones who are receiving home care. Their home-care workers don't show up on time. Their home-care workers don't provide the services that they're expected to provide. They often change without notice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to speak to Bill 204? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to provide a few comments to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. There is no question that the discussion that my hon. colleague began with on the topic of supports for people with Alzheimer's and dementia is an issue that I hear in my riding of Lethbridge-West as well given that we, too, have, I think, a slightly higher than average number of seniors living in Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. I think it's just shy of 20 per cent. Certainly, I have had over the years many, many, many people come to me to talk to me about the need for more specialized Alzheimer's and dementia care, and ultimately that kind of care is what is at issue here.

Here we have an act, and a good one at that, to ensure at least a modicum of safety for adults who go missing. We also have a history with this particular bill. The hon. member had previously introduced this bill in 2017, noted it did not receive royal assent. It wasn't proclaimed due to the powers it could grant police in disclosing information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. So there's no question that we've had a few years to examine that. We should certainly find ways to answer those questions, and I hope that the hon. member has been able to receive those assurances in the intervening period, because ultimately I think this is a really good piece of legislation.

These silver alerts are for missing adult citizens, generally senior citizens with some form of Alzheimer's, dementia. You know, there's no question that we have an increasing number of folks, because we have an aging population, who certainly have been diagnosed these disorders.

We're getting better at early diagnosis, Madam Speaker. We're getting better at even brain research and understanding some of the pre-existing conditions or other aspects of brain development that show or that can begin to unlock some of the mysteries as to why dementia and Alzheimer's occur in some folks and what some of the precursors may be. Indeed, much of that research in the Canadian context is undertaken at the University of Lethbridge at the centre for neuroscience. Given the amount of interest in my local constituency I'm pleased to provide my support to this legislation.

Having said that, there is no question that appropriate care at every stage of diagnosis or early onset of dementia and Alzheimer's and appropriate support for both the patient and their families can certainly head off the need for such legislation. There is no question that investment in long-term care facilities with specialized Alzheimer's-dementia units with the appropriate number of staff, with the right kinds of supports for the patients – not only are they quite inaccessible; waits are long.

Sometimes families are put in a position where they have to purchase these services privately because there are no public facilities. There is no question that with home care, as my hon. colleague indicated, even when families are trying to support people at home before they make that transition into some form of supportive living facility, home-care budgets are strained, often families are paying out of pocket for these services, and they are not necessarily the level of care and support that families need.

I knocked on a door a couple of weeks ago now. It was quite a lovely day out, so I was able to get out onto Chippewa Crescent. Some folks came to the door and said: you know, we really appreciate your advocacy for health care in the riding. They have been supporting the woman's mother for some time and in that transition over to a continuing care facility where they knew that she was not getting exactly the level of care she needed for the level of dementia with which she had been diagnosed, but the family could not, with the assistance of home care, provide the kinds of supports that this woman needed so that she would remain safe, so that she would not need something like this legislation.

This human drama is playing itself out across the province, Madam Speaker, where families, essentially what we call the sandwich generation, are dealing with their aging parents, you know, and getting their children ready for university and what have you, and they find themselves looking for a public health care system that over the last three to four years has taken body blow after body blow with respect to availability of family doctors, of specialists, of continuing care spaces of various kinds.

Then they've seen the costs of those go up as well. Many, many people, as I said, are now paying privately for home care or because they need that additional piece of home care for their family members who have potentially early diagnoses of these diseases. Then once they do get into continuing care, the rental rates for that have gone up over the last three years. When the income tax bracket indexation did not happen, the amount of money given to residents in long-term care facilities was frozen as well, so they lost that pace of inflation. Their rental charges kept going up. The amount of money that was given to folks from the government, the government piece, remained constant. This also put a pressure on people's budgets.

3:10

**Mr. Hanson:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.



### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under 23(b)(i), which is a little bit different than we're used to, you know, basically it speaks to matters other than the question under discussion. You've pointed out to the previous member and – you know what? I've been in the House for about eight years, and I've witnessed some pretty shameless behaviour from the members opposite. I know the folks are in full campaign mode, and I get that, but politicizing a good bill like Bill 204 is pretty much a new low. I would appreciate if the folks would stop the politicizing of Bill 204 and get to the point. Talk about what this is actually doing. It's protecting seniors that happen to wander away from their home. It gives the families some kind of a facility to issue an alert. If the members could . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** You have more hairs on your head than brains in your head.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, those are inappropriate comments in this Legislature, completely uncalled for, and I heard them. You have an opportunity now to stand up and apologize to the hon. member for your insults.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's a reason that I shave my head, because when I let it grow, it looks like his.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you now have the opportunity to apologize.

**Mr. Hanson:** I apologize and withdraw the comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now that we are done with apologizing, I think at the second reading of a bill you can talk broadly about the principles of the bill. From what I've been hearing from my colleagues, they have kept the debate around the safety of seniors, issues facing seniors. They appreciated that it's a good step, but they are also highlighting the concerns relating to safety and issues facing seniors that they hear in their communities. I think it's well within what we do at the second stage of a bill. It's not a point of order, and certainly I can say this, that my colleagues will try to keep their comments more on the bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I certainly can appreciate the last words that you added to this point of order.

I have given great latitude when it comes to relevancy on this topic for all members of this House during the course of this debate. However, I feel that members are starting to take advantage of the niceness of the Speaker in this regard. Hon. members, we're speaking about Bill 204. If you are going to talk about all sorts of aspects in all sorts of areas, please make it relevant to the state at hand. This will be a caution.

The hon. member has I thought 45 seconds, which made things a little bit more difficult, but it's two minutes and 45 seconds. I'm sure she will speak to the topic at hand as the caution has been provided by their own House leader.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to conclude my comments as I was discussing the specific challenges of my constituents as a result of knocking on doors, hearing from a specific family who were dealing with the safety and security of their family member who had dementia, and they were having to look for the appropriate amount of care. There's no question that that was difficult to come by, and that in itself was – they had to settle for a level of care that, over time I think, has become better. At least their family member is now safe from the very obvious thing that was about to happen without that care, which was potential harm to the family member themselves or others.

There is no question that, just as we have Amber Alert for children, this is obviously an important piece of infrastructure for public safety and public emergencies. There is no question that when we discuss Amber Alerts, we also need to discuss safety and security for children in all of the aspects of family and social life that surround children to keep them safe. In the context of the silver alert it is the same dynamic at play.

Now, I am quite certain that I will end up in many more of these conversations over the next couple months given that these sorts of issues are raised on the doorstep all the time. Given that my colleagues, as well, are out knocking on doors and people are raising their health and seniors' care concerns with them and that we will all be having these conversations, it would be good, I think, to be able to answer them with something, with a proclaimed silver alert amendment act that has grappled with some of the issues that were first raised in 2017. What would be even better is to be able to pair that with a commitment to expanded long-term care, particularly public long-term care, that is affordable for everyone and gives the right level of care for all seniors.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there are other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 204? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to a bill which I think is very important. I must express some of my concern that while the government side is berating us for speaking to the issue, they themselves are not speaking to it at all. If they feel like it should be addressed and we should focus on it and that's what we should use our time to do, you would think they would have some value in actually speaking to it themselves, so I'm a bit concerned.

I am concerned about this because I certainly know a lot of people who are of a certain age, as am I, who are looking more and more at the concerns of aging and some of the outcomes that are possible for us as we get older. I know in my own family, now that we're all reaching our 60s and 70s, more and more of our family members are experiencing health issues. For some of them, unfortunately, those issues also encompass cognitive issues that make the rest of us very concerned and very worried about the well-being of our family members and their safety. Recently I had a family member who had to go to hospital emergency because of exactly that kind of situation. You know, we are all very concerned about it.

I remember one particular incident that sort of resonated with me for many years. That is that back in the 1990s, when I was working an NDP campaign in what is now called Edmonton-Riverview, a gentleman came in and sat in our campaign office. I noticed that although it was March, he didn't have a jacket on, and he was wearing slippers, so we kind of approached him and, you know, "Can we help you?" as you do when someone comes into a campaign office. It became apparent that he wasn't there for the

campaigning purposes, so we said, “Well, would you like a ride home or something?” because I was concerned that he didn’t have a jacket on. He said, “Oh, sure; that would very nice,” so I said to him to hop into my car.

We got into my car. We were just by the university, and I said to him: so where is it that you live? Then he identified a World War II camp that used to exist near the university as his place of residence, at which point I realized this was an individual who was not cognitively aware and believed himself to be living in an era that was, at that point, 50 years old. It just so happened that I do know about the veterans centre near the university, just south of the university, and I suspected that someone wearing slippers and without a jacket had probably wandered away from that centre. Indeed, I drove the individual over to the veterans centre, and they had not even been aware that this individual had left the centre. This is the type of circumstance we’re talking about today, where people are clearly vulnerable, and they certainly need to be taken care of. You know, that’s the kind of thing I think that we should be doing.

### 3:20

I’m increasingly worried about these because of some of the context within which we are seeing this bill being brought forward, the context of the behaviours of this government over the last number of years. For example, the elimination of drug coverage for partners of seniors worries me a lot because if you can’t afford drugs for your partner and those drugs allow your partner to live a fulsome and safe life but your inability to pay for those drugs causes that partner to become increasingly vulnerable, then how much more likely is it that we’re going to find that someone whose services have been diminished by this UCP government is going to be in need of a service like the silver alarm? I am very discouraged to find the government, you know, wanting us to speak to supporting the silver alarm, which obviously I do – I’m very, very happy that there is an outlet for those circumstances where something negative happens, but I’m very concerned that the government is actually creating the circumstance under which the likelihood of needing that service is going to increase. I think the government has continued to do that in a variety of ways, and I think that’s an inconsistent philosophical place for the government to be taking.

For example, the government has eliminated the Seniors Advocate position in this government, a position that’s been around for a number of years, and they didn’t see right to follow that up. Now, how many of these vulnerable people could be well protected if there was somewhere in the government where concerns could be addressed, where phone calls could be made about, “I’m very concerned that this person is not receiving the services that they need in order to be safe,” to prevent the need for a silver alert, to get in front of it, to be proactive? We certainly could have used a Seniors Advocate who would ensure that all of our seniors are well taken care of in appropriate facilities with appropriate services and getting appropriate services in their home. Had all those things existed under this government, which they do not, how many times could we save ourselves from having to go to the end-resort activity of putting out a silver alert?

That’s the kind of concern I’m concerned about. That’s the context we have to understand when we look at this government wanting us to support silver alert but then not philosophically staying with the concern of the protection of seniors in the rest of their behaviour. I think that is a deep concern and therefore legitimizes the members on this side spending time talking about the context, legitimizes the members saying in this House what we all know, and that is: if you create the structures that increase

vulnerability for seniors, you are going to increase the need for some kind of an after-the-fact intervention such as the silver alert.

We know that this government has done a variety of things to increase that vulnerability and that risk. I have within my constituency, for example, a seniors’ residence, southside care, that has recently had a reduction in the number of beds available. Given the increasing population that we have in the seniors area, that is a real serious concern. The concern is that if we reduce the number of beds in places like the southside care centre, that resides in Edmonton-Rutherford, then we are going to be in a situation where people do not have the ability to move into appropriate settings where they will receive appropriate care and therefore be in a place where their vulnerability has been increased and therefore are likely to be the type of people that we end up having to create a silver alert for.

That’s the kind of thing that we would like to see this government do: to prevent it before it actually becomes a problem in the first place, to reduce the vulnerability of our seniors, to reduce the threat to their safety and their well-being that we see when you do things like eliminate the Seniors Advocate, when you do things like eliminate the drug coverage for partners of seniors, when you do things like reduce the number of beds available in long-term protected care. Those are the things that are deeply concerning on this side of the House, and we think it’s philosophically consistent to say that if we care about seniors, we care about them not only when they are lost and we want to find them again through the use of a silver alert, but we are concerned about them when they are lost living in their own home, when they are lost in institutions that do not have sufficient resources, when they are lost because when things go wrong, they do not have an advocate that they can call to correct the vulnerabilities, to reduce the risks, and to bring them back into the place of well-being that we want our seniors to live in.

Now, some of us in this House are a little bit more worried about those seniors’ issues as we’re a little bit closer to it than others, but I think it’s really important that all of us in this House take the time to evaluate what our position is as a society with regard to our elders. Do we as a society have a responsibility to ensure the well-being of our elders?

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. This is actually my first opportunity to speak to Bill 204, so I do have some questions in relation to how the bill was drafted and why some changes were made in relation to a pre-existing Bill 210, that was actually taken to a community and some consultation was done on that bill, because some concerns were raised respecting the Missing Persons Act, disclosure of information by police to public, and a couple of other topics that I haven’t seen addressed necessarily or heard being addressed through debate. Again, in fairness, this is my first time speaking to it, so if there are answers to my questions, I would be more than happy to hear from the member of the government being able to maybe clarify some of these questions.

One of the things that happened in Bill 210, that was passed in 2017, was that there was an opportunity and an ability for this not to just impact seniors but also to support individuals that may be dealing with some type of mental health concern and the police then being able to issue an alert because of that. It wasn’t necessarily just related to a 55-plus. It could be someone who may be known to a family member to have some mental health concerns that people would be relatively concerned about their safety and well-being and needing to be able to find them as soon as possible to ensure that their health was being addressed.

Now, my understanding is that the definition of a mental disorder has been removed from the bill and that it limits the silver alert to only being for those at the age of 55 and over. My concern is that I have had, actually, a few situations in my riding where adults, young adults in their 20s, have had some mental health disorders that they've been dealing with, diagnoses that they have, and unfortunately they have left the home and have gone missing. Of course, my riding has a little bit of an urban setting but mostly has lots of farmland and then, of course, the river valley along the North Saskatchewan. It's concerning because there's an ability to wander in my riding and get lost, and there's not a lot of population in certain areas of my riding for people to see if someone is wandering down the road without a coat on or any of that kind of stuff. So to see this removed – what ended up happening for this one particular family in my riding is they ended up having to put up billboards in the neighbourhoods with this person's picture on, a phone number that they had come up with asking for people to call, Facebook, using social media as much as they could. But, of course, had there been an ability for an alert to go out, the opportunity to maybe share that information would have been, well, more efficient and would've gotten out to a lot more people.

3:30

I think, you know, when we look at these alerts – and I think we can all acknowledge that we are very familiar with the alerts given last week or the week before, when we all got about eight or 10 alerts all within, like, 30 seconds of each other and nobody was quite sure what was going on. The test apparently worked, too efficiently, some would say probably, but we know it can work. I think, looking at a piece of legislation like this, this is really important, I would say, for our smaller communities, our rural communities, where the population is less and the opportunity for individuals to wander into bigger spaces and things like that and not necessarily be noticed as quickly as maybe if you were in downtown Edmonton or downtown Calgary. I think it's very important.

You know, I'm not saying I don't support the bill, because I do; I just wish the age group wasn't there. Maybe part of the reason for that is that there's a reason why the member chose the age of 55 and over. Maybe that was part of what came out of the consultation with the Missing Persons Act and whether or not they were able to disclose information and whether that has more to do with the fact that there are probably some guardianship components that are attached to this. I appreciate that, but I would be curious to know: if it was someone between the ages of 18 and 55 that's missing in this piece of legislation, if they also had guardians, would they be able to actually engage with this alert system? Can we do interventions in private members' business?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No.

**Mr. Smith:** We could do interventions at first, but we can't now.

**Ms Sweet:** No, we can't. Okay. Well, maybe somebody else can answer when I'm done. I appreciate the member who wrote the bill wanting to answer my questions.

I think that, you know, it's an important piece because it isn't always just seniors that I think we're talking about. In fact, I would say, again, going back to my riding, that I have one of the youngest ridings in the province, and many of the individuals that would benefit from something like this would probably be in that 18 to 55 age group who are needing additional supports. So I see that.

Again, recognizing and moving on into the rural components, I do think that this is very helpful. You know, I would hate to hear of a scenario where this wasn't being able to be used. My family is

from Pincher Creek, and had my grandma still been around, if she had decided to go for a walk without anybody with her, I think we would all be pretty scared at that point although she was pretty well known; people would've noticed her pretty fast. Anyway, the idea behind that, though, is that I think it is a good idea.

The other piece that I'm looking into wanting to kind of understand from the member, which, again, I think goes back to what came out of the committee when this was debated before, was: what is the privacy for adults and the idea around self-determination and, you know, at what point do we consider someone missing? Obviously, that is clear in the Missing Persons Act, and we would know that.

Now, the other piece around this is, again, looking at the infrastructure. Going back to the fact that we obviously know the alert systems work, I would be wondering, from the government's perspective, what the financial commitment would need to be to be able to update this system. Would it be piggybacking on the back of the Amber Alert, or would it just be a line text change? So the system would be the exact same system, no different than if we use the Amber Alert and it's a different child, age, vehicle, things like that. If it's really just a turn in phrase or if there would have to be a whole other infrastructure component built to support this.

And then, on top of that, given our experience over the last couple of weeks with these alerts repeatedly going out into the universe on our phones, what is the measurability to make sure that people don't become desensitized to the alerts? I think even based on our experience a couple of weeks ago, when we were getting inundated with alerts, at some point people get a little bit frustrated with the system and how it works. I want to make sure even from a testing perspective as well as a use perspective that this is being used in those urgent moments and not being done to the point where people become desensitized to them and then they don't read them; they don't look at them. That would be the other question that I have around the bill.

You know, I would hope that we can use the Amber Alert system and that we're not trying to create another system that is going to have a financial component attached to it that couldn't be somehow figured out so that we're not spending money if we can use a system that already is being used and working.

Other than that – oh, the other piece, too – sorry – that I just wanted to flag is that we know that something similar exists in Ontario, B.C., and Manitoba, and I just want to make sure that it's no different than our Amber Alert, that the silver alert would then be compatible across the country and that we're not building systems in other provinces that don't necessarily work together. Again, it defeats the purpose, and then we're just creating redundancy after redundancy on these issues.

I think that is what I have in closing. I look forward to hearing from the member that introduced the bill, Drayton Valley-Devon, maybe when he has an opportunity to answer my questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just in time.

Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. I have appreciated the debate so far from members on this side of the House. I think they've raised some important questions, some that I will likely highlight through my time in discussion.

You know, again, just looking at what this bill is proposing, at the end of the day, offering changes to Bill 210, that was passed back in 2017 – of course, we never saw that proclaimed as far as I

can tell, Madam Speaker. Instead, we see some changes being proposed through this amendment act regarding some of the details within here, arguably making it less prescriptive than what was previously introduced. The previous member spoke to it but, specifically, removing the definition of a mental disorder and the circumstances under which the police may issue an alert and, finally, limiting the silver alert to an individual over the age of 55.

Again, I think, as the previous member stated, it would be important to hear from the mover and creator of this legislation to provide comments and details about exactly why these changes have been made, what further consultation took place that has made them arrive at a different place than what was originally proposed. I, you know, do not argue the changes that they've made. I think that likely there's good reason for it, but I think it's important that we hear why those decisions were made in terms of the changes that are being proposed in this amendment act.

You know, we see that – again, as the previous member spoke to, we've seen jurisdictions across the United States moving forward with similar legislation, specifically in 48 states, as well as Quebec recently introducing a pilot project in the fall of 2023, and Ontario, B.C., and Manitoba have also brought forward similar legislation. I would also ask the mover of this legislation if what we're seeing proposed in Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, is exactly what we see in other provinces, if there are some minor changes, if there are any larger changes that are important to provide and have our own distinct policies here in the province compared to what we've seen in other jurisdictions, whether across North America or across Canada.

You know, in my time as an MLA, like many other of the members who have spoken this afternoon, I have seen instances of what I would believe to be somebody in my community that would likely meet the criteria of a silver alert. Thinking back to those situations and how concerning it is for the family of a senior or a member of our community that has gone missing, for potentially the support staff who may or may not have been in charge of keeping them safe and ensuring that they were in a specific location and just in general the broader community and the concern there.

3:40

It's just about ensuring that the people that live in that community are protected and safe. In general I think those are all important things that we should aim for and things that we also need to measure, you know, before this legislation is introduced and following the implementation of this legislation and this amendment act if it is passed.

Some questions that I have – and hopefully this came up through the consultation process. I would be interested to find out if there is a breakdown of where the majority of these cases are happening, the majority of cases that would meet this criteria of a silver alert, if it's primarily happening in long-term care settings, if it's primarily happening in community, you know, home support being provided to a senior potentially, where we are most likely to see this. If there is a breakdown that the member or the government is able to provide – or even anecdotes, Madam Speaker, I suppose would suffice at this time – I'd be interested to find out if there is quite a difference between how, when this is happening, and where it's happening overall.

I think that question would lead back to some of the discussions that we've heard from members this afternoon and very likely through previous discussions about the need to ensure that no matter where a senior or any Albertan is getting supports, they are getting adequate supports.

Again, this goes back to the idea that I've heard again and again and concerns that have been raised throughout my last eight years

representing many seniors in Edmonton-West Henday. We have a number of long-term care facilities as well as seniors receiving supports in their own home and in their own community. I think it's important to understand, again, past what we're seeing in this legislation and what could be argued as reactionary compared to what changes we could potentially be making on the prevention side if it is a need, which very likely is a need for increased supports in home care and increased supports in long-term care facilities in general, Madam Speaker.

That is something that I've heard again and again, that not only is there not enough space in our long-term care facilities, but if you are able to get a space in them, very often they unfortunately are just – you know, a lot of them do the best that they can with the funding that they're provided and the funding that they collect, but sometimes mistakes are made at the end of the day, and I guess that is why there is value in seeing something like what is proposed in Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act.

Beyond hoping and looking for a breakdown of where the majority of these situations are happening, you know, whether it's a senior who has stepped out of their home and is potentially lost, if it is a senior that has left their long-term care facility, I'm hoping that the member or the government is able to provide how many cases Alberta traditionally sees year to year that would likely meet the criteria of what is being proposed in Bill 204 and likely meet the criteria of having a silver alert put out to the public, if that number is growing year to year as decisions are made and, of course, through the pandemic, that has added a number of complexities to our long-term care facilities, to the ability to provide supports to seniors in our community. I'd be interested to find out if there is any sort of breakdown year to year and potentially looking back and, again, looking forward, what we might expect to see from those numbers.

As the previous member and many other members have brought forward, looking for a cost analysis of this legislation. Again, I am in full support of what we're seeing proposed in Bill 204, but I think that it's always important that we look at the effectiveness of a program based on the cost. Again, not arguing the effectiveness of this program. But we need to ensure, if we are putting forward legislation like Bill 204, that the money is best spent in a reactionary way, in this instance, compared to putting that money forward into prevention. Again, I wouldn't argue that, but I think it's valuable that we have an understanding of the cost breakdown, where those funds are going to come from, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, I want to be careful, because I do appreciate that you have put forward a number of I don't want to say warnings, but for lack of better terms I think we do have to look at the way that we support our seniors overall, in general, when we have considerations like Bill 204 in front of us. I won't push the point too much, but when we do look at changes that have been made over the last few years around the elimination of drug coverage for beneficiaries, I think there is very likely a case to be made that we could see ourselves having more seniors or Albertans meeting the criteria of a silver alert if they are no longer able to access the medication coverage that they need.

I think that it's just a part of the bigger conversation, that it needs to be discussed, that all changes that have been made, whether it be under this government, under previous governments, around the way that we support our seniors are very much relevant and that they do provide a better picture of what is being proposed. At the end of the day . . . [Mr. Carson's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. This is my first opportunity to speak to this, and I'm listening closely to the debate. You know, I think I can agree a hundred per cent that we need to do as much as we can to support seniors in this province, and I think that this is a good step towards doing that.

I know that here in Alberta we have the Amber Alert system, which is for children, and I've seen as a social worker a few instances where that has resulted in some incredible responses from the community, from the police, from those that are all alerted to this to make sure that a child is located safely. I've seen the success first-hand of that. The intent of this legislation, with Bill 204, I think is to make sure that when someone, I believe, aged 55 or older is missing, they meet certain criteria and then an alert can be issued.

Now, I think that when we're talking about this bill, there are a few questions that I have that I am hopeful will be addressed. I'm curious: why the age? Why 55? Where did that number come from? I know that there are individuals that are younger that have early-onset dementia and could benefit from this legislation if something unfortunate happened to them and they were missing and their loved ones determined that, you know, an alert needed to be issued. So I'm curious how the age, 55, was determined when it came to this legislation.

I'm also curious about why the definition of mental disorder was removed. I think that when police are looking at the criteria to issue an alert, the more detail and definitions that we can provide, the better. I've watched in court cases where people have come forward requesting from the courts a secure – regarding either a youth or an adult. Having a clear definition is definitely helpful for those that are making the decisions. We saw numerous requests coming forward to the courts to have some of these certificates issued, but they didn't meet the criteria. So when a definition is available, I would argue that that is a lot more user friendly for those that are making the decisions.

3:50

When an alert is issued, it is important, and it's something that we want to make sure Albertans are paying attention to when they get that alert on their phone. I know that it's a fine line between someone's privacy and someone's personal information and an individual's, an adult's, self-determination. There are many criteria that come into place. When someone is coming forward and arguing that a silver alert needs to be issued, it's beneficial to have a very clear, concise definition of what that could mean.

I know that I've spoken to many people that are in situations right now where they have their aging loved ones at a place where they need more supervision, where they need more assistance, and caregivers are really struggling with what to do. We've watched a system, from this government, of lack of support to seniors, and we're hearing from families that they're feeling overwhelmed, that they're feeling burned out when it comes to caring for seniors, and they have this awful circumstance that they've described as being not able to meet their loved one's needs in their home. There's a lack of resources and supports for home care but also really struggling with having their family member going to a longer term facility despite knowing that the level of care is needed, that they are at high risk of being someone that could require a silver alert.

When we're talking about ways to support seniors, I think the conversation needs to be bigger, Madam Speaker, and I think that having a silver alert amendment act is definitely a positive step. We want to make sure that seniors are safe. We want to make sure that the community is engaged in ensuring their safety. We know that when an Amber Alert comes out, everybody gets notification and a

description, and people are paying attention. People do not want to see a child at risk or hurt, and I believe that the same is true for seniors.

When we're talking about the resources and supports to help diminish the need for a silver alert, we need to talk about the bigger picture and what sort of services and supports are being supported. Throughout this term of this government we've seen those supports be significantly decreased. We watched through the pandemic devastating impacts on seniors, with so many being exposed unnecessarily to COVID and to other heartbreaking scenarios where families are at a place where they're struggling with what to do with their loved ones.

I know as a social worker supporting caregivers in the community that these are tough decisions. When we're looking at ways to support seniors in Alberta, it needs to be a broader conversation. Why is there a lack of supports for seniors? Why is there no longer a Seniors Advocate? Those are the conversations that we're having at the doors. Those are conversations that I know are happening around kitchen tables all across the province.

I've heard a devastating story about a family friend's great-aunt. I believe she's in her early 80s, and she is struggling with some significant memory issues: dementia, Alzheimer's. The amount of care that is required is – when she's awake, she needs to be supervised, and she's a significant risk to herself, without intending to be, because she has no idea of where she is, who's around her, her loved ones, et cetera, and she's afraid, Madam Speaker. When trying to have conversations with her great-aunt, she said that it's heartbreaking, because if she was to leave the floor of the unit that she's on, they don't believe that she would ever find her way back, and without assistance of the community it could be a really devastating situation. They were quite worried about her when it was quite cold because she liked to be outside, but she needed constant supervision.

So there were family conversations about what that could look like, what that quality of life was for her. Was it better for the family to bring her into their home, where they were hopeful that there would be some form of normalcy, or should she stay in the facility that she was at? It was a very, very real fear that if she left the facility, she would be at risk of needing a silver alert. These are conversations that I know people are having when it comes to their loved ones and the seniors.

I'm just curious what the intention is around the age, like I said, in this piece of legislation and about making sure that it doesn't contravene the Missing Persons Act. I know that there are some conversations that we're having here in the Leg. talking about these things, but I would really hope that we can get some clarity around that, because this is a piece of legislation that I really want to support. I think that when we're talking about making steps to ensure that seniors are at a decreased risk if they go missing, we need to come together to support that. I'm not sure that all of the information has been clarified in this piece of legislation. Like I said, a definition of mental disorder I think would be incredibly important when it comes to those making the decision of whether or not to issue an alert. There are circumstances that I've seen when it comes to issuing alerts regarding children – it's a tough criteria to determine what is the best interest of that individual.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, for second reading. I think, if I'm not mistaken, it is one of the very few

times I have seen a private member's bill make it to second reading, because for the most part under the UCP the process was that the bill will get introduced and then handed over to a committee, where it will be decided without any input from members of this House, all members of this House, whether that bill should be debated or not. For the most part we missed out debating all those private members' bills, good ideas that private members have brought forward.

This is one such bill, which comes with a good idea on what we can do to make sure that for those who are at risk of going missing, there is some process in place that will make sure that they are safe. In all of our ridings, in our communities seniors are a vital part of our communities, and the constituency I represent has also a considerable number of seniors living in it. There are quite a few senior-serving organizations as well, and whenever I have the opportunity to engage with them at their events, engage with their loved ones, the conversation about seniors will start with their safety and their well-being because, as my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford said, when we grow older, which we all do, our needs change, and those changes do impact our safety needs as well.

4:00

As my colleague mentioned, when the pandemic hit, certainly it was a general health risk for Albertans of all ages, but we know from day one that medical professional advice was that seniors will be more vulnerable, that they will be more at risk. There's more that was advised of us all to do to protect seniors. Their safety is an important concern, and that's what this bill is trying to help with in at least one way, by creating a silver alert so that for those who are vulnerable or at risk of going missing, there is some process in place that will make sure that they have some help that will be available to them.

As I said, I'm speaking in support of this bill and in support of this proposal that will help make our communities safer, at least one step more safe, but we do have some questions about this legislation. We do know that the same or a similar bill was brought forward before, and it was not proclaimed. At that time I think one of the reasons that was noted for not proclaiming that piece of legislation was that there were concerns that it could give police information not collected in accordance with the Missing Persons Act. So we do want to know, need to know: what steps, if any, were taken to make sure that that concern was addressed? What assurances has the member received, can the member provide this House and Albertans that this bill will not be in contravention of the Missing Persons Act?

Another concern that was raised with respect to these amendments was that now this bill, the bill in its current form, removes the definition of mental disorder and the circumstances under which police may be able to issue an alert. I do understand that it's a difficult topic, and coming up with a definition which will cover a range of mental health concerns, issues is difficult, but as was mentioned by my colleague from Edmonton . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 8 the mover of the bill has five minutes to close us out.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, will enable police services across this province to be able to access a tool that will help the police to find seniors that have gone missing and are believed to be at risk. I'm grateful for the members of the Legislature that have stood and have spoken to this bill in second

reading and have provided some insights and some questions that they may have as we move on to the next stage, which would be the Committee of the Whole. I look forward to resuming the debate and to perhaps answering some of those questions. I would encourage all to pay attention, to listen to the debate as it moves forward, and hopefully, at the end of the day, to support this in Committee of the Whole and to support this in third reading.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed with debate, there has been a request to briefly revert to introductions, so I will seek unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose on introductions.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you members of the rodeo and chuckwagon associations. I have with me Geoff Turnquist; PBR event producer Angela Watson; Coy Robbins, professional bull rider; Shaun Morton, rodeo production manager; Denny Phipps, GM, Canadian Professional Rodeo Association; Patty Auger, Canadian Professional Rodeo Association; Celeste Chaytors with the Cowboy Channel Canada and also with Alberta High School Rodeo; Presley Chaytors is here with the rodeo as well; Pam Golden and her daughter Emma, also with Alberta High School Rodeo. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Chamber.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Welcome. Welcome.

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 205

#### Official Sport of Alberta Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 205, regarding the recognition of rodeo and chuckwagon as the official sport of Alberta. You know, I wanted to pause and just tell you all why it is that this bill is so important to me. Rodeo and chuckwagon are events, sports that I grew up watching as a child, and the reason I had that opportunity is because my grandfather used to break horses. He would say to us every year, at least two or three times a year: come on, girls; get in the car; we're going to the rodeo. And off we would go, and we would spend the day together. Those bring back such great memories for me, and I hope that all Albertans have that opportunity to spend family time attending rodeos and chuckwagon races because it's made for very long-lasting, pleasurable memories for me and my family.

I'll just go on to tell you that sports are not just for competition but also a way of life that creates a cultural identity. Canadians have always and will always be identified by their love of hockey. Most Calgarians and Edmontonians have an identity built around their

love of the Flames or the Oilers. The rivalry against each other and their close connections to their respective cities create culture identities for both Calgarians and Edmontonians.

A similar logic and view apply to the beloved sport of rodeo and chuckwagon racing here in our province. Without the rodeo and chuckwagon races there would be a missing piece in Alberta's proud western heritage. Rodeo and chuckwagon promote Alberta's strong cultural mindset of being a proud maverick. Alberta was founded by settlers who embodied the values of hard work, resilience against the untamed prairies, and communities built by people who believe in one another. Rodeos and chuckwagon racing display all these traits and characteristics. Rodeo and chuckwagon racing are sports that demonstrate a passion for improving oneself, both mentally and physically. They bring together the young and the old to rally around adversity and competition.

This also describes who Albertans are, what we stand for, and why we live in the most fantastic province in Canada. The cultural importance of rodeo and chuckwagon racing to Alberta cannot be overstated. When visitors come from across Alberta, the country, and the world to participate in rodeo and chuckwagon events, it gives Alberta a chance to welcome people from different backgrounds. It creates a sense of community, belonging, and friendship.

#### 4:10

The sport of rodeo and chuckwagon racing is a vital part of Alberta's rich cultural fabric that highlights Alberta's agriculture sector. To give members of the House an idea of the impact that rodeo and chuckwagon racing and its agriculture events have on Alberta, I'd like to mention a few examples. There are 94 primary agriculture societies, seven regional agriculture societies, and one major agriculture society that hold a whopping 138-plus rodeo events spread across our great province. The first Canadian rodeo was held in Raymond, Alberta, in 1903, two years before our province came into being. The first Calgary Stampede quickly followed, in 1912, which has been popular with tourists from across the country and the world ever since. The Calgary Stampede draws around 1 million visitors annually and is now called the world's most significant outdoor attraction event.

The direct impact of the 10-day Calgary Stampede has an economic impact of \$282.5 million, but imagine the indirect effect of the Stampede, from the hotels that are booked to the tourists visiting Calgary's small businesses, to buying souvenirs, to the indirect jobs created because of the Stampede. These indirect impacts are likely unaccountable. The beauty of all this comes because we embrace our western heritage culture, and rodeo and chuckwagon have no doubt helped in the creation of building Alberta's unique cultural identity.

Rodeo and chuckwagon racing: the economic tourism benefits are not just insulated to Calgary. In fact, hundreds of similar stampedes happen simultaneously across the province every year due to the long months of summer. For example, the Canadian Finals Rodeo, held at Westerner Park in Red Deer, is a six-day event with over 43,000 attendees and an economic impact of \$37 million. Also, rodeos, like the Ponoka Stampede and Strathmore Stampede, contribute millions of dollars to our local economies. In my Camrose constituency we are enjoying the PBR in Camrose.

At its heart, Madam Speaker, rodeo is about community. They're not just about competition and the demonstration of skills but also about coming together to enjoy food, listening to local singers, shopping at trade shows, and visiting the rides at the fairgrounds. They bring people together from all walks of life and backgrounds, immigrants and new Albertans from all other parts of Canada, people who have been here for generations.

Making rodeo Alberta's official sport would help to illustrate the importance of rodeo and chuckwagon racing to our province and local communities, who work year-round preparing for the season. Families, agriculture associations, local businesses, community associations, and individuals rely on the income they make from the season. Our love for rodeos and chuckwagon racing is something we all share as Albertans, and I want that to be officially recognized in this Legislature.

Some of the most notable rodeos in the Camrose constituency include the Sodbuster Rodeo, the Cloverdale rodeo, the Hardisty Rodeo, the Killam Indoor Rodeo, and the Bruce Stampede. The Bruce Stampede is particularly noteworthy as it has produced some of the most talented and accomplished rodeo stars for nearly 100 years.

It's important to note that the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association regulates the sport. Rodeo judges are responsible for enforcing all CPRA rules, including a section that deals exclusively with the humane treatment of livestock. Rodeo and chuckwagon judges undergo constant training and evaluation to ensure they are knowledgeable and up to date on the rules. The association's rules and regulations include more than 60 rules dealing with the treatment of livestock. Committees ensure that the facilities are inspected before the animals and contestants arrive, to minimize the chance of injury to the animals and contestants. Professional judges check the livestock before each performance, and any animal suspected of being unable to compete to the best of their ability is pulled from the competition.

Alberta's love for rodeo and chuckwagon mirrors the values and character that Albertans represent today. Rodeo is not a sport but a way of life for Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to have this opportunity to introduce the bill and welcome the guests.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, can I just have you stand back up and say that you move second reading?

**Ms Lovely:** I move second reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Perfect. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. I would like to also extend a warm welcome to all those that are joining us in the gallery today from the rodeo community. I think it's wonderful when individuals can come and experience the Legislature and hear about the debate that's happening.

I, too, have a strong connection with rodeo. I grew up in Whitecourt, Alberta, and my parents had many friends from childhood that participated in rodeo. They were athletes from bull riding to barrel racing and calf roping. I have very, very fond memories, as a little girl travelling all across the Alberta rodeo circuit, cheering on some of these athletes from Sangudo, Mayerthorpe, Boyle. It was just a great experience. I was very fortunate, Madam Speaker, to be able to sit as a board member at Northlands and participate in some of the behind-the-scenes stuff that was happening around the CFR specifically. I'm very grateful for rodeo and the contribution that it made in my life upbringing, so it's wonderful to have these conversations and talk about, you know, a key piece of Alberta's culture and history. I couldn't agree more that there are so many wonderful memories that come out of rodeo, and being able to talk about it is incredible.

I mean, when you travel, if you go down to Vegas for the rodeo there, there are lots of Albertans there, and they're well represented. I can say with pride that, you know, when you're around the

community, the pride that comes from so many family and friends that have athletes involved in rodeo is spectacular.

On the other side, Madam Speaker, I am the Culture critic, and I represent all sport across this beautiful province, and I have some questions that I hope will be answered through debate in the House. I think that rodeo is absolutely an identity when it comes to Alberta's culture and history, but I question why it was chosen at the exclusion of so many others. Not to say that I don't support it, not at all. I just have heard from so many organizations in sport that questioned: who was consulted when this came to be? I know that there's a great hockey community in the province. There's lacrosse. There's soccer. There's basketball. There's baseball. I would like to know, you know: were these organizations consulted? We have Alberta representatives from soccer, from basketball, from hockey. I'm curious if they had a consult in terms of when the sport was being determined for the province. If they haven't been consulted with, are there plans to consult with them? I feel like when we're talking about an official sport for the province, we have to include some of those major players.

Part of my childhood was rodeo, absolutely, but I also spent a lot of time in arenas all across the province both as a figure skater myself and supporting my brother's hockey. We played in barns all over Alberta. It was part of our life, and I know that it's a part of many Albertans' lives, as is soccer. I know that soccer is huge in the province. We have so many that play, and to not have those sorts of organizations at the table is a bit concerning.

I've heard that some are feeling left out. They're not feeling like they've been included in the conversation about selecting a sport for the province, and I would like to hear from the hon. member that brought this forward what that consultation looked like, whose voices were at the table, and how it was determined that rodeo was selected. I think that Alberta is a very, very diverse province, and I think we have so much going for us when it comes to sport. I would hope that the hon. member took opportunity to speak to the many, many levels of sports that are represented all across the province.

When it comes to reporting activities in the province, as the Culture critic it's something that I look at, it's something that I see as being very important when we talk about targets and looking at ways to include activities, physical activity, to Albertans. I know it's broken up into two categories: we look at adults, and we look at children. When we look at participation, from a government report from 2018-2019, it states that the adults who participated in organized sport activities: 22.7 per cent played hockey, 16.3 per cent played soccer, 11.5 per cent played golf, 10.7 per cent played basketball, and 10.2 per cent were involved in curling. Now, the report did not identify rodeo as a common sport of interest and/or participation.

4:20

I'm hopeful, Madam Speaker, that government consulted with those adult activities that were reported in the report as they were the most identified participation from Alberta adults. I would hope that there was a robust conversation with those organizations.

When it comes to adults and children that participated in organization or sport activity, 33.3 per cent of children played soccer, 25.4 per cent played hockey, 19.9 per cent swam, 19.2 per cent played basketball, and 17.5 per cent played baseball.

Again, there's no mention of rodeo in the government report, so I just question: when it came to determining the designation of Alberta's official sport, who was at the table to have these conversations, and how was it determined? Was it determined on activity? Was it determined on access? Was it determined on longest sport in the province? I'm just not clear how it came to be named as the official sport. I know that a decision like this requires

a great deal of consultation. I know that when we are standing up for what we believe the official sport should be, it's important to have rodeo at the table, but it's also important to have other organized sports at the table.

Just listening to the conversations that are happening within the sports community, that doesn't seem to be the case, Madam Speaker. There are many that have felt ignored by this government. They've felt a lack of support from this government, and they haven't been at the table for decisions about what their needs are, what supports they would like to see. I certainly haven't heard from them that they were at the table to be consulted with when considering the designation of Alberta's official sport. That concerns me because we have a government that has been making decisions without robust conversation. It's troublesome when I'm hearing from community that their sport wasn't consulted with. So I'm curious how it came to be that rodeo and chuckwagon was selected as the official sport.

Now, when it comes to the way that this government has been introducing legislation, the other piece is: why wasn't this included in the Alberta emblems act? We've seen this government take pieces of legislation and put through certain pieces and have opportunities to really combine the intention of legislation, and I would argue that the official sport could have been included in the Alberta emblem act. This was an act that was introduced in 2020, and I think that it would have been well fit under that piece of legislation.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

We watched this government introduce a piece of legislation to support Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee, which we were one hundred per cent in support of. Yet they combined it with the same legislation that would allow all members who had . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has risen.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'll rise to speak to private member's Bill 205, Official Sport of Alberta Act. Rodeo is an institution in Alberta. It's ubiquitous. It's spontaneous. It's history. It's culture. It's our Alberta identity. We celebrate our unique western heritage and culture by holding rodeos and chuckwagon races, where athletes can compete in their unique, exciting sport for the refinement of their skills and for the entertainment of spectators. Rodeo is intrinsic to the Alberta identity because of our history as an agricultural region, a ranching region of North America where wide open prairies welcomed farmers and ranchers who could settle the land, develop it into one of the most productive places on Earth. As hockey became Canada's national sport in large part thanks to the prevalence of ice in our country, so too did rodeo in Alberta because of the widespread agricultural and ranching economy that defines us to this very day.

Mr. Speaker, to make rodeo our provincial official sport will enshrine what we already know to be true. Our province hosts rodeos north to south, east to west. We draw competitors from across the continent to participate in those rodeos, including the world's largest outdoor show, the Calgary Stampede. Additionally, the Ponoka Stampede in my constituency is Canada's largest rodeo on the professional circuit, ranking in the top five for payouts to competitors in North America.

Beginning in 1971, high school students participate in official high school rodeos in May and June, and winners can then move on to the



National High School Rodeo Association level of competitions in July and August.

But it's not just the large official rodeos that define this wonderful sport and our province. The real essence and significance of rodeo is anchored in the small communities across our province. Smaller community organizations and municipalities are responsible for hosting hundreds of rodeos every summer. Children, seniors, and their families attend these events in community life. It's a rite of passage for rural children as they ride calves or chase greased pigs, meet friends, and teenage romances bloom at these events. That happens a lot. As spectators, volunteers, and participants, families from across Alberta enjoy the volunteer, smaller rodeos hosted in their communities, the large ones drawing competitors from as far away as Australia, but it's the small ones where the life really happens. Rodeo is a central community event in rural Alberta, a family event for all ages and all backgrounds.

The growing and historical diversity of this sport is testament to Alberta's welcoming and open-hearted disposition. One of the founding fathers of not just Alberta's rodeo but the ranching industry in general was John Ware, an African American who immigrated to Alberta more than a century ago. But more recently I find it fascinating that, in fact, the very idea of recommending rodeo as Alberta's official sport came from the Calgary-North member in the last couple of years, who first raised this issue, an individual from Pakistan who came to western Canada. His first job was out in Rocky Mountain House, and as he travelled around on weekends throughout Alberta, he just was taken with rodeo, and everywhere he went was able to participate. So actually this very idea came from a recent immigrant, a Pakistani Canadian, who saw what the rest of us just all take for granted. So congratulations to him and thanks to him, the Member for Calgary-North, for bringing this forward.

Young women will train for years with their horses, their friends, and their companions to prepare for rodeo. In the small rural rodeos women are equal participants alongside men, as is also true with agricultural farm businesses. My own granddaughter competed along with her friends in the Mirror rodeo last summer in nothing less than a real, flat-out horse race. She learns responsibility in caring for her horse 365 a year. She learns animal anatomy, she learns medical science, dietary needs, all these different things.

Mr. Speaker, this bill: on one hand it will show how our government embraces the culture and heritage of our great province, but on the other hand it also supports economic prosperity that rodeo brings to Alberta. Events like the Calgary and the Ponoka stampedes and other rodeos that have been mentioned, that occur across our province in towns large and small, bring immense economic benefits to the areas where they are hosted. Businesses in these areas benefit from increased activity and the people that rodeos draw.

No rodeo is complete without adjacent amenities like food and games for children and adults alike as well as performing opportunities for Alberta musicians at many of them. These events give an opportunity for businesses that provide these services to prosper. I should also mention that a great draw of Alberta's tourist economy is to come and to be able to see western culture and western events, so this is a part of Alberta's tourism industry as well, not to mention the fact that there are immense benefits that rodeo brings to the agricultural industry, specifically in livestock, feed, equipment suppliers, western ware retailers, saddlemakers, farriers, and the list could go on.

4:30

Horses bred to race chuckwagons, bulls for bull riding, horse training and trainers for all manner of events from roping to barrel

racine to all kinds of different things: the livestock industry in relation to rodeo is literally a world of its own, and until you've become part of it and begin to see it, you don't realize how great and important it is. It's a world that bolsters the grand Alberta heritage we should all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, the social, the community, the economic benefits are absolutely crucial, but another aspect of rodeo is the display of competitive, frontier spirit, that built our province into one of the greatest places to live in the world. Exemplified at every rodeo is courage, physical prowess, precise animal handling, and an understanding of the relation between human beings and the animals that have been by our side for millennia. Rodeo shows us the camaraderie and the symbiotic relationship animals and humans share.

You know, I have to say that horses are extremely intelligent beings, and throughout our history horses have saved the lives of many, many people who got lost in a snowstorm, lost in the vastness of the country, and if they just give the animal its head, it will almost always just go home. They're smarter than we are sometimes.

As western Canadians rodeo represents a central aspect of our heritage and cultural identity. As human beings rodeo exemplifies the power, the beauty, the devotion of the animals we have been blessed to call our companions since the dawn of time. As Albertans we are privileged with the presence of these wonderful creatures. Some work with us, others provide us with devoted companionship, and others actually teach us a lot about life and how to live.

It's an honour and a blessing for our province to be the central hub of rodeo, a competition that portrays the unbreakable bond between us and the animals that have walked by our side for countless centuries. The community benefits of rodeo bring us closer together and strengthen the bonds between families and the culture they have inherited from their forefathers.

Economically rodeo bolsters our businesses that focus on festivity and has created an entire economy based around the animals that compete alongside the cowboys and the cowgirls in the many events we see every year in every corner of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this bill. To the many Albertans who live and breathe rodeo: this bill is for you. We love and support rodeo for many reasons, and making it the official sport of our province is long overdue and only natural. Spring is coming soon, and with it we will get to enjoy the wonderful animals and amazing competitors who travel to this province from across the world to participate in what can only be described as the legendary rodeo industry. Personally, I can't wait.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 205, Official Sport of Alberta Act. I appreciate all the comments that all members of the House have been speaking to in regard to rodeo, and I believe that, you know, having rodeo acknowledged in Alberta is an important step in helping to build and even expand the rodeo networks that we have here in Alberta. I know that COVID was extremely hard on many of the smaller rodeos that were happening across the province, so that actually impacted the number of people that were able to go and see and be able to experience the sport.

In talking to some of my stakeholders, because I am, obviously, the ag critic, one of the things that has come up in regard to this piece of legislation is actually just: how do we encourage and expand access to rodeo so that more people are participating in the

sport, so that more people have access to being an athlete in this area? What are some of the things that we could do?

I heard the hon. member in her opening comments around the bill, the Member for Camrose, speaking about the importance of the ag societies and how many of the ag societies are actually the ones that host many of these events and are the ones that understand the community and are able to be that liaison between introducing people that have never been introduced to rodeo as well as supporting those communities in having their own rodeos. I will say that I was pleased to see in this budget that there is infrastructure spending going towards ag societies to be able to upgrade and build on some of the infrastructure that exists, so that rodeos are able to build bigger grandstands and things like that are able to happen, and I think that's very important to see as a sign from this government that they are committed to supporting the sport.

Now, the downfall of that, Mr. Speaker, is that in the budget there was no money put in for ag societies to actually deliver any of these supports. The infrastructure will be there, but being able to fund and being able to deliver the services that ag societies do deliver in their local communities actually was not increased as requested. I find it a little bit disappointing, because I look at this piece of legislation and I look at what the government is saying in regard to wanting to support rodeo. Well, the smaller ag societies that put on these rodeos don't receive a lot of financial support from the government. The big 10 do – the big 10 ag societies do – but it's those smaller, local communities where we really want to be able to see the sport be supported and expanded. I've been to the Ponoka rodeo. It's a great event. It's very established, and it would be great to see some other communities around Alberta, that may not be as big, that may not be as established, be able to do that.

So I would hope that the government would reconsider in their budget making sure that ag societies actually have the assistance that they need to be able to provide those supports, because the infrastructure is not enough. They need the additional financial assistance to be able to put the event on. That would be one feedback that I would encourage the government to look back at and take back to their colleagues so that this can be a successful event across the province.

The other piece – I really agree, actually, with the hon. member that just spoke before me – was about the financial and the economic drive that many of these rodeos have for communities. I believe that being able to have these events go on brings people into smaller towns and communities and is able to help stimulate the economy in those areas. I'm a big believer in that, and I think that it's important that that continues to happen and that we're able to support those events and talk to the communities about what other opportunities there might be to be cohosting around those rodeos to bring in even more attraction and opportunity for that rural economic development.

I do believe that it's a good tool to start with. You have a rodeo, but then you look at: what else can we bring? Can we be supporting a local powwow, or could there be an opportunity to have a bigger, expanded farmers' market to support our local food and our producers in those neighbourhoods, in those areas? What other opportunities can we be doing to create – similar to what we see in some of the bigger and established rodeos, where they have the week-long events, are we able to support some other communities that are doing that, and what do they need to be able to make that happen? How do we expand the network, and how do we repeat or emulate the things that go on at the Ponoka Stampede? Obviously, we can't compete with Calgary's, but there are opportunities to be able to look at supporting other areas to be able to do the same thing.

Those would be some other things, I think, as consultation continues to go on. I don't think that, you know, introducing this

bill and just saying, "Well, this is our provincial sport," if this bill were to pass, is sufficient. I think that if the government is serious about introducing a piece of legislation that makes rodeo the official sport, then we need to make sure that we are introducing and supporting that sport. It has to be able to be expanding the sport, making sure infrastructure is there, providing education to people that may not have been exposed to rodeo before so that they want to attend and that they understand the history of rodeo, that they learn about the fact that the whole reason rodeo started was so that we could see the expertise that was used when handling animals and things like that, so that people who are from the city understand what is going on and that then they want to attend.

4:40

Looking at our 4-H clubs and being able to ensure that they are also supported through many of these ag societies, that they are receiving the support they need to support our younger people in still being involved in rodeo, and being able to get the experience and the access to even have an animal I think is very important. So there are many things that are connected to Bill 205 that can't just be simply: the official sport is rodeo. As my other colleagues have mentioned, there are other sports in the province, and their ability to, I guess, promote their sport is more accessible. I think there has to be a move by the government to figure out how they're going to promote rodeo.

Like, the Calgary Stampede is amazing. I spent 10 days there last summer talking to investors, talking to the athletes, talking to the veterinarians that work there about how well they take care of our animals and about all of the good things that come out of that. But what needs to happen is that we need to be able to make sure that it's not just the Calgary Stampede, that it's all the smaller communities that are doing this. It's making sure it's no different than the movement that's happening right now around the agrifood industry and agritourism. Rodeo could be built into that conversation around the agritourism, but it needs to be supported by the government to be able to do that.

Again, I would encourage the government, if this bill were to pass, to make sure that they come up with a plan and that they are supporting the sport, as we say, because the last thing we want to do is have our official sport not grow and expand and be the economic driver in these communities that it can be and ensure that people understand the sport and that all of those things happen. So there is a responsibility on the government to make sure that that happens, and I'd be very interested to hear from the members opposite about what conversations have happened within the government, what plans they have to support the economic driver, how they're going to promote the industry and make sure that people feel that they can access it, and then wrap around that economic potential that rodeo provides and grow it in working in partnership with our local communities around the farmers' markets and things like that.

Again, I think this is a good bill. It's just that I have a lot of questions about how it's going to be supported if it were to pass. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members? I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has risen.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by congratulating the member for being chosen for this bill, Bill 205, and having an opportunity to put it forward. I'd just remind the folks opposite that it is a private member's bill, and it's open to that member to choose what topic they would like to see put forward.

I'd like to thank the folks up in the gallery. I haven't seen this many cowboy hats in here since the Bill 6 debates back in the NDP days. It's great to see you guys here in the crowd.

I'd just like to take a minute to talk about my area, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, a big rodeo area. St. Paul on the long weekend in September: a shout-out to anybody that wants to come up and enjoy the Lakeland finals rodeo. It's a week-long event. There are pancake breakfasts. The community just gets onboard. Community businesses are all decorated in rodeo regalia. Like I say, there are pancake breakfasts. There's a beer garden on Saturday night that's – well, it's a bit of a riot; let's put it like that. One of the biggest parades that I attend as a rural MLA – and I probably hit eight or nine, sometimes 10 parades a year. At the one in St. Paul literally thousands and thousands of people line up there, and the rodeo folks get involved in it as well. It's a big thing. It's huge for our area.

The Bonnyville Ag Society as well: they have the rodeo and chuckwagon association that performs up there, and they put on a really good show as well.

Cold Lake and St. Paul both have bullaramas. Actually, you know, getting chosen for a private member's bill is kind of like pulling the right bull at the rodeo. I've been an MLA for eight years, and I've never made it to the top 10. It's really good. Again, congratulations on that.

Stony Lake Rodeo as well: these are really big things that have been in our communities for a very, very long time. I remember going as a kid. One of my fondest memories was going with my Uncle Ray to a rodeo in Spedden. I'll never forget it. They had a fellow there demonstrating. He had a bunch of sheep, and he came out there with two or three sheepdogs with little monkeys saddled and, obviously, tied on, because, boy, they could hang onto those sheepdogs when they were herding those sheep. It was the most entertaining thing I think I've ever seen. It should have been on film.

Ricky-Ticky Wanchuk, a rodeo clown from out in the St. Paul area: everybody knows him, and he's a highlight. He comes out to the rodeo there at least every year that I've been there, puts on a show. He's got his kids involved and family involved in it.

This is a big thing. Like I say, you know, for anybody in Alberta that doesn't think rodeo is a big sport and is something that should be recognized – and like I say, yes, hockey is big in my area, too. So is soccer, baseball. They're all huge. But this is a private member's bill, and I congratulate this private member, and I'll be supporting Bill 205.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Others wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 205? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 205. You probably don't want me to do it, and it might get me in trouble for unparliamentary language, but I was tempted to break out into *The Rodeo Song* here today, but I won't do that because I'm sure that you would be chastising me for some of the language in that particularly famous piece of musical work.

But what I did want to talk about a little bit was *Cowboy Ethics*. It's a book by James P. Owen, which is a great read, if anybody hasn't read it. It's a book, really, about principles and some issues that I'll address here. In fact, I know that this book is used by corporate Calgary in many cases to talk about how to conduct business in a way that, I think, you'll see reflected in what is known as the code of the west, that's embedded in that book and in many other things. There may be some lessons in there for us in this

House as well: how we conduct ourselves. The code of the west says: live each day with courage; take pride in your work; always finish what you start; do what has to be done; be tough but fair; when you make a promise, keep it; ride for the brand; talk less and say more; remember that some things aren't for sale; know where to draw the line.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we'll all reflect on that. These are principles of life that come from the cowboy and the western heritage that we're so proud to have in this province. As a proud born-and-raised Albertan myself I embrace, respect, and celebrate our western heritage and the cowboy culture. Full disclosure: I'm an urban cowboy but one who has been blessed to grow up, spend my whole life in Alberta and spend much time on many ranches in the Calgary region for brandings, horseback riding adventures, and – more full disclosure – shooting the odd gopher in some of the vast prairies and beautiful foothills of our province. I'm proud to have the much-storied Bow Valley Ranche, of William Roper Hull and Pat Burns fame, right in the heart of my constituency, in Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to wear our much-coveted and iconic Calgary symbol, the white Smithbilt hat. I've been proud to wear it around the world, in fact, and delighted recipients from Hong Kong to Washington, DC, quite recently, from Sydney, Australia, to Halifax, and from Bali to Boise with a gift of the same. Now, I use a little bit of a mythical hook. I say, "Once you put that hat on, it is a must – in fact, good luck – and an expectation that you are then committed to come to the Calgary Stampede," so I guess I'm doing a little bit of tourism boosting while I'm at it. However, I do guarantee them that if they come, they'll have a great time and enjoy this incredible spirit that we have of our western culture, western heritage, and, of course, the greatest outdoor show on Earth.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge those who suggest that we should get rid of it. I think there was an article in the paper recently talking about the hat, the white hat, as a symbol. But I defy anyone the power of being proud owners of such an iconic, global brand that is highly recognized around the world, coveted by leaders and dignitaries around the world who wear it and look pretty darn good in it as well.

**Mr. Hanson:** As long as you don't put it on backwards.

**Mr. Gotfried:** As long as you don't put it on backwards. Good point.

But it speaks volumes about who we are, where we came from, how we live, and the western, pioneering, agripreneurial spirit that we should all be proud of, not trying to distance ourselves from. These are things that we should be proud of. In fact, I talk about agripreneurial. We talk about being entrepreneurial in Alberta, but – let's be honest – it came from the agricultural sector, because when you couldn't fix something, you found the guy down the road who could, and next thing you know, he had a new business because he could fix your tractor and you could fix something else for him. That was the spirit of entrepreneurial. There was nowhere else to go than down the road to the neighbour who had that skill or developed that skill. That spirit is actually taken on into Alberta and into the culture that we have as entrepreneurs.

4:50

A little reminder for everyone. Everybody talks these days about certain brands and branding, talks about all that as if it's some highfalutin Wall Street kind of thing, but I would suggest that the makings of a global and societal obsession with the power of brand have maybe forgotten that it all started with a hot branding iron and

the smell of burning cowhide. Brand: that's what we have here in Alberta, and we should be darn proud of it.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to take representatives of our world-renowned rodeo and exhibition the Calgary Stampede along with Premiers, mayors, and economic development representatives from across our province to Hong Kong for the Chinese New Year parade in 2000-2001, and I can tell you that we had a heck of a time there: western heritage, spirit, hospitality; Alberta beef on a bun for 38 people one year; stampede breakfast for 10,000 people the next year. I can tell you that the representatives of our Calgary Stampede, our western heritage, and our First Nations were there in celebration of that time-honoured culture and our western culture and spirit as well. I can tell you that it was a pretty neat experience walking down Nathan Road, called the Golden Mile, in Hong Kong with my cowboy boots on and with some of our First Nations friends in full regalia walking down the street. I felt like I was in some kind of a weird movie. Maybe it was just after *Shanghai Noon* came out, I think. We had some fun with that.

A reminder again to consider the highly exotic and huge draw for visitors from around the world as witnessed by our demand for farm, ranch, and Indigenous tourism-related experiences. What we think of as everyday life here across the prairies is highly exotic to people from Europe and Asia, and we should not forget that we are exotic in our own right.

Further, and for the record, I'm personally a big fan of Calgary's old brand, the Heart of the New West, because I think that we are the heart of the new west, not just the geographical heart but the emotional heart, which I think speaks volumes about who we are in western Canada, here in Alberta, and with the roots that we are so proud to have. Now, that decision – that's my personal opinion – is up to city council and the citizens of Calgary, but I'm a Heart of the New West guy all day long.

Mr. Speaker, you may have guessed by now that I'm a fervent and proud supporter of Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. As a lifelong fan of the rodeo, from its anchor position at the greatest outdoor show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, of course, to the rodeos across Alberta, referenced by some of my esteemed colleagues here, from Ponoka to Pincher Creek, Strathmore to Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie to Teepee Creek, all across this province, I'm also proud to share my own personal favourite event. I was talking to some of the members in the lounge earlier. I've been attending the chuckwagon races since I was knee high and kind of sneaking back there as I got older, and I still love going to the chuckwagons. You know what? I guess, you know, in the rangeland derby, as we – those of us that are fond of that. That's turned into a huge event. Of course, the chuckwagon auctions are coming up, I think, on April 15 or something like that. That's always a spectacle, in fact, the barometer of Calgary's economy in many ways.

Bull riding is a close second. I love all the sports, so thanks to our visitors today for representing that great sport.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for Camrose and also the Member for Calgary-North for bringing this forward in the past. I strongly encourage all members of this Assembly to support this private member's bill, to remember where our roots are in this great province, and to put on our hats and our boots and our blue jeans and head off to the rodeo.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to Bill 205? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to say a few words around Bill 205, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. I just want to thank all of the presenters here today around this bill.

Certainly, it brings back lots of fond memories for many of us, myself included, growing up here in Alberta and participating as a spectator in many rodeos and gymkhanas over the years. You know, that's just part of a culture to look forward to in the summer, especially when you're young. I certainly did do lots of that and still do today here, mostly with the Calgary Stampede, I guess, but that's the biggest one of all, as far as the people of Calgary say. I think it's true. Probably I would say that the world rodeo competitions in Las Vegas are certainly, you know, one of the big ones as well. I know about all of these things.

I had a close relative that worked for the Calgary Stampede for quite a few years. He certainly kept us abreast of what was going on in rodeo not just in Alberta but right around the world as well, and certainly when we were younger, he kept getting us the odd ticket to go to the stampede, which was nice, and we always appreciated being able to do that as a family.

Also, of course, I mean, there's not just straight-up rodeos, Mr. Speaker, here in the province of Alberta, but you also have some individual rodeo events that take place as part of the agriculture shows that take place around the province. Perhaps the best known one is, of course, the pony chuckwagon races that will tour not just rodeos across the province here in Alberta but agriculture shows as well. Certainly, that was another highlight for my own family, going to the Vermilion Fair every year and watching the pony chuckwagon races and cheering on our favourite teams.

You know, I picked up a habit there, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't know – you can always plead innocence somehow – that apparently it's against the law to gamble on pony chuckwagon races. But, sure enough, that's kind of how we made the afternoon a little more exciting and did make some small wagers on the pony chuckwagons. I did take that same habit to the Calgary Stampede when I've been going back there as an adult and was surprised to see that people are not gambling for money in the grandstand of the Calgary Stampede quite as much as we did along the rail at the Vermilion Fair for the pony chuckwagons, but so it goes.

You know, I think it's important for us to always look at ways by which we can support the proclamations of something like an official sport – right? – which is one thing, but as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning mentioned, it's important to support these things in a broader context. I mean, like I said before, you have individual rodeo events at agriculture shows across the province, and we need to make sure that we are supporting those agricultural societies properly so that they can continue to host the various fairs that take place across the province and have a circuit by which not just rodeo events can follow but other bits of commerce as well like midways and people selling things at fairs and so forth.

You know, I've noticed in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, that some of the pieces that make up a circuit are starting to be in jeopardy, right? And it's important that if you're missing one piece – for example, you're going from the Vegreville fair to the Vermilion Fair and something is missing in between or what have you – then you put all of the string of those events in jeopardy because you're missing one or two pieces along the way. I think it's incumbent upon us, if we are supporting an official sport like this in rodeo, that we're also putting something behind it, which is, of course, to ensure that these events have a venue and that those events are sponsored and supported and that you have a circuit that can function together as a whole, not just singularly, with rodeos and agriculture fairs in general.

Yeah. I mean, we have had a number of tries at an official sport for rodeo here in the province, in this Legislature, and, you know, I'm glad that the hon. Member for Camrose has brought this back to our attention. I definitely am supportive of this concept. I mean, we can do lots of ways by which to have different elements of a unique culture and sport sponsored and endorsed and promoted here in the province of Alberta, and it's sometimes good to reach back and see – something like rodeo has a combination of a cultural significance with rural roots but with lots of urban connections as well.

Of course, we had the rodeo here in Edmonton for quite a number of years. I was sad to see that, you know, it did get lost, but lo and behold it has popped back up in Red Deer now, so it lives well and will live on well for now and for the future. We still have the Farmfair here in Edmonton. Again, you know, it's good to remind ourselves what the agricultural roots are of some of these larger urban celebrations that we have in Edmonton and Calgary. I'm always pleased to note that the Calgary Stampede, which is at the heart a rodeo, is also an agricultural fair, and they've managed to maintain the agricultural element . . .

5:00

**The Acting Speaker:** I hate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, but the time for consideration of this item has been concluded.

If the members could just indulge me, we've had a request to return to introductions, so I'm going to look for unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek with introductions.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some special guests today in the Chamber from Edmonton's and Alberta's Jewish community. I would like to read all the names, and after that if I could ask you to rise, that would be wonderful. We have representing broadly the Jewish Federation of Edmonton: Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Jacqueline Medalye, Doug Wolch, David Aaron, Abe Silverman, Benaron Gliberman, Liran Levin, Gillian Horwitz, Adam Zepp, Josie Coutain-Segall, Orkhan Shirinov, and Daniella Asbell. If I could ask you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

Thank you.

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Condemning Anti-Semitism

504. Mr. Gotfried moved on behalf of Mr. Yao:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly condemn anti-Semitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, with the Lieutenant Governor in Council adopting that definition on September 23, 2022, through its making of Order in Council 317/2022, to mean a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews along with rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property or toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities; and be

it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide clear direction that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary's definition of anti-Semitism, along with its illustrative examples, be adopted by all ministries, publicly funded school boards and postsecondary institutions, public agencies, boards, and commissions, and other publicly funded, legislated, or regulated entities under the authority of the province so that these entities may better recognize and act against any instances of anti-Semitism as defined; and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the minister responsible

- (a) to prepare a report on an annual basis following each calendar year that sets out the level and extent of anti-Semitic acts that have been publicly reported to have occurred in the province during that year, and
- (b) to table in the Legislative Assembly, at that minister's first opportunity, the report referred to in paragraph (a).

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to move on behalf of and with gratitude for the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, as an Albertan raised as an Irish Presbyterian but of proud Jewish heritage, I am perhaps well placed to be a champion for this motion. Indeed, in Nazi Germany, where the most heinous example of anti-Semitism reared its ugly head, resulting in the hateful murder of over 6 million men, women, and children, both I and my children would have been Jewish enough for a deadly one-way trip to the gas chambers, which was indeed the tragic fate of all my known relatives in German-occupied Poland. A cryptic knock or an SS boot on the door tore families apart and cruelly ended entire bloodlines forever, a reminder that fully 75 per cent of Holocaust survivors were the only members of their families that survived. Never again.

This reminds us that it is the responsibility of us all to combat a concerning surge into anti-Semitism and indeed other forms of racism. Hence, we must begin by clearly defining it. Because anti-Semitism knows no borders, it is important that Canadian institutions at all levels embrace the same definition to facilitate collective efforts to combat it. Significantly, over the past year Canadian governments and institutions continue to embrace the most authoritative, comprehensive, and representative definition of anti-Semitism that exists today, the IHRA, or International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, working definition of anti-Semitism, specifically to enhance education and awareness about the Holocaust. Mr. Speaker, to ensure the heinous crimes against humanity, perpetrated now almost 80 years ago by the hateful actions of cold-blooded murderers and, sadly, by the inaction of silence of so many who remained silently complicit, will never be forgotten now and by future generations for eternity because of the adherence to this definition.

Mr. Speaker, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba all officially adopted the definition in 2022 while the government of British Columbia has expressed support for the use of the definition in B.C. These governments join Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick as well as the government of Canada, which all previously adopted the definition.

Today is our opportunity to add the voice and democratic will of this Chamber and the people we represent to this all-important initiative and to be sure we empower, enable, and encourage our government to ensure that the adoption of the IHRA definition carries the weight it deserves across our province, with particular

focus across all government departments and publicly funded legislated or regulated entities, as noted.

Mr. Speaker, 2021 saw a large spike in anti-Semitic incidents across Canada. The Statistics Canada 2021 report on police-reported crimes noted there were 884 hate crimes targeting religious minorities in the country, a jump of a shocking 67 per cent over 2020. Of that number, 487, or 56 per cent, of all police-reported hate crimes were aimed at Jews, who comprised slightly more than 1 per cent of the Canadian population. Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Canada, and new tools are needed to aid decision-makers, civil servants, and law enforcement officials to allow them to better recognize and react to acts of anti-Semitism. In fact, B'nai Brith Canada recorded 2,799 incidents nationally in 2021, the highest number since they began auditing anti-Semitic activity in 1982. Unfortunately, Alberta contributed significantly to the increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2021 with the number of recorded incidents in the province rising from 95 in 2020 to 148 in 2021, a 55.8 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, this is deeply concerning.

I'm grateful for the early outreach and initiatives of Michael Mostyn, chief executive officer of B'nai Brith Canada; Marvin Rotrand, national director, League for Human Rights, B'nai Brith Canada; and, locally here, Abe Silverman, manager of public affairs for B'nai Brith in Alberta; and the support received from Adam Silver, chief executive officer of Calgary Jewish Community Campus Corporation and co-president of the Calgary Jewish Federation; Jared Shore, president of the Calgary Jewish Federation; of course, our own Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton; Steven Shafir, director and past president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton; and Rabbi Menachem Matusof of Chabad Lubavitch of Alberta.

And, of course, a list of supportive individuals and organizations too long to mention, but I will: Alberta Jewish program Edmonton; Alberta Jewish Pipeline; Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association; Beth Israel synagogue; B'nai Brith Canada, Edmonton chapter; B'nai Brith Youth Organization; Camp BB Riback; Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University; Edmonton chapter, Canadian friends of Hadassah-WIZO; Chabad of Edmonton; congregation of Beth Shalom; Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation; Jewish Free Loan Association Edmonton; Edmonton Jewish Baseball League; Edmonton Jewish Hockey League; Edmonton Jewish seniors' centre; Edmonton Talmud Torah Society; Emunah women of Edmonton; Hillel of University of Alberta; Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta; community centre of Edmonton Jewish Family Services; Jewish Federation of Edmonton; Jewish National Fund, Edmonton chapter; Maccabi Edmonton; National Council of Jewish Women; ORT Edmonton, and I'm sure there are more.

On September 23, 2022, Order in Council 317/22, with thanks to then Premier Kenney and our Minister of Justice, the current Member for Calgary-Acadia, we enforced that Alberta is committed to defending human dignity and opposing racial, religious, and ethnic hatred in all its forms and recognized anti-Semitism as the most durable and pernicious form of hatred in human history. Therefore, the government of Alberta then endorsed and adopted the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism and noted that remembering the Holocaust is a moral obligation and that anti-Semitism, like all forms of racism and prejudice, has no place in Alberta.

In endorsing this internationally recognized definition, Alberta is doing its part to make sure we continue to learn from the painful history and promise never to repeat it. Our Minister of Justice reminded us at that time that Alberta's government is endorsing this definition of anti-Semitism to let the Jewish community know that

we stand with them against discrimination and will not tolerate hate in our communities. Further, the minister invited all Albertans to speak out against this hatred and help foster a more accepting province.

5:10

Rabbi Menachem Matusof reminded us that naming the hate we experience and standing together against it will make Alberta an even better, more welcoming place to live and worship.

Mr. Speaker, Adam Silver, the CEO of the Calgary Jewish Federation, noted that "with antisemitic hate crimes on the rise across the country, fighting antisemitism [should be] a priority – not just for the Jewish community, but for all Albertans and for all Canadians." We must be able to clearly define anti-Semitism and Jew hate in order to fight it, and the IHRA definition underpinned by its examples is a highly effective and well-respected tool that equips policy-makers, organizations, and those working to combat discrimination and racism against Jews with a usable, gold standard definition to guide their efforts.

Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, states that Alberta's order in council sends "a strong message that antisemitism has no place in society."

Hon. members, today is the day that we add each and every one of your voices and the 4.3 million voices of those we represent with encouragement for broad application across government and the public sector through your support of this motion to add to the weight of the strength of the IHRA definition.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members, I would like to conclude my opening remarks on behalf of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo by thanking him for his commitment to the importance of this motion, by thanking all of the many members of Alberta's Jewish community and B'nai Brith Canada that both supported this motion and encouraged our efforts and patience to bring it forward for debate and hopeful passage, and by thanking all members of this Chamber in advance for their earnest and heartfelt support in our shared, nonpartisan fight against anti-Semitism, hatred, harassment, discrimination, and gratuitous violence in all its forms on behalf of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak to Motion 504? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anti-Semitism has no place in Alberta. In 2018 there was a string of swastikas painted across my riding in Edmonton-McClung, including one spray-painted at the Talmud Torah school. The swastikas spray-painted across west Edmonton inflicted fear and insecurity throughout the Jewish community. I heard from community members that they feared for their safety within their community and their children's safety at Talmud Torah school. Just a few days later I joined over a hundred community members with various religious beliefs who stood in opposition to this abhorrent, hateful act. This rally showed everyone in Alberta that we do not stand for the anti-Semitic hate held by a small number of people.

Unfortunately, acts of hate are only increasing and have become more brazen. The latest data shows a 47 per cent increase in police-reported hate crimes against Jewish people. This includes an incident of two Nazi flags flying on private property just outside of Boyle. We must do better to tackle anti-Semitism and hate, including calling out hateful rhetoric and radical conspiracies perpetuating hateful stereotypes of the Jewish people and making them targets of violent attacks.

Those who fly a Nazi flag or spray-paint a swastika at an elementary school do not choose to do this overnight, but it is from

being indoctrinated slowly through radical ideology. This hateful path may start by engaging with a Facebook post that contains dangerous rhetoric or a YouTube video shared by a friend. As people slowly consume more content focused on radical, anti-Semitic ideology, it empowers some to act out violently.

The non legally binding International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism is a good tool to help identify many forms of anti-Semitism. However, we need to use it appropriately. We should not impede or condemn comments against the actions of the state of Israel or an individual's belief in a two-state solution. I believe in a two-state solution, and the Alberta NDP supports a two-state solution.

We also need to make sure that if this definition is adopted across all ministries and publicly funded bodies, there is a prior consultation to ensure a broad understanding of what is and what isn't anti-Semitism. The IHRA definition is a non legally binding tool, and we must consult to make sure the tool is effective.

That is why we asked for unanimous consent for the ability to amend this motion. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that consent was not granted by the Assembly. Had it been granted, the amendment would have ensured that prior to implementing this non legally binding tool across public bodies, this Assembly's recommendation would call for a comprehensive process of open discussion and consultation. This consultation would have provided opportunity for the public at large to feel confident that the IHRA definition was being properly implemented. While the motion will continue without that recommendation, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government takes heed of the need to consult prior to a broad implementation, as urged in this motion.

We all agree that no longer anyone, anywhere wants to see Nazi flags and swastikas, and we need to work with the Jewish community so they feel safe in every corner of the province. As we affirm Alberta's support for the IHRA definition, we need to make sure it doesn't silence legitimate concerned voices while tackling hate speech, nor should it silence those who criticize a foreign government as they would criticize any other. We must allow people to speak out, but we cannot support those who turn that criticism into hate speech that can lead to violence. This will be a tough balance to maintain, but, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe Albertans can make it work.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly humbled today to stand and speak in support of my colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's private member's Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. I'm also grateful for the efforts of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in bringing this forward to the Chamber, and I'm grateful for Premier Kenney, whose inspiration brought this forward last fall as Order in Council 317/2022. I am proud to stand with the Jewish people across our province and with my friends and neighbours in Calgary-Glenmore against Jew hate.

The adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism: Alberta joined three other provinces – Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick – that have also done this. Just as a reminder for the Chamber, the working definition of anti-Semitism is: a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews; rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

But I also want to look at the word “anti-Semitism” and how many or most people understand it. The word “anti” – it's pretty obvious – means against. “Semitic” means relating to a family of languages that includes Hebrew and Aramaic and certain ancient languages such as Phoenician. Mr. Speaker, we can understand that when we speak of anti-Semitism, we are speaking about so much more than just language. That is one of the reasons why this working definition is so important. This definition speaks to a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews.

Now, when one goes to the website of the IHRA, the first thing at the top of the page is the name of the organization, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. What is this organization? IHRA, formerly the task force for international co-operation on Holocaust education, remembrance, and research, or ITF, was initiated in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Today the IHRA membership consists of 35 member countries, each of whom recognizes that international political co-ordination is imperative to strengthen the moral commitment of societies and to combat growing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

The IHRA's network of trusted experts shares their knowledge on early warning signs of present-day genocide and education on the Holocaust. This knowledge supports policy-makers and educational multipliers in their efforts to develop curricula and inform government officials and NGOs active in global initiatives for genocide prevention. So we see, Mr. Speaker, from the name of this organization that worked so hard to create this definition and its adoption across so many governments that it's very much rooted in the horror of the Holocaust, or the Shoah, and also the phrase: never again. You see, this definition is really about identifying anti-Semitism in an effort to assist individuals, citizens, and others in recognizing hateful behaviour and acts today that were the drivers for the Shoah 78 years ago and that act as warning signs for present-day genocide.

5:20

One might wonder, Mr. Speaker: why in today's day and age is this so important? Have we learned nothing? Well, I'm sad to tell this Chamber that in 2019 a survey conducted by the Azrieli Foundation reported that 1 in 5 youth in Canada had not heard of the Holocaust or did not know what happened in the Holocaust. One in 5. Further, B'nai Brith Canada, in its 2021 annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, reported record numbers of anti-Semitic hate incidents in Canada, including beatings, vandalism of synagogues, and swastikas in school: 2,799 incidents – 2,799 incidents – an increase of 7.2 per cent from 2020.

How does this definition help to combat this? First, let's look at examples that accompany the definition. I think this is really important to understand, that this definition comes with examples to really illustrate what this actually means. Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel conceived as a Jewish collectivity; however, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for why things go wrong. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and action and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of anti-Semitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include but are not limited to calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion; making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical

allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective, such as especially but not exclusively the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy, or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government, or other societal institutions; accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group or even for acts committed by non-Jews; denying the fact, scope, mechanisms – for example, the gas chambers – or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II, also known as the Holocaust; accusing the Jews as a people or Israel as a state of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust; accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel or to the alleged priorities of Jews world-wide than to the interests of their own nations; denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, for example by claiming that the existence of the state of Israel is a racist endeavour, applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded by any other democratic nation; using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism – example: claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel – to characterize Israel or Israelis; drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis or holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel.

Anti-Semitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law; for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of anti-Semitic materials in some countries is criminal. Criminal acts are anti-Semitic when the targets of the attacks, whether they are people or property such as buildings, schools, places of worship, and cemeteries, are selected because they are or are perceived to be Jewish or linked to Jews. Anti-Semitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

When we adopt the IHRA definition and work across all Alberta public institutions, we are ensuring education and awareness around anti-Semitism, Jew hate, and the Holocaust. We are standing with the Jewish people of Alberta and everywhere, and we are setting an example and encouraging other jurisdictions to undertake the same. The unanimous support of this important definition will send a clear message that hate and anti-Semitism have no place in this or any society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Others wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today we gather to discuss this important motion that reinforces the Alberta government's commitment to supporting the Jewish community and fighting against anti-Semitic hatred, harassment, and incitement of violence. This is a crucial moment in our history as we are witnessing a rise in anti-Semitic incidents across the globe, including here in Alberta.

Last September Alberta's government endorsed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, which describes anti-Semitism as a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews; rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions or religious facilities. This endorsement is a significant step in raising awareness on this issue and promoting a broader understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism.

The motion we are discussing today is designed to further increase awareness of anti-Semitism and support the province's

Jewish community. It also aims to promote robust bipartisan debate on the issue while supporting broad dissemination of the definition amongst all publicly funded entities. Some of this work has already begun, for example, via Advanced Education to postsecondary institutions. It is important to note that this motion sends a clear signal to Albertans that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated.

All forms of racism are unacceptable, and Alberta's government and its agencies more broadly need to be committed to combatting racism, supporting racialized communities, and promoting a safe and welcoming province for everyone. As a society we have a responsibility to ensure that our communities are inclusive and safe for all. No one should be subjected to harassment or discrimination based upon their religion, ethnicity, or any other factor. We must stand united against hatred and bigotry in all of its forms.

The Jewish community has been subjected to persecution and violence throughout history, and it is unacceptable that this is still happening today. We must work together to combat anti-Semitism and create a more tolerant and inclusive society. The motion we are discussing today is an important step towards achieving that goal. It is a further signal of our government's commitment to providing understanding and tolerance to communities and to supporting those who have been affected by racism and discrimination.

According to a recent report by the Anti-Defamation League incidents of anti-Semitic harassment and violence in the United States have surged to unprecedented levels. The report states that there were a record number of incidents of anti-Semitism reported in the U.S. in 2020, the highest annual total on record since the ADL began tracking the data in 1979. The incidents included physical assaults, harassment, vandalism, and online attacks. Also, in Canada the number of anti-Semitic incidents reported in 2020 reached a record high according to a report by B'nai Brith Canada. The report found that there were 2,610 reported incidents of anti-Semitism in Canada in 2020, which is an 18.3 per cent increase from the previous year. The incidents included vandalism, harassment, and physical assaults as well.

Now, these alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for action to combat anti-Semitism. The endorsement of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism for all of Alberta's government agencies is a positive step in the right direction. It will help to raise awareness on the issue and promote a greater understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism. Moreover, the motion to increase awareness of anti-Semitism and support the province's Jewish community is also an important initiative. It will help to ensure that the issue is taken seriously and that appropriate action is taken to address it.

According to the ADL report social media platforms were responsible for a significant proportion of the anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. The report found that there were more than 900 incidents of harassment and vandalism that were attributed to social media platforms. This highlights the importance of ensuring that social media platforms are held accountable for hate speech and other forms of online abuse.

The motion to support broad dissemination of the IHRA definition amongst all publicly funded entities is also crucial. It will help to ensure that public institutions are equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to identify and address anti-Semitism.

In addition to these initiatives, there are other steps that can be taken to combat this issue. For example, education plays a key role in promoting understanding and tolerance. Educational institutions can play an important role in promoting awareness of the issue and fostering a culture of inclusion and respect.



5:30

Furthermore, there is a need for greater collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector to address anti-Semitism. This can also involve initiatives such as joint advocacy campaigns, public awareness campaigns, and community engagement programs.

Now, in conclusion, the motion to support the Jewish community in fighting against this anti-Semitic hatred, harassment, and incitement of violence is an important initiative that is urgently needed in the current climate. By working together to combat anti-Semitism, we can create a more tolerant, inclusive, and safe society for everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members wishing to speak to Motion 504?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to close debate.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise before the House to give my final comments in support of Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. I am proud to say that this motion reinforces our government's already strong commitment to fighting hatred and harassment in this province. Anti-Semitism, irrespective of however minor it is purported to be, hints to a sentiment that has led to countless acts of violence and discrimination against Jewish people and their communities and is something that has no place in our province or any society. Alberta's Jewish community should have no reason to be subjected to treatment that is at its core inexcusably reprehensible and dangerous.

The United Nations General Assembly designates January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as international remembrance day, but we must do more than honour those that lost their lives to hatred for one day. We must always remember those 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. We need to remember; otherwise, we risk reliving those horrors another day. Too often history repeats itself.

We currently live in an era where history is being erased by those that think they know better, erased by people who are of privilege, who stifle debate and discussion and, ultimately, understanding. A culture of wokeness exists that would deny the lessons of history, who attempts to erase the harsh realities where man has demonstrated traits that we do not wish to reinvigorate in the population. We need to be vigilant of those that would erase these hard memories. These deniers need to be stopped so that we can remember the horrors, so that we can assure that these atrocities never ever happen again.

This motion increases awareness of anti-Semitism to support the province's Jewish community and allow for robust, bipartisan debate on the issue while supporting broad dissemination of the definition amongst all publicly funded entities. This awareness will create a more inclusive and welcoming province for everyone, where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. By endorsing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, we are taking a critical step towards identifying and combating anti-Semitism in all its forms. Mr. Speaker, our government's endorsement of this definition sends a clear message to Albertans that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated. We must work together to eradicate it from our society. By recognizing and confronting anti-Semitism, we can create a province where everyone can feel safe and welcome.

I want to emphasize that this motion is not only about the Jewish community. It is also about all forms of racism. We need to stand

up against all forms of racism, whether it be against the Jewish people, Muslims, Indigenous, Black, or any other racialized group. All forms of racism are unacceptable and have no place in our province or our society.

As someone of Asian descent growing up in communities where there were not many of said ancestry, it was at times difficult. Being on the receiving end of name-calling, bullying, prejudice, and, ultimately, discrimination is not a pleasant experience. It does impact a person's life; that much I can guarantee you. It is for reasons of my own personal experience that I can easily stand up for the Jewish community and denounce the racial hate that they endure.

As elected representatives of this province and our communities we have a responsibility to ensure that all feel safe and supported. It is our job to create policies and laws that promote Canadian and fundamentally Albertan values of acceptance and decency. We must do everything in our power to combat anti-Semitism and discrimination to create a more inclusive and just society for everyone.

I should also note that our good friend the Minister of Advanced Education, the MLA for Calgary-Bow, also encouraged our postsecondary institutions to embrace this policy. And I do wish to thank my good friend and colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his devotion to this House and for all of his fine work in this Legislature. This piece, Motion 504, Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, is his final statement and mine to the Alberta Legislature, a statement that demands that prejudice, racism, and discrimination have no place here in Alberta, no place here in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that this government and all its members are committed to combatting anti-Semitism, supporting our Jewish communities, and promoting a safe and welcoming Alberta for everyone. We will continue to work together to fight all forms of hate, including anti-Semitism, and to build a province where everyone feels valued and included.

With that, I would like to formally end this discussion on Alberta's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism and look forward to a strong, positive future in this province where Alberta's Jewish population can live in peace. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:36 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Schmidt
Carson	Jones	Schulz
Dach	Long	Singh
Feehan	Lovely	Stephan
Fir	Madu	Turton
Gotfried	McIver	van Dijken
Hanson	Milliken	Walker
Horner	Neudorf	Yao

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 0
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried unanimously]

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

**The Acting Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. This evening the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates of the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape

Reduction in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:54 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 14, 2023

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
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Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

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**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

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Allard  
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Deol  
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Renaud  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-Decore has an introduction.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 63 of some of the brightest minds in this province of Alberta, located right in the grade 6 class of Kildare elementary school. So happy to see them here today; looking forward to seeing what they will bring in the future. I would ask that they all now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly students from Steinhauer school in the glorious area of Edmonton-Rutherford. They're accompanied today with their teacher Danelle Hancock. I'd ask them to all rise and receive the warm – my voice today – greetings of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you not only one but two classes from the Viking school with their teachers Mrs. Josephson and Mrs. Culbert. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you my better half, the love of my life, my greatest supporter, and my greatest champion, my husband of almost 39 years, Darren LaGrange. I'm blessed to have him in the gallery today.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a number of individuals who have been very involved in helping Ukrainian newcomers settle in life in Alberta. We have with us today Heather Cournoy from the Ukrainians in Sherwood Park Facebook page, Claire and Neil Hayes from Sleep in Heavenly Peace Canada, as well as Mike Thomas and Cherilyn Michaels from the Edmonton Hosts Ukrainians Facebook page. I ask that they please rise and that the members of this Assembly join me in giving them a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce some friends of mine: Cam Baker from Nutrien; with Sherritt International I'd like to introduce Alyssa Carson and Greg Pohlka; I'd also like to introduce Darcie Park from CF Industries; and joining us from Fertilizer Canada, Dan Demers and Dustin Pike. Thank you for being here today. Please stand and receive the warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The Deputy Premier has an introduction.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and welcome members of the Calgary Construction Association and the Edmonton Construction Association. Both organizations play a big part in communication between the government and our industry partners, helping us ensure that we get the job finished safely, on time, on budget, and at the best value for Albertans. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Ms Phillips:** Shortly after forming government, the UCP removed the rate cap on auto insurance after being lobbied by their insurance industry friends and insiders. Almost immediately car insurance skyrocketed, with some increases as high as 30 per cent. Worst of all, these increases happened in the middle of the pandemic, when Albertans were driving less.

Now – fast-forward three years – Albertans pay the highest auto insurance rates in the country. We have heard from many Albertans about these increases and how they're worried about keeping their vehicle on the road. Albertans asked government to get insurance rates under control, but the UCP refused. We introduced a bill to freeze auto insurance rates, but the UCP wouldn't even debate it.

Then in January the government finally brought in a rate freeze, or so they said. But on March 1 several companies were approved for double-digit increases to auto insurance rates despite the freeze supposedly coming into effect on January 26. Let's be real. This rate freeze is a fake, just like the natural gas rebate, which has not provided one dollar of support to Albertans, and the so-called electricity rate cap, that actually piled \$200 million of debt onto Albertans' bills.

Here's what's not fake: UCP plans to take away your CPP retirement savings and hand it over to an untrustworthy Premier to finance separatist dreams. Here's what's also far too real, after the election, though: a politicized UCP provincial police force that no one wants and a \$20 billion giveaway to the Premier's small group of friends who want the people of Alberta to pay for them to clean up their wells so they can turn around and spend bunch of money on unseemly, dishonest, American-stye attack ads on the NDP.

Here's the basic reality, Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The sad consequence of this is that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West gets to start again.

**Ms Phillips:** Shortly after forming government, the UCP removed the rate cap on auto insurance after being lobbied by their insurance industry friends and insiders. Almost immediately car insurance skyrocketed, with some increases as high as 30 per cent. Worst of

all, these increases happened in the middle of the pandemic, when Albertans were driving less.

Now Albertans pay the highest auto insurance rates in the country. We have heard from many Albertans about these increases and how they're worried about keeping their vehicles on the road. Albertans asked government to get insurance rates under control, but the UCP refused. We introduced a bill to freeze auto insurance rates, but the UCP wouldn't even debate it.

Then in January government finally brought in a rate freeze, or so they claimed. On March 1 several companies were approved for double-digit increases to auto insurance despite the freeze supposedly coming into effect on January 26. Let's be real. The UCP auto insurance freeze is a fake, just like their natural gas rebate, that has not provided one dollar of support to Albertans, and their so-called electricity rate cap, that has actually piled \$200 million of debt onto Albertans' bills.

Here's what's not fake: UCP plans to take away your CPP retirement savings and hand them over to this untrustworthy Premier to finance her separatist dreams. Here's what's also far too real but after the election: a politicized UCP provincial police force that no one wants and a \$20 billion giveaway to the Premier's small group of friends who want the people of Alberta to pay for them to clean up their wells so they can turn around and spend a bunch of money on unseemly, dishonest, third-party, American-style attack ads on the NDP.

Here's the basic reality, Alberta. Any promise this UCP government makes, especially one that purports to make life more affordable, is dishonest nonsense. Feel free to ignore anything they say, Alberta. They don't mean a word of it. One more reason to elect an Alberta NDP government on May 29. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

### Physician and Nurse Education and Training

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the best health care workers in the world. Alberta's government will work to make sure Albertans can get the care they need when and where they need it. Simply put, we need more doctors and nurses and health care staff.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have heard from my constituents that their children aren't being accepted into medical school in Alberta even though they have mid-90 averages. In fact, on average our institutions turn away 2,800 qualified nursing applicants each year due to limited capacity, and on average our medical schools turn away 2,300 qualified applicants each year.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government is taking action. Budget 2023 invests nearly \$200 million to help train the health care staff we need and ensure young Albertans can get into the programs they want right here at home; \$72 million will go towards creating nearly 3,400 new seats in health care programs, with over 1,800 new seats for programs like nursing, 1,500 new bridging seats for internationally educated nurses, and 120 new physicians; and \$113 million will help add 100 new medical residency positions and support physician training in regional centres and rural communities.

To quote the U of A dean of medical school, today we are investing in the future of every citizen in the province and moving towards making our vision of equitable access to health care a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### 1:40 Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the communities I represent in Lacombe-Ponoka are home to farmers who work hard all year to put food on our plates, Albertans who wake up early and don't stop until the job is done. Through freezing winters and long, hot summers they feed the world and make Alberta proud.

Today I speak to the importance of safety and well-being for our farmers and agricultural workers. This is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week; hence, the safe ag pin. Canadian Ag Safety Week is an initiative that aims to promote safe and healthy practices across the industry. Agriculture is an important sector in our economy, and it's crucial that we ensure the safety of those who work in it. Farmers and ag workers face many risks every day from heavy machinery, dangerous animals, and hazardous climates. It's important that we raise awareness about these risks and provide resources to help prevent accidents and injuries.

This year's theme for Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is Be an Agsafe Family. The theme focuses on the importance of making safety a priority for everyone in agriculture: families, employers, and employees. It's important that we work together to maintain a culture of ag safety where everyone feels informed and empowered to speak up about safety and take steps to prevent accidents.

During Canadian Ag Safety Week there are many events and activities – workshops, webinars, social media campaigns – all aimed at promoting safe practices and raising awareness about risks in agriculture. These events are an opportunity for us to learn from each other and share best practices for keeping our families safe on the farm. I encourage all Canadians to participate in Canadian Ag Safety Week. Whether you're a farmer, a farm kid, a farm worker, or an Albertan who cares about the safety of our farm families, there are resources and tools available to help you think and be safe. Let's work together to enhance a culture of safety in agriculture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may this year's Canadian Ag Safety Week be a success.

### Industrial Development in St. Albert

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, there can be no greater investment than investing in Albertans and Alberta. This has been something that I've always believed: give Albertans the chance and the opportunity, and they will succeed.

While I thought this would be a universal sentiment shared in this House, the recent actions of the government have shown me and my colleagues loudly and clearly that this government actually opposes investing in Alberta. The minister of jobs actually attacked our proposal to support the Lakeview business district in St. Albert, a critical project that will create 7,000 jobs and, importantly, grow the economy of St. Albert, the surrounding region, and even the province of Alberta. It's the first time ever that I've heard a minister of jobs attacking a proposal to create jobs, but that's the UCP.

The members opposite are quite happy to spend Albertans' money on the Premier's donors. They're scheming to hand out \$20 billion to a small number of bad companies to clean up the messes they are already legally obligated to clean. The difference in this Chamber could not be clearer. That side of the House wants to shovel Albertans' tax dollars to the Premier's friends, and on this side of the House we believe that investing in Albertans and investing in job creation are the smartest investments you can make.

Albertans can choose a government focused on them in just a few short weeks.

### Support for Ukrainian Newcomers

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, last year Russia began an unlawful invasion of Ukraine, forcing millions of people to flee their country in an emergency. Alberta has long-standing ties to Ukraine, with hundreds of thousands of Albertans being of Ukrainian descent. Alberta sympathizes with Ukrainians and has welcomed thousands of evacuees who are looking for safety from the war in their homeland.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a place that is filled with people who seek to help others in need. Therefore, Albertans have formed grassroots networks of volunteers that are providing support to thousands of Ukrainian evacuees here. These groups provide information and resources to Ukrainian newcomers in the Edmonton area. They also pick up the newcomers at the airport, host them in their houses, help them get necessary documentation done, and mentor the newcomer families.

Special shout-out to Cherylyn Michaels, who founded the Edmonton Hosts Ukrainians Facebook page, Mike Thomas, and former MLA David Dorward, who provide support, too. This is a group of about 21,000 people who are residing in the Edmonton area and Ukrainians intending to move here. Another shout-out goes to Laurie Kardynal, Heather Cournoyor, and members of the Ukrainians of Sherwood Park Facebook group, which was created to connect Ukrainians in Strathcona county.

Hearty gratitude goes to Neil Hayes, Claire Hayes, and the Sherwood Park branch of Sleep in Heavenly Peace Canada. SHP partnered with Canadian social services Edmonton and has provided many beds to Ukrainian children. Thanks to other organizations in Strathcona county that have helped support Ukrainian newcomers such as St. Nicholas school, St. Sophia parish, St. Theresa school, Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, and the Bilingual Ukrainian Catholic Parent Society.

Mr. Speaker, to all the volunteers we say thank you. With these supports, displaced Ukrainians can live to their fullest while we await an end to the war.

Thank you.

### South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, for over three years my constituents have been living through a UCP-created health care crisis. They drove family doctors out of Alberta, threatened the pay of nurses and paramedics, drove our EMS system to the breaking point, all while failing to properly fund the system. They also failed to deliver the necessary infrastructure that we will need to ensure that we can properly recover and rebuild the system.

In 2017 the NDP government announced the south Edmonton hospital, the first new Edmonton hospital since 1988. The UCP delayed this hospital time and time again. Now we have a Premier who claims it's her top priority but also an Infrastructure minister who blames everything and everyone for his failure to do his job. What should be a hospital under construction is still just a snow-covered field. My constituents have been harmed by this failure. Edmonton is short hundreds of hospital beds, and that number is going to climb to 1,500 in a few years.

A government that cares about the people of Edmonton and their health care needs would focus on getting this hospital built. The UCP doesn't care about the families in south Edmonton. An Alberta NDP government will end this UCP crisis in health care, end the excuses, and actually get the south Edmonton hospital built.

### Federal Energy Transition Plan

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, Ottawa under the Trudeau Liberals has recently discussed the possibility of pushing for a so-called just transition. However, their policy for phasing out our ethical oil and gas sector and putting a cap on oil production is nothing more than an illegal and immoral effort to make hard-working Albertans unemployed and to devastate the towns and cities dependent on our energy sector.

Clearly, the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa do not understand the importance of oil and gas workers to our province, nor do they understand the power that this province has to fill global energy needs, nor the fact that our energy sector provides the money that sustains the economic lifeblood of this country. It is obvious that the Justin Trudeau government, dependent on support from the federal NDP, has decided to push for a policy based on radical and dangerous ideas that will destroy the main economic engine of this country.

The track record of this federal government since the Liberals were elected in 2015 has been horrible for this province. Under their leadership Bill C-69, the oil pipeline ban, has heavily and unfairly regulated our oil and gas industry. We don't need to look hard for examples of how this legislation negatively affected our oil and gas industry. The Energy East pipeline and Northern Gateway were both cancelled as a result of this legislation. The Ottawa carbon tax has also hurt middle-class Albertans since its implementation. With the federal Liberal and NDP coalition in power, I cannot see Trudeau nor his biggest supporter, Jagmeet Singh, backing down on passing this radical legislation.

Nevertheless, Alberta, since the days of Premier Lougheed, has always fought back against Ottawa's attempts to destroy our way of life. Therefore, our government will take up this mantle and continue to stand up for Albertans. We know that the only way to preserve our political, economic, and societal interests is to fight back and never surrender to Ottawa's demands and interests that attempt to hurt and go against the well-being of Albertans.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

#### Physician Supply

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, every Albertan should have access to a family doctor where and when they need one, but today more Albertans are watching as their family doctors pack up their bags for B.C. Now, the UCP ripped up doctors' contracts, undermined their profession, ignored their concerns, all in the middle of a pandemic. Yesterday the UCP Health minister finally acknowledged the serious doctor shortage in this province after years of ignoring it. To the Premier. The UCP created this problem. Does she understand why absolutely no one trusts them to fix it?

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know a lot of people trust our Health minister to fix it because we're already making great progress on the three areas that we identified that we want to make progress on. The next big piece, of course, is establishing a medical home, as the Health minister likes to call it, a joint practice with doctors, nurses, and other health practitioners. That's the reason why we have \$2 billion that has been dedicated towards that. The goal is exactly that, that every single Albertan should have access

to a primary care practitioner so that it becomes the first line of defence if something goes wrong. We're investing in it, and we're going to do it.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, their record doesn't make people confident. There are fewer rural doctors working today than there were under our NDP government, and right now Alberta is also short anaesthesiologists. These professionals are critical to getting surgeries done all across the province. Yesterday the Health minister admitted there are fewer of those professionals working today than even last year. Can the Premier explain how exactly Alberta is going to perform more surgeries when the number of these anaesthesiologists is actually down, not up?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the nice thing about having an official administrator in place in the form of Dr. John Cowell, because part of the thing that he's discovered is that anaesthesiologists are doing different scope of practice in different regions and that, in point of fact, in certain regions we would be able to use respiratory therapists so that we can make sure the anaesthesiologists are available for the highest priority surgeries. What we will see over the next little while is that there is going to be some reallocation. We've done that already on nurses, we've done it already on paramedics, and we're going to be able to solve that problem, too.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, those strategies have already been acknowledged as being exceptionally unlikely to work and, actually, unsafe. Today health care is in jeopardy, and the biggest threat, now and always, is this UCP government. The UCP have damaged the system, and this Premier's favourite solution is to offer Albertans the choice to pay more.

Now, the Alberta NDP will go a different way. We'll ensure another million Albertans have access to family health teams at no cost to them. Albertans know it's true; the Premier probably knows it, too. Why won't she admit that a better plan for Albertans who need health care is simply to just vote NDP?

**Ms Smith:** I was so excited to see the Health minister's announcement yesterday that we'll be investing \$200 million to expand postsecondary health programs and train 3,400 additional health care professionals. We have 3,400 new seats in postsecondary health programs across the province. We're investing \$113 million to add 100 residency spaces for newly graduated doctors, particularly in, yeah, rural areas and, yeah, specialist fields. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite should be congratulating our Health minister on acting on the things that they think . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for a second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll congratulate him on admitting that it's actually a day late and many, many, many dollars short.

### Wage Growth and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's wage growth is the slowest in Canada, meaning Albertans are actively losing ground when inflation is at a 40-year high. Meanwhile families are paying more for utilities, for tuition, for fees, for car insurance. The Premier's so-called affordability measures all expire immediately after the election, and they can't even properly freeze car insurance even when they're trying. After four years the UCP record is Albertans paying more, earning less. Why are the only Albertans getting the break her donors?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are actually earning more than any other Canadian. We have the highest average weekly earnings. The next-closest province is \$4,000 per year behind us, and then on top of that, as the Finance minister likes to note, if we had the kind of tax system that the members opposite want to have, the next-closest tax system would generate \$20 billion more. That means that we are giving, essentially, a \$20 billion tax break to Albertans. So not only are they earning more; they get to keep more, and that helps to defray the cost of the NDP.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that working people will be happy to know that the Premier thinks they're earning enough money.

Nonetheless, earlier this week we learned that Calgary has the highest unemployment rate of any city in Canada. Meanwhile we're hearing from job creators that they can't build in Alberta because we simply don't have the workforce they need. This UCP government then went about and cut almost a billion dollars from postsecondary education. After four years of the UCP Albertans can't afford to invest in new skills, and job creators can't invest in diversifying the economy. Why is diversifying the economy still a luxury for this UCP?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when the UCP came to office, the unemployment rate in Calgary, after the way they left it, was 6.9 per cent, so actually the unemployment rate in Calgary is lower than it was during that period of time. We also have the highest workforce participation rate. We've got a 66 per cent workforce participation rate, which is also the highest in the country. Part of the reason that we have a higher unemployment rate – unemployment is those who are looking for work. There are a lot of people looking for work because Alberta is calling, and people are heeding the call. We've got people coming from all over the country, and they're going to find those jobs.

**Ms Notley:** Well, they're not finding them in Calgary, Mr. Speaker.

Now, this government cut economic diversification programs that were working even as the Premier claimed that she understood the value, for instance, of the digital media tax credit, but then she failed on that, too. Now, while the Premier goes off and plans to give \$20 billion of taxpayers' money to donors, the Alberta NDP has a plan to attract \$20 billion in private investment, creating tens of thousands of new jobs, Mr. Speaker. The best party to increase wages, create jobs, and grow the economy is Alberta's NDP. No question.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall that under the NDP the most venture capital dollars flowing into this province was about \$30 million per year. Last year we brought in \$729 million in venture capital investments, 12 per cent of all of the deals and 7 per cent of all the venture capital investment invested in the entire country. Our venture capital has gone up 30 per cent whereas it's gone down in the rest of the country. The digital media tax credit is something that is in the minister's mandate letter. He has already indicated that he is consulting on it, needs to do a little bit more work. Stay tuned.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and Opposition House Leader.

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, this UCP government is refusing to listen to the heroes of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire. Bill 9 will be of no help to firefighters who have been diagnosed with cancer before

the bill passes, only after. We thought this was a mistake, and I offered an amendment to make sure that all of those Alberta heroes and their families are covered. I'm shocked to learn that, no, the UCP is intentionally denying coverage to these firefighters. Will the minister of red tape reduction reconsider his statement that no amendments will be accepted and agree to support all of them? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering why the NDP and that particular member didn't get it done when she was the minister. Now, what I will tell you is that we've checked with the WCB, and there's no need for retroactivity since there's only one, maybe two Fort McMurray firefighter claims that would be impacted by retroactivity. In those cases the WCB has the fairness process review, and we're being assured by the WCB that if that fairness process kicks in, those firefighters have nothing to worry about. There will not be any firefighters from Fort McMurray that will be left behind. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the firefighters say. We know of at least one firefighter who fought the Beast in 2016 and has died from cancer after exposure to an incredible number of toxins produced by that fire. The family has been fighting a protracted . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** The family has been fighting a protracted battle with the WCB. The bill does not protect them, but it's a simple matter of passing our NDP amendment to make sure all are covered. There may be other firefighters who have not even started the claim, and the minister wants them to do a fairness process review? Just fix the bill.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the bill is fine as it is, but let's be clear. Retroactivity was an option for that government and that member when they were minister to change, and they did not change it. They didn't change it because that would be the wrong thing to do. There is a fairness process in place. They take it very seriously. If there's an issue after that fairness process goes through, have the member come and see me. We're going to make sure that no firefighter, no Fort McMurray firefighter, is left behind.

2:00

**Ms Gray:** That member represents Fort McMurray, they've been in government for four years, and they are consigning firefighters to a fairness review process rather than just making this retroactive and covering all firefighters. Consigning firefighters to fight with the WCB is the wrong answer. We need to support the firefighters who are on the ground. Will they pass our amendment? Will they do the right thing, stand on the side of the heroes in Fort McMurray and accept the amendment?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, fight WCB? WCB is there for the workers. That is the wrong attitude and the wrong approach by this member. No wonder the people of Alberta threw them out; they didn't get the job done when they were there, and they won't do a good job if they ever get a chance to come back.

## Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Member Irwin:** I am being inundated by stories from Albertans about how our commitment to provide free prescription contraceptives will change their lives. Lisa wrote to me saying that our policy would save her \$400, a huge saving. Heather said that she's been putting off replacing her IUD because she just can't afford it. Amy says that she's been rationing meds for years, and this would mean safe, reliable treatment. How can the Premier hear from all of these Albertans and still say that they should pay more out of pocket for their health care?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I understand where the NDP opposite is coming from. They don't believe in a public and private mixed system for pharmaceuticals. We do. We believe in the kind of choice that allows for maximum amount of coverage. From what I can see, the vast majority of people are covered by the plan. Our private-sector plans cover this as one of their priority items; our Alberta Blue Cross covers it as a priority item for anybody on our benefits. I don't see the need.

**Member Irwin:** This Premier just doesn't get it, and she's clearly not listening to people like Chantelle, who wrote that her prescription costs her \$300 every three years despite it being treatment for a medical issue. Michelle told me that this policy alone would save her \$400. The Premier must be getting some of these same messages from people explaining how this would change their lives for the better. We know – she just said it – the Premier wants Albertans to get used to paying out of pocket for health care. So is that why she's refusing to listen to the thousands upon thousands of Albertans for whom this policy would be truly life changing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, Alberta Blue Cross has the ability for anyone who does not have employer-based benefits to be able to sign up so that they can get the coverage for all of the needs that they have. Everybody has different medical needs, and that's why we allow for insurance companies to take the lead on identifying the right mix of plans and the right mix of pharmaceuticals to cover. It has served us very well. The fact that we have both private and public operating in this environment means that we have far more drugs that are covered so that more people get the coverage that they need for the very specific needs that they have. I don't want to prejudice what other drugs might need to be covered.

**Member Irwin:** Let me introduce the Premier to people like Jess, who wrote me to explain that her birth control is not covered by any nongroup private insurance plans despite what this Premier continues to say. Meghan really summed it up when she wrote to me saying that this policy actually doesn't help her, but she just thinks everyone deserves good health care. Me too, Meghan, and all of us as well. On this side of the House we're focused on getting Albertans the good health care that they deserve. So will the Premier tell, I don't know, Lisa, Heather, Amy, Chantelle, Michelle, Jess – the list goes on – and so many other Albertans why she wants them to pay up to get the health care they need and earn?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Alberta Blue Cross is the provider of choice for government, for our over age 65, for all of our programs. There is a nongroup coverage that is available for those who need it, and I would encourage anybody who wants to get pharmaceutical coverage to go and look at that. We want to

make sure that everybody has access to the health care they need. If they don't have it through private insurance, through their company, then they're able to get it through Alberta Blue Cross, and we think that that's the right balance. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Health Care Workforce Education and Training

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of this House will know, there is a nation-wide shortage of health care workers. Just like other provinces, Alberta is looking to attract and hire more health care workers. Unfortunately, there are thousands of qualified students here in Alberta who don't get admitted into college and university health programs like medicine and nursing because of a lack of capacity. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is the government doing to ensure students can get into the health programs they want right here at home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was an honour to join the Minister of Health yesterday to make an announcement of a \$200 million investment over three years to dramatically expand health care training capacity at our incredible universities and colleges. In particular, Advanced Education is investing \$72 million to create 3,400 new spaces in health care programs. That's in nursing and paramedicine, in health care aides. In addition, \$20 million is going to create 120 new spaces to train physicians. That's a 34 per cent increase.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm so glad to hear about all these new seats. Given that it takes at least four years to train a student just beginning their health care training and given that there is already a shortage of health care workers, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what is the government doing to ensure that we train more health care workers to join our workforce in the short and medium term?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we've done – we started the work going back last year and even earlier – is that Budget 2022 invested \$26 million to create 2,500 seats in health care related programs. Many of those seats were opened that September, and those students are already in place. In addition, we're expanding programs and supports for internationally educated nurses. These individuals are already here. They're educated as nurses, but they need to participate in additional bridging programs, and we're creating additional spaces in those programs so they can meet the Canadian standards.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister for that answer. Given that rural Alberta is disproportionately affected by the shortage of health care workers and given that an increase in physician seats means we need more residency positions to graduate doctors, to the Minister of Health: what is the government doing to expand residency positions and support greater rural physician training in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Thank you also for his advocacy on improving access to health care, particularly in rural areas.

I'm very pleased to stand with my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education announcing the expansion to med schools. Now, one of the key areas of focus for that expansion is for rural family physicians. I'm very pleased that part of that programming is to expand the training and where that happens. Initially we're going to start off with the University of Lethbridge and also in Grande Prairie, because when you train people locally, they stay local, and that's our objective.

### Energy Company Liability

**Mr. Schmidt:** Even before the Premier won her party's leadership, she was a registered lobbyist for a \$20 billion giveaway to a small number of bad companies to clean up messes they are already legally obligated to clean up. As Premier she continues to push the program, but she's now given it a new name and claims that it's only a \$100 million pilot program. But I'm hearing from Albertans who say that it doesn't matter what the Premier calls it or the size of the down payment on the \$20 billion; it's still a scam. Does the Energy minister agree with Albertans?

**The Speaker:** I provided caution on the use of the word "scam" yesterday. I am certain that in the subsequent questions the member will govern himself accordingly.

**Mr. Guthrie:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad state of affairs with the Alberta NDP. These anti oil and gas activists must be tortured watching industry come back to life after they did everything in their power over their four years to destroy the resource sector. Desperate, as they fall in the polls, they fabricate a crisis, misleading Albertans, which is exactly why nobody trusts them. This UCP government will always stand by energy workers to protect their jobs from the NDP and their ENGO friends who are hell bent on shutting down fossil fuel production in this province.

**The Speaker:** I'll provide some caution to the hon. the Minister of Energy. I provided caution with the use of the word "fabrication" yesterday, and I believe an apology was accepted.

2:10

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that that member stood in this House and promoted the R-star program in a private member's statement just a year ago and given that the UCP has already caused damage to our energy industry's reputation through their do-nothing war room and their failed inquiry and given that Scotiabank concluded that the program goes against the core capitalist principle that private companies should take full responsibility for the liabilities they willingly accept and that the program has a potential to generate negative public sentiment toward the sector, why is the government pushing ahead with the \$20 billion giveaway that will cause further damage to our energy industry?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, let's take a trip down woke memory lane to expose the NDP's just transition plan. They were the creator of Canada's first carbon tax. They oppose any and all pipelines. They support the west coast tanker ban, taking a position against our own province, and they're full steam ahead on an emissions cap. They also support the feds' clean electricity regulations. With Trudeau and Singh behind them, the NDP will continue to sabotage industry. Albertans cannot trust and cannot afford to make that mistake again.



**Mr. Schmidt:** What Albertans can't afford is a \$20 billion giveaway to the industry that it doesn't deserve.

Given that the environment minister rejected the \$20 billion giveaway that the Premier is pushing, saying that it does not align with the province's royalty regime or our approach to liability management in Alberta and the polluter-pay principle, and given that the president of the Rural Municipalities association said that the program is exactly how a fox would design a henhouse, why is this government refusing to listen to Albertans, economists, and even their own minister on this issue? Is it because she promised her leadership donors \$20 billion if she got her way?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hypocrisy of the NDP has no bounds. Not only did they create the C-star incentive program, but in May 2017 their leader announced a \$235 million program to accelerate abandonment and reclamation. She stated, "This is about creating jobs and fixing a long-standing problem." So it was okay then but not now. What a joke. Remember that the goal of these activists is to end fossil-fuel production and to do it at any cost. The NDP cannot be trusted, full stop.

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

#### Anaesthesia Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In estimates last week we learned that the UCP government has made no progress in increasing the number of anaesthesiologists in Alberta. In fact, it appears we have slightly fewer than we did at this time last year. This is one of the critical bottlenecks in surgical capacity: no anaesthesiologist, no surgery. There are operating rooms and surgeons at our major hospitals sitting idle because of a shortage of these specialists. Can the Minister of Health tell Albertans how many surgeries have been delayed so far this year due to his failure to attract or train more anaesthesiologists?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We are actually increasing the number of surgeries that are being done. We appreciate that there's a challenge in terms of attracting and retaining anaesthesiologists. This is a challenge not only faced here in Alberta but, quite frankly, faced around the country and the western world. But we have a solution to this. We are expanding the use of an anaesthesia care team model in Alberta. This model actually is used in other provinces. What that enables us to do, in certain surgeries, is allow one anaesthesiologist to oversee other team members to be able to provide the surgeries. We're going to continue to invest in surgeries and get them done for Albertans.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we're aware that these shortages pushed the government towards potential experiments with asking respiratory therapists to take on the responsibility of anaesthesiologists with full sedation but given that we've seen no evidence that any other jurisdiction is even considering such a potentially risky initiative and given that Albertans should not be put at risk because of this government's failures to retain and attract anaesthesiologists after actively driving them out of the province, will the minister guarantee that Albertans' safety will come before his government's need to hide their failures before the next election?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I have to stop for a minute and take umbrage with some of the statements being made by the members opposite. We have more doctors than we've ever had in this province. When we compare last year over the year before that: 254 more doctors. Now, I appreciate we have shortages in certain areas, and I appreciate we have shortages in certain specialties, but we have more coming in. I was very pleased to go and stand with my colleague to announce an expansion of our med school program, which, by the way, takes seven years for a family physician. You know, we wouldn't be in this position if the previous government actually had done it beforehand.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we wouldn't be in this position if this minister and his predecessor hadn't chased doctors out of this province, if they hadn't torn up their master agreement and continued to pursue those damaging policies in the midst of a global pandemic and given that we would not be in this position if this government had not continued to raise tuition, if they had not eliminated – the fact that costs made it harder for students to actually want to stay and take residency positions, which, in fact, went unfilled last year due to the toxic environment this government has created. An Alberta NDP government will make this a province where doctors want to stay.

**Mr. Copping:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to answer some issues substantively. Number one, on the previous question, we will ensure the safety of Albertans will be ensured when we actually apply a model in terms of – like, a broader model. That's rule number one, and we'll make sure to do that.

In regard to the residencies being filled, the hon. member is quite right. They typically haven't been filled over the years, including that under the previous government they weren't filled. We understand that this is an issue, Mr. Speaker, so we're actually looking at changing the process to ensure that if it isn't filled in terms of the original CaRMS process, we could actually get IMGs. Plus, some of these new spots: we're going to do a flow through without using CaRMS.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has a question.

#### Capital Plan

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, are home to many vital public facilities not just for locals but the broader north and south regions of the province. As a result, there is construction, maintenance, and planning work that goes into existing facilities and future ones. Given that the province's biggest city, Calgary, will benefit from over a billion dollars in the Infrastructure 2023 capital plan, to the Minister of Infrastructure: what major projects can Calgaryans expect to actually see as a result of Budget 2023?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, through you, to the member for the question. One billion dollars of Infrastructure's \$5.4 billion three-year capital plan is going to Calgary projects such as the Foothills medical centre neonatal intensive care unit; the Peter Lougheed Centre emergency department, mental health intensive care unit, and laboratory redevelopment; the Calgary Court of Appeal; and the Calgary cyclotron and radiopharmaceutical facility project. There are eight active health facility projects, three government facility projects, and six school projects in Calgary. There is an increase in funding

for the Alberta surgical initiative capital program, recovery communities, and much more.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister knows his stuff and given that Edmonton is not only our capital but also a major hub for northern Alberta in terms of services, health care, and more . . . [interjections]

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

**Mr. McIver:** . . . and further given that Budget 2023 outlines \$1.2 billion for Edmonton in Infrastructure's capital plan, to the same minister . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. You know what the difference is? Earlier today the Member for Calgary-Hays was interrupted by the Speaker for his heckling. Immediately following, he refrained from doing such. Perhaps other members would do the same.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion for Edmonton in the Infrastructure capital plan. To the same minister: what are some major projects that Edmontonians will see thanks to Budget 2023?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you again to the member. Yes, \$1.2 billion, or 22 per cent, of Infrastructure's \$5.4 billion three-year capital plan is going to Edmonton projects such as the Edmonton hospital in the southwest, the Gene Zwozdesky centre at Norwood, the Misericordia community hospital modernization, the U of A hospital brain centre-neurosciences intensive care unit, the Yellowhead Youth Centre. There are seven active health care facility projects, one government facility project, and six school projects in Edmonton. There is increased funding for the Alberta surgical initiative program, recovery communities, medical device processing, and, again . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is on fire and given that building our vital infrastructure requires constant communication with our construction partners in major cities across the province and given that Edmonton and Calgary construction associations work closely with the industry to ensure projects are completed on time and that Albertans have access to the work on the projects, to the minister: how many construction and construction-related jobs do we currently have, and how many more will be created as a result of Budget 2023?

2:20

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you once again to the member for all his fine work. As I do like to say, infrastructure is the work that puts people to work. I'm happy to report that currently the active capital projects support approximately 37,000 construction jobs and construction-related jobs. The Budget 2023 capital plan is supporting an average of 20,000 direct and 12,000 indirect jobs per year through to '25-26. I'd also like to take an extra opportunity to thank the ECA, the CCA, and the ACA for all the work they do and the members that they represent, hard-working people all across Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

## Industrial Development in St. Albert

**Ms Renaud:** Last week the Leader of the Official Opposition committed to funding the Lakeview business district in partnership with the city of St. Albert. We're a party invested in growing jobs, supporting the economy, and working with municipalities to support growth and development. I can't say the same for the UCP, who ignored this need despite it being a top priority for the region. The jobs minister said that there's no way the UCP will support this project to create 7,000 jobs. To the minister: why does the UCP refuse to invest in projects that support economic growth in St. Albert, Morinville, and right across the region?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what the member said is not correct. This is a great project. We will help them with the regulations. We will help them with the regulatory burden that that party wants to put in place. We will help them with any funding initiatives. What's odd about this is that they might not recognize that this business industrial park services the oil sands, and that means that it's a great project because it's great for the future of Alberta. How can they possibly live with themselves? On one side they say, "Kill the oil sands," and on the other side they say, "Support corporate welfare to this . . ."

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

**Ms Renaud:** Given that just last week the minister of jobs openly sneered at this important project despite the fact that this business park will bring 7,000 jobs for my constituents and given that the minister can't point to a line in this budget that says that this government is going to support this important project – and comments like his completely undermine the good work of the city and the people of St. Albert, the good economic projects that deserve support – will the jobs minister stand here today and admit that his comments about the Lakeview business district were crass, inaccurate and apologize to the people of St. Albert?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member misunderstood. I was actually sneering at what she was doing when they suck and blow at the same time. Sucking and blowing: let me get to that. What that means is that, on one side, if it's in their constituency, they say that it's a strategic investment, but if it's an investment in corporate Alberta that creates thousands and thousands of jobs, good-paying jobs for Albertans, they say: no, that's corporate welfare. Which is it? Are they just prepared to support their own ridings if they need an investment in corporate, or is it not? Are they standing up for Albertans, or are they not?

**Ms Renaud:** Given that St. Albert is a fast-growing and diverse city and given that that is the most ridiculous answer I've ever heard and given that the Lakeview business district is a crucial step in creating jobs that will support the community and grow this economy and given that the minister of service Alberta has failed for years to deliver this project despite repeatedly promising to get it done, will the service Alberta minister apologize to the people of St. Albert and Morinville for his colleague's rude and misinformed comments and just commit to work with the NDP and get that Lakeview business district done?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize for that member. If the people of St. Albert want to make a good choice, they should elect a UCP member. Now, let's be clear. That member, the minister of red tape reduction, has saved Albertans over \$2 billion by reducing all of that red tape that that government brought in when they were in government. I don't see that happening again. I think Albertans

know better than to hire somebody that sucks and blows at the same time. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I learned that . . .

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:24.

You can start again. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Seniors' Housing, Benefits, and Pensions

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I learned that Revera River Ridge in St. Albert was increasing its monthly rental rates by 10 per cent. This is very concerning. A 10 per cent increase during a cost-of-living crisis could mean families are left trying to find new places for their loved ones to live or are cutting back on other supports. This is increasing stress on seniors and their families, who often stretch their pocketbooks to get the right care. Will the minister please explain why the UCP is forcing more costs onto Alberta seniors and their families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This government is actually working towards reducing costs for seniors, reducing costs for Albertans while working towards making things more affordable across the board. We indexed seniors' benefits as well as supplementary programs. We're investing significantly in building out more affordable housing across the province so that more seniors have a place to call home in the communities that they've raised their families in, that they've built their lives in. That's a huge priority for this government, and we're going to continue to commit to making sure that we're increasing the affordability supply for Albertans.

Thank you.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the UCP got rid of the Seniors Advocate, a position I wish existed right now because seniors need support, and given that the UCP kicked seniors' dependents off their drug plans, forcing them to pay more for the medication they need, and given that the government deindexed seniors' benefits for three years, meaning they lost thousands of dollars that are essential to ensuring seniors can live and age in dignity, will the minister stand and apologize for the government's legacy of making life harder and more expensive for Alberta seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. I'm proud to live in a province in Canada that has the most generous supports for seniors in this country. I realize that it's still a challenge. I've been hitting a lot of doors in my community, talking to seniors on a daily basis, and understanding the challenge, the challenge that has come with this inflation crisis, that's created affordability challenges for seniors. That's why we've added our seniors to our affordability payments to make sure that they get that additional hundred dollars a month for six months – talking to seniors at the door, that's having a huge

impact for them – as well as trying to address heating bills and other affordability challenges for our seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that on top of everything else, the UCP wants to gamble with Alberta seniors' pensions so the Premier can fund an Alberta revenue agency and a UCP police force, both things Albertans have made abundantly clear they do not want, and given that seniors will get the chance to protect their pensions from the UCP in just a few weeks by electing an Alberta NDP government, why is the minister gambling with seniors' hard-earned savings, all while making them pay more to live in the province they call home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was so pleased to make seniors a focus point of our affordability action plan with our government. A couple of seniors in Alberta are eligible for up to \$1,200 together in affordability payments. They're eligible for up to \$500 of electricity rebates, and we've fully suspended the fuel tax. Two seniors in Alberta could be receiving up to \$2,000 in benefit, in support through this inflationary crisis from our government, and we're going to continue to be there for seniors.

### Budget 2023 and Calgary

**Mr. Panda:** It is ironic that the MLA for downtown Calgary is criticizing that Budget 2023 is not doing enough for downtown Calgary. Mr. Speaker, when he was the Finance minister, he probably did the most to drive out offices from Calgary, chase them out of Alberta. In stark contrast, those of us on this side of the House have seen an increase in employment and greater occupancy in our downtown office buildings. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs tell this Assembly what more is in the budget for Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. My colleague is well aware of many of the projects going on in downtown Calgary, right across Calgary right now, thanks to his time and dedication on the file of Infrastructure. He's right to recognize that we saw a decline in office vacancy in Calgary, the rate now dropping for a second straight quarter as the province recovers from four years under the NDP. As the member will well know from his time as Minister of Infrastructure, the government knows the importance of Calgary, and he will know many of the projects in Budget 2023, with \$541 million over three years for Calgary LRT . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister. Given the critical importance of Calgary being our commercial capital and given that there is a need for schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and social services in Calgary, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs tell this House about the supports provided by the province for Calgary to build infrastructure that the city deems important?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, Budget 2023 includes great news for the city of Calgary, including the widening of Deerfoot Trail and the new Calgary cancer centre, which I know my colleague is very passionate about. That's above and beyond the other dedicated projects for Calgary, that are too many, of course, to list in this short time, but it spans roads, postsecondary, health

care, education, arts, and recreation, with almost \$3 billion in the budget, because Calgary matters.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Edmonton.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. Given that many Calgarians are concerned about crime and safety, particularly when they ride the C-Train or go downtown, and given that often those committing crimes are suffering from mental health and addiction challenges, can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction tell this Assembly how programs and projects in Calgary around mental health and addiction will help create safer streets in our communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Addiction, homelessness, and public safety issues are impacting every community in Alberta. Edmonton and Calgary especially have, I would say, borne an unfair brunt of that. That is why we are taking real actions. The Calgary and Edmonton public safety and community response task forces are responsible for implementing \$187 million worth of life-saving initiatives in our two largest cities. We are increasing addiction treatment capacity in both of our urban centres, more sheriffs. We're doing this because big cities matter, and we're taking care of them.

#### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Mr. Sabir:** So many of my constituents rely on their vehicles to get to and from work. In fact, for many their cars are their livelihood. They deliver goods, they shuttle passengers, they drive long-haul trucks and do many other critical jobs. They all need to insure their vehicles, and despite the UCP's promise to freeze the insurance rates, drivers will soon pay a lot more to keep vehicles on the roads, up to 16 per cent in some cases. How does the minister explain to my constituents that under his so-called rate freeze the insurance rates are still going up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs has risen.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve an automobile insurance system that is fair, affordable, and accessible. This pause is a temporary measure to give Albertans some breathing room while the government explores longer term solutions, which the members opposite completely ignored. The goal is to steady auto insurance rates in the province and ultimately lower those rates for Albertans. This government has heard concerns from Albertans about auto insurance rates throughout the inflation crisis, so we're working to provide relief. That includes pausing rate increases to private passenger vehicle insurance through to the end of 2023.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that this government has once again abandoned my constituents – and now they are running misleading ads on Red FM about their fake insurance freeze – and given that they have taken the side of the insurance industry, just like they did after the northeast hailstorm in 2020, and given that the Alberta NDP has always been there for northeast Calgary while the UCP only listens to their friends and former campaign managers who are now lobbyists for the insurance industry, can the minister at least admit to Albertans that his government's first priority has always been their buddies in big insurance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The rate increases that the members opposite are referring to are from October to December of 2022, well before the rate pause came into effect. We confirmed with the auto insurance review board that no new rate increases have been approved since the rate pause. Just like what we saw with the members opposite and making up information about crop insurance, for example . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Ms Schulz:** . . . we don't need the members opposite purposely causing confusion where it's unwarranted. When the pause took effect, some insurers had already been approved for rate increases, so some Alberta drivers may see those reflected, but rate changes are also because of things like driving records.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that Albertans actually caught a break on their insurance rates when the Alberta NDP government put a cap on insurance rates and given that as soon as they formed the government, the UCP removed the cap and the insurance costs shot up by 30 per cent in some cases and given that last year when I brought forward a solution for my constituents' concerns and proposed a bill to reinstate an auto insurance freeze, this government refused to even debate that, how can the minister even explain his fake auto insurance freeze as anything other than a misleading stunt right before an election?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the regulated rate cap under the members opposite resulted in insurance providers pulling back products, including rate plans. We don't want to see that. Ours is a temporary pause to give us time to review and explore real, long-term solutions for Albertans. The arbitrary rate cap implemented by the members opposite hurt Albertans, Alberta businesses, and insurance doing business here. The rate cap implemented by the NDP government was hard on Alberta drivers. Many drivers had to pay for the full year's premium up front rather than monthly, were denied collision in comprehensive coverage. We've seen rates decline thanks to our Bill 41. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

During the second supplemental the Deputy Opposition House Leader raised a point of order at 2:34.

#### Kananaskis Conservation Pass

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP government turned K Country into Pay Country, and they'll pocket about \$11 million in revenue from their \$90 K pass. Despite taking this big pile of money from Albertans, the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis admitted that this government doesn't know where the funds will go. Will the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism finally tell Albertans why they're collecting money from them when they don't even know what they're doing with it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. All aspects of the K pass are under review. All options are being considered. It's important for me as Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism to ensure our review reflects a diversity of options while prioritizing affordability and promoting outdoor recreation and tourism. Rushing our review would do a disservice to those who love Kananaskis Country.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that Albertans, who are passionate about our beautiful parks in the wilderness paradise that is a provincial

treasure, have called for the K pass to be axed, pointing out that it betrays the legacy of Peter Lougheed – as Shaun Peter with Bragg Creek & Kananaskis Outdoor Recreation said, quote: we're paying now to use our backyard – and given that Shaun and so many other Albertans would rather see funding added to the parks budget through voluntary methods such as the parks licence plate program, that we have been advocating for, will the minister agree that the K pass is a bad idea, scrap it, and commit to adopting the Alberta NDP voluntary . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. Of course, I agree that Albertans love Kananaskis Country. There are more than 4 million people exploring that area annually. We want to make sure we have the right solutions. We want to make sure that we support outdoor recreation, public safety, and conservation. We want to make sure that we do what's right for the people of Alberta and make sure that they can enjoy the great country of Kananaskis when they have a chance to visit there.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that in November, a month after being sworn in as Premier, the Premier was asked on a radio show what she thought of the K pass and responded, quote, I don't love it because I think it puts a burden on families, and given that in December she said that she'd ask the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism for a review of the K pass but that three months later all we have are crickets on this issue and given that the Premier's budget shows that she's decided to break her promise and keep the K pass, how can Albertans believe a word anyone in this government says when they keep policies they know are bad and which impose new costs on to Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. We have increased funding on parks in Alberta and in Kananaskis particularly. We've put in \$1.2 million to maintain over 1,600 kilometres of trail, \$500,000 in grants to support trail organizations, and \$1.5 million to support public safety and dispatch programs. We are focused on making sure Kananaskis is safe, making sure that people have something to do when they get there and that we protect and conserve the environment there.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has a question to ask.

#### Calgary Ring Road and Deerfoot Trail Construction

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest Calgary ring road is a huge win for Calgary and Alberta. The truth is that we can no longer run our north-south trade route through the middle of our city. It has benefits for those in my constituency, who are no longer limited to one way in or out of our neighbourhoods. Today a trip to West Hills takes seven minutes, compared to the previous 25 minutes. We're now looking forward to the west leg being completed, which will allow us to get to WinSport in 15 minutes. To the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: can we see the entirety of the southwest Calgary ring road completed soon, including the west leg? When will it open for traffic?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary ring road is a huge win for all of Calgary. Construction is anticipated to be complete next year. That will help Calgarians spend more time at home with their families versus being stuck in traffic. Budget 2023 actually commits nine kilometres of new road on the ring road, a five-kilometre upgrade to the Trans-Canada highway, six new intersections, and 29 new bridges. When this project is complete, it'll do 101 kilometres of free-flowing traffic around the city of Calgary, and it's just great news for all of Calgary.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for that answer. Given that while there are many benefits of the ring road, there are also annoyances such as increased road noise, particularly noticeable where previously there wasn't even a road before, and given that road noise will likely increase as usage grows after the west section of Stoney is completed and given that the road noise affects my constituents' quality of life, can the minister please share what he is doing to prevent and mitigate the spillover of noise from the ring road in Cedarbrae and Woodbine neighbourhoods in southwest Calgary in particular?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In all of Calgary they're going to get about \$2.2 billion over three years in capital projects. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore has been a fierce champion when it comes to advocating for her constituents for the need of sound attenuation along the ring road, and I'm happy to say that in Budget 2023 we have that project committed into it. She can rest assured to know that her constituents can get a better night's sleep.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, that is fabulous news. Thanks to the minister for that. Given that the ring road is not the only vital roadway for Calgary's local economy and given that our government is committed to improving Deerfoot Trail, the busiest roadway in Alberta, and given that the UCP government is committed to driving our province forward, unlike the NDP, who want to just force a transition on Albertans and put thousands of Albertans out of jobs, can the minister please share the economic benefits of improving Deerfoot Trail and how that will affect our province?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2023 has \$430 million for Deerfoot Trail upgrades within the city of Calgary. That means about 900,000 hours a year, with an economic benefit of \$23 million for Calgary and the region. That means these Deerfoot upgrades will actually be 15 per cent faster for Calgarians to get to work and also 22 per cent faster time for Calgarians to get home from work and, overall, just help families spend more time together versus staring at tail lights at the end of the day.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, my apologies. The question period timer did not sound, but I can assure you that the 50 minutes allotted for question period have expired.

Hon. members, we will proceed immediately to the remainder of the daily Routine given the close approximation of estimates to follow. If you are leaving the Chamber, I encourage you to do so

quickly, quietly as we will continue with the remainder of the Routine.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 207, Jobs and Investment Act,\* a bill to help grow and diversify our economy here in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 2:24 the hon. Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I suspect you know why I'm rising on this point of order, 23(j), uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder. Essentially, I rise on a point of order that there was language being used that offends the dignity of the Assembly. The Minister for Jobs, Economy and Northern Development repeatedly used the phrase "suck and blow," and it's very visual language, bordering on profane. I think the fact that the minister was so delighted with himself that he repeated it over and over again makes my point for me. If it is language that the grade 6 classes in the gallery would titter at, I think it offends the dignity of this place.

I rise on this point of order. I realize unparliamentary language is a difficult thing to rule on. It's often the Speaker's judgment that will make this call, but I think in this case having all members yelling at each other about sucking and blowing is something we should not have in this House. I hope you will rule this a point of order and we can avoid this language in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I don't really need them. I did hear the hon. minister say the term "suck and blow" a number of times, but in this Chamber you cannot fabricate outrage, okay? The language used – if the member opposite is going to suggest that there was a sexual connotation, she should have a conversation with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who on a number of occasions has referred to bills in a phallic nature, saying that it's not the size of the bill but how you use it. End quote. That has never been ruled a point of order though I have called it a number of times.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that saying "suck and blow" in this context is necessarily a point of order. I can assure you that the member on our side of the House was not referring to it in any inappropriate manner so much as to say that you can't inhale and exhale at the same time, when the members opposite are saying one thing but doing the other. So I don't find that this is a point of order, and I would hope that if it's used again, it's also not called a point of order because we know that in some instances when phrases and words are used repeatedly, then they become disruptive to the Chamber. This I don't believe is one of them, and I'd hope that we would not fabricate a point of order out of something like this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I hope the Government House Leader wasn't implying that the Speaker would fabricate a point of order in any parameters.

**Mr. Schow:** Never, sir.

**The Speaker:** I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I do have the benefit of this exact situation. In fact, it took place immediately prior to an estimates meeting on March 20, 2013, on page 1671 of *Hansard* on that particular occasion, when a member used the language around sucking and blowing. On that occasion a point of order was not found, but a caution was provided with respect to language that is likely to create disorder. I will concur with the Speaker in the strongest possible way. As we saw today, this language certainly didn't lend itself to creating order; as such, a case could be made that it created disorder.

Having said that, I will provide a caution to the hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development with respect to the use of such language, but it is not a point of order. I consider that matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:34 the Official Opposition Deputy House Leader rose on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to 23(i), and I think it's always good to have (h) and (j) with it. I don't have the benefit of Blues, but in response to my question the Minister of Municipal Affairs did comment, did say something along the lines that the member opposite is making it up. She specifically used "making up" and directed it at myself personally. That is clearly offside 23(i), and it's a point of order.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll indulge me for a very quick moment, referring to the last point of order, I would never suggest the Speaker is fabricating a point of order. Just a point of clarification. Second off, I will provide clarification and caution to our member on that term.

With regard to this point of order I believe it's a matter of interpretation. What I heard from the member, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, was: the members opposite. Certainly, saying "the member opposite" would be a point of order, but without referring to one member in particular, it'd be difficult to call this a point of order, so I would disagree: not a point of order but, rather, a matter of debate.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. On this occasion the Blues report the statements of the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs as, "Just like what we saw with the members opposite," being plural, "and making up information about crop insurance, for example." The point of order was called, and she proceeded.

While I have provided caution around the use of "making things up," "making information up" as well, I concur with the Government House Leader. If, in fact, she had said "the member opposite," it certainly would have been a point of order, but today it will be caution with making accusations that large groups of people make information up or otherwise. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I see the Official Opposition House Leader rising for some reason.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to return to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

\*See page 589, left column, paragraph 3

**Notices of Motions***(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the entire House. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-North West and for clarity of *Hansard* I just want to make sure that we all know that he rose to give oral notice for Bill 207, Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Out of an abundance of caution and for clarity's sake, will you please just read the name of the bill which you intend to place on the Order Paper? The exact verbiage, please. Just the bill.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at Orders of the Day, Ordres du jour.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30. The legislative policy committees

will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for the consideration of the main estimates.

This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Executive Council in the Rocky Mountain Room. This evening the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will continue the consideration of the main estimates on Affordability and Utilities in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism in the Grassland Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:54 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 15, 2023

Day 19

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)	Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Deputy Government House Leader	Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)	Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)	Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)	Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC), Premier
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I had the absolute privilege to meet a very special guest to Alberta who's now joining us in the Speaker's gallery, His Excellency Kakha Imnadze, the ambassador of Georgia, on his and on the country of Georgia's very first official visit to the province of Alberta. We had a wonderful opportunity to discuss the future of Alberta-Georgia relations and know there is much work we can do together in our shared values of democracy and freedom. I invite the ambassador and his assistant minister-counsellor to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you my mom, Josie Fir. She regularly watches question period, so much so that when we argue, she'll end the argument by saying: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. After the Speaker and the Member for Grande Prairie, I'm honoured to be my mom's third-favourite MLA. Mom, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a school group.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to introduce through you and to all members of the Assembly the fantastic grade 6 class from Earl Buxton school and their teacher, Ms Kristine O'Driscoll. I had the honour of meeting this class when they came through the Legislature a couple of weeks ago, but, even better, I got to celebrate Carnival at their school just a few weeks ago, where they had taffy pulling, potato sack races, and tug-of-war. They're fantastic students, if I dare say, some of the best in the province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a school group.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you. It's a thrill to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 41 of some of the brightest minds in the province of Alberta, the grade 6 class, from my home constituency and home neighbourhood, of Evansdale school. I ask you all now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to rise today to introduce to you and through you the young men and women participating in the United Conservative caucus internship program. They've come to serve our caucus, learn about our province's great tradition and institutions and rich heritage, and invest in our democracy, that we share. It's an immense pleasure to work with these young men and women. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some great folks from Scleroderma Canada. Please welcome Erin Stanhope, Scott Munnoch, and my good friend executive director John Malcolmson. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House two special guests from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, Alyssa Stoddard, also known as Miss Alyssa to my kids and many of the other Shumka kids out there, and Orysia Boychuk, president of the organization. With their concern and advocacy for landing Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta, it's an honour and a privilege. Thank you so much for what you do, and we look forward to helping you more.

## Members' Statements

### School Transportation Funding

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, through Budget 2023 our government is providing school authorities with an additional \$414 million over the next three years to support school transportation and ensure affordability and accessibility for all Alberta families. This will be a 32 per cent increase for the 2023-24 school year.

To help relieve inflation pressures, we have made significant investments in school transportation to ensure more students can take the bus, rural students have shorter rides, and families can save money. With these new changes 80,000 more students will be eligible for provincially funded school transportation. We will be saving parents over \$20 million by expanding provincial supports for bus services to 47,000 more students. We're also increasing eligibility for busing by 30,000 students through a reduction of the minimum distance they must live from their school to be eligible.

Budget 2023 student transportation funding will also continue to address costs and inflationary pressures faced by school authorities and bus contractors by providing funding for an additional 100 bus routes serving rural students. Rural ride times are expected to decrease significantly. Increased funding for driver training will support 1,250 drivers, including 350 new drivers, and increase the driver workforce by 6 per cent. Alberta's government is also continuing the fuel price contingency program for the 2023-24 school year. To date this program has saved school authorities \$16.5 million in the current school year, '22-23, and is projected to save them a total of \$23.5 million in the upcoming school year.

Mr. Speaker, more than 300,000 Alberta students and their families rely on transportation services to and from school every day. The investments we are making now will benefit Alberta families today, tomorrow, and for many years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Budget 2023

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this budget does not inspire confidence in accountability, transparency, or common sense, and I must admit that I'm a little surprised. While the Premier and I don't agree on much, I do remember her last time in this Chamber, where she was very concerned with these principles that are seemingly being thrown aside in this budget. Would as a member that Premier of 2012 or 2014 have stood by while an out-of-touch PC government created a potentially multibillion-dollar slush fund right before an election, or would she have agreed that a Premier should give herself the ability, right before an election, to spend potentially billions? The answer to that is: I don't think so.

But that is exactly what is happening in this budget. The government's slush fund, which, if enacted, gives the government the ability to spend money that they are projected to have on, scare quotes, one-time projects – and these are scary quotes – or, quote, emerging priorities: that is a polite way of saying “electioneering.” The budget has \$3 million to advertise itself. It has \$30 million for the embarrassing war room. This is undemocratic, unaccountable, in short, the UCP in its truest form.

But Albertans have come to expect these sorts of tricks from the government. They know they will promise one thing and do the exact opposite after the election. Albertans know that this budget is not about supporting them. It is for a government that is increasingly desperate in its attempt to win back the trust of Albertans after violating it time and time and time and time again. Albertans do not trust this government or this Premier, and they know that if they want a government they can trust, they can elect an Alberta NDP government on May 29.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

### UCP and NDP Government Records

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This United Conservative government is in tune to the needs of Albertans, and we strive to bring opportunities to all parts of our stunning province. We are focused on growth and targeted funding. We are motivated to assist Albertans through extraordinary periods of high inflation. We are determined to bring forward better health care deliveries and outcomes and expand supports for mental health and addictions.

Albertans elected us in 2019 to fix the problems that the NDP let slide. Albertans trusted us to be the guiding light to new potential. They trusted us to be their representatives for Alberta but also for Canada. Albertans are confident that we have their best interests in mind.

The same cannot be said for the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has vigorously promoted the carbon tax from day one, and at a time of real financial difficulties they are one hundred per cent in support of the federal government further raising the carbon tax in April. This increase will add an additional 14 cents per litre for Albertans at the pumps.

As our United Conservative government applied for the affordability action plan to help alleviate stress and financial concerns for Albertans, the NDP still wants to make life more unaffordable for everyone. The NDP brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta's history when they were in government, and they would surely do it again, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy was struggling when the NDP was elected, but what was their solution to a struggling economy and high unemployment? They chose to hit employers with a 20 per cent tax increase. They introduced a provincial carbon tax that raised the costs of all goods and services, and they drove away important businesses and investors.

The NDP's mismanagement greatly affected our province, Mr. Speaker, but I am proud to say that this UCP government has brought Alberta back on track, and we're just getting started.

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

1:40

### Royal Canadian Legion

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a crossparty homage to the Royal Canadian Legion. I know that many members of this Chamber are also members of the Royal Canadian Legion, and so am I. Very happily, I was given this gift today of a tie, a Legion tie, from Legion 62, the one of which I'm a member. I am a member because my father was a member. My grandfather was a serviceman. You can be a member of the Canadian Legion if you are a service member or not, if your family is a service member or not. It's welcome to all, and there are thousands upon thousands of Albertans that are.

The history of the Legion as an institution runs deep. In fact, it's crosspartisan, Mr. Speaker, because the CCF, on July 31, 1932, the precursor to the NDP, was founded at the Legion 1 hall in Calgary, a great part of prairie populism as a tradition that we hold here in Canada and Alberta and the prairies.

You can host your Christmas supper at the Legion, your perogy dinners at the Legion. You can do every single community event you can imagine. Mr. Speaker, I know my constituency office and my family book every single year as often as we can.

A thank you to all the servicemen and -women for all the work that they have done protecting our country, keeping us strong and free.

Thank you to everyone who is a Legion member for the work that they have done making sure that that institution is still a place where you can have your turkey and perogy dinners, where you can go to meat draws, which was my childhood with my father and grandfather coming up together. The meat draw is every single Saturday afternoon, something I still participate in at the Peace River Legion all the time.

To everyone: thank you very much for your service if you're military members. Thank you to everyone who is a Legion member. Cheers to you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Canadian Legion: God bless.

**The Speaker:** While I share your support for the Legion, I don't share your commitment to a prop inside the Assembly.

### Affordability Plan

**Mr. Feehan:** Mr. Speaker, for weeks Albertans have had to listen to the UCP wax poetic about their so-called affordability plan. They spent a lot of taxpayer dollars advertising it online and in the mail, but there's an irony here. The UCP plan is just the UCP reversing some of their own bad decisions, decisions that raised the costs on each and every Albertan and made them pay more. Four years and four big mistakes: let me tell you about them.

The UCP slashed AISH and seniors' benefits, saying that the cuts were, quote, not onerous, but these cuts were onerous. They hurt Albertans. Now the same team that caused the pain wants credit for reindexing them. I don't think so. By deindexing personal income taxes, the government cost Albertans over \$600 million, money that should have stayed in Albertans' pockets. Ironically, the government that took that money away wants credit for giving it back.

Here's another. The UCP took the cap off car insurance premiums at the behest of their lobbyist friends, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? Albertans were side-swiped, driven into the ditch by



double-digit premium hikes of, in some cases, more than 30 per cent. Now this government wants credit for a fake freeze even as insurance premiums are spiking by 16 per cent now. The hypocrisy is astounding.

Here's another example. Our Alberta NDP government put a cap on utilities. One of the first things the UCP did was remove that price protection. Now the RRO price is triple the protected price, and the UCP wants credit for offering payday loans that come due after the election.

Mr. Speaker, on all these matters – benefits, income tax, insurance, utilities – the UCP is the cause of the problem, not the solution. Albertans will have the chance to rectify this on May 29.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North has risen.

#### UCP and NDP Government Records

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Looking back at the 2019 budget address, our government and Albertans had three main priorities: getting back to work, making life better, and standing up for our province. Our government took those priorities seriously. Here is a quick high-level comparison of Alberta then and Alberta now.

In 2019 the unemployment rate was 7.3 per cent, the corporate tax rate was 12 per cent, the budget deficit was over \$12 billion, and the provincial carbon tax was in effect. When the NDP left office, we were coming out of a four-year period with multiple credit downgrades, a shrinking private sector, 97 tax and fee increases, and \$64 billion in debt. In 2019 Albertans were worrying for their future and for their province.

Four years later, Mr. Speaker, and despite two years of a global pandemic, Alberta's unemployment rate now is at 5.8 per cent, with over 200,000 jobs created. The corporate tax rate is the lowest in the country, at 8 per cent, bringing \$400 million more in revenue than at 12 per cent. Last year's venture capital broke records at \$729 million, with more expected in 2023. We don't have a provincial tax. We have a balanced budget with a \$2.5 billion surplus. We are providing an increase of \$100 million over the next three years for the film and television tax credit. Under our government more than 119,000 private-sector jobs have been created. We have the lowest tax of any province, and our Finance minister just paid off all the debt that matured in 2022.

Banks are forecasting that Alberta's economy will lead Canada over the next two years, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is pulling through to become stronger and better than when we first came into office. We are leading the nation with economic growth and endless potential. Thousands of people are moving into Alberta every month from across the country, around the world, including many newcomers. That's why Alberta's best days are ahead under another UCP government. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### Budget 2023

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to work with this Finance minister to develop the largest capital plan in Alberta's history. Together we invested about \$30 billion over four years to stimulate and diversify Alberta's economy. This year's budget is a testament to the strong fiscal management the UCP has brought to our great province. Budget '23 is investing over half a billion dollars in Calgary LRT projects, nearly half a billion dollars to upgrade Deerfoot Trail, over a quarter billion dollars to protect communities on the Elbow River, and \$166 million towards the cancer centre.

Additionally, the Alberta government is increasing health care spending by nearly \$3 billion, the Education budget by nearly half a billion, and the Advanced Education budget by nearly \$200 million compared to last year. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment will create 3,400 more health care training spots in postsecondaries, 100 new residency spots for doctors, and 120 new spots for physician training at Alberta universities, a 34 per cent increase.

Budget 2023 represents a monumental investment in Alberta's future and only exists because of the strong fiscal management this UCP government has produced over these past years despite COVID-19. This budget will continue to provide affordability relief to all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, facts matter. Numbers don't lie. I would encourage all Albertans to look at all the good investments in this new Budget 2023. Don't fall for fearmongering. The NDP would have borrowed and spent and mortgaged our children's future while the UCP has created wealth, prosperity, and jobs for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve a secure retirement with strong pensions they can count on, but repeatedly the UCP has meddled in pensions, and now this Premier is threatening their CPP. Last year she said, and I quote: when you look at the CPP alone, that is clearly going to pay for a new Alberta provincial police force or collecting our personal income tax. On this side we know that Albertans' retirements should never be used to fund this Premier's bad ideas. Will the Premier stand today and commit to never withdrawing Alberta from the Canada pension plan?

1:50

**Ms Smith:** I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that a hundred per cent of the premiums that are collected for pension will always, one hundred per cent go to support pensions. What we are looking at on this side is something that we heard from the Fair Deal Panel discussions all over Alberta. Albertans wanted us to look at what would happen if we had our own Alberta pension plan. We have done a report, but it's a couple of years old. The company, LifeWorks, that did the report wanted to update it with new information, so we're awaiting that information. When it's available, it will be released.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans didn't ask for this at all. Here's Leah from Edmonton: the Premier's plan is reckless and ill advised; it puts seniors who rely on their CPP in jeopardy. Here's Karen from Calgary: the pension I paid into for 40 years is not something that belongs to the UCP. And Alex from Devon says: this is a ruse for the UCP to get their hands on the personal savings of Albertans; CPP is not being mismanaged; if you want to know what Albertans believe, then have a referendum. I agree with Alex. If the Premier agrees, too, will she agree to hold a referendum during this spring election?

**Ms Smith:** I agree with Alex, too. There should be a referendum if there is going to be any change to the pension, and we have committed that there would be. But it's a little premature to be talking about that since we don't have the report and we haven't done the public consultation and we haven't heard from Albertans

whether they want us to proceed to a referendum. I don't know why the members opposite didn't participate in the province-wide hearings that took place with the Fair Deal Panel, because we did hear from Albertans that we should look into it, and that's what we're doing.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we actually know that the UCP has already received part 1 of the report on gambling with Alberta's CPP, and the real thing is that they're just scared to release it before the election. It's a deeply unpopular idea. They know it, so they're hiding it. In contrast, Alberta's NDP will release our own report tomorrow, a real commitment that we will stay in CPP and other good ideas as well. Now, while we want Albertans to see our proposals, this Premier can't say the same. If she believes in her plan, why is she so scared to show it to Albertans before the election?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, the initial report looks very promising. It looks like not only would we be able to substantially decrease the premiums that Albertans pay, but we would also be able to substantially increase the amount that we give to each senior in benefits. We want to just make sure that we've got the right information based on updated figures because things have changed on the rates and the contributions and the overcontribution of Albertans. That report, we've been told, by LifeWorks won't be available till May, so as soon as it's available, we'll release it and have a discussion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** What the Premier wants is to hide this issue from Albertans.

### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Ms Notley:** Now, on a different issue, quote: I don't see the need; I won't prejudge what drugs need to be covered. And another quote: we let private insurance take the lead. For a week now this Premier has been asked repeatedly about a good health care policy that would help tens of thousands of Alberta women, universal contraceptive coverage at no cost. Instead of supporting women's health care, this Premier has come up with every excuse in the book. I can't wait to hear today's. Once again, why won't this Premier help Alberta women afford the cost of birth control?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we just have a different approach. We know that there is coverage that is available in private insurance plans as well as public insurance plans. Alberta Blue Cross is available not only for low-income individuals through the various programs that we offer; our seniors also have access to these programs. We have a nongroup program that's available for anybody to be able to sign up so that they can get the full range of pharmaceuticals that they might need as opposed to just singling out this one particular one. So anybody who lacks coverage should call Alberta Blue Cross.

**Ms Notley:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues her full-throated defence of the idea that people should pay for their health care out of pocket. We did look at what Blue Cross costs and what the coverage costs. A 28-year-old woman with no health conditions and no dependants will pay \$60 a month, and even then she will only get 70 per cent coverage. On what planet does the Premier think the choice to pay more is one that any Alberta woman is remotely interested in accepting?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we've got support in our system to have both private insurance and public insurance when it comes to pharmaceuticals. The reason we do that, quite frankly, is so that we can get a broader range of drugs covered, because the private formularies often accept the new drugs faster than public formularies when you look at places where they don't have private insurance. We want to make sure that the full range of coverage for all pharmaceuticals is available in Alberta, and that's the reason why we want to continue to support choice.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's answers have even been more ridiculous. On Monday the Premier said, "The . . . things that we hear should be covered are things like the diabetes pumps." Now, while I'm glad the UCP finally figured out that diabetes pumps should be covered, those pumps do not prevent pregnancies. The Premier says that she's going to let private insurance take the lead, the total opposite of leadership. Why should Albertans elect a Premier who lets private insurance companies, who have a profit motive, decide the kind of health care that people will have universal access to? Why?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we support women's health in a number of different ways. We provide grant funding to community-based organizations in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat to support vulnerable women, including those who are pregnant, postpartum, and want contraception. We also have a funding commitment for current projects under \$2 million annually to support 350 women and infants that are supported each year. We've got a number of programs offering culturally sensitive maternity care, including Indigenous Births of Alberta and Juniper Midwives, which provide services that support Indigenous women and families. We support women's health.

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

### Public Safety and 2SLGBTQQIA-plus Rights

**Member Irwin:** Calgary public library has partnered with Calgary Pride for the past five years to host reading with royalty. These are family-friendly events that celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and spark the imagination by telling stories and singing songs. But this year the library was forced to postpone reading with royalty because a small number of people chose to harass children and families and spew hate against fabulous Alberta drag queens. My question is a simple one: will the Premier join me in condemning these acts of bigotry?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is committed to the protection of children, diversity, parental choice, and the right to peaceful protest. Any event where children are present should be age appropriate. My understanding of the reading time events, like the one in Calgary, is that they are kept age appropriate and minors attending them have the consent of their parents. We respect parental choice being exercised by minors that are in attendance. We also believe in the right to peaceful protest as long as people are doing it within the bounds of the law.

**Member Irwin:** While this Premier and this UCP did nothing, the city of Calgary took action. Yesterday council passed a bylaw aimed at preventing harassment of people entering or leaving public libraries or recreation centres by setting up a bubble zone of 100 metres. It's so sad that they even needed to do this, but here we are. The last time we talked about bubble zones in this building, that time in relation to abortion clinics, the UCP actually went and hid

in the bathrooms. Does the Premier support the new city of Calgary bylaws?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we are just hearing about the new bylaw in the city of Calgary, and we know that municipalities are responsible for creating bylaws. I would encourage anyone who is concerned about this to reach out to their councillor and to the mayor's office to express their view.

In the meantime I do want to tell the members opposite what we have done to support the city of Calgary, because what we hear from the city of Calgary is that citizens are worried about public safety. It's why we have our sheriffs embedded with Calgary police officers, addressing the issue of public disorder and making sure that the streets are safe.

**Member Irwin:** When someone shows you who they are, believe them. This is the same UCP government that's the first and only government in Canada to remove protections for the 2SLGBTQ-plus community. That's right. This is the first provincial government in Canada to actually roll back rights, when they removed legal privacy protections and they limited the right for Alberta students to form GSAs in schools. This was a clear demonstration that the UCP is willing to put 2SLGBTQ-plus youth in danger. Does the Premier regret her predecessor's attack on young Albertans, and if so, what tangible steps is she going to take to fix that terrible relationship she has with the . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

2:00

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I really object to the way the members opposite try to divide people when we are united on the issue of protecting our students and protecting members of the LGBTQ-plus community. Our government has the most comprehensive . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Smith:** Our government has the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ-plus students in Canada. Membership in any student organization, including GSAs, is protected under Alberta's robust privacy legislation. I would ask for an apology from the members opposite for suggesting otherwise. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Publicly Funded Health Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current Premier wants Albertans to pay out of pocket for the health care they need. We know this because she keeps saying so. She's on the record saying she wants Albertans to get used to paying for health care, even for taking their kids to the family doctor. Why, as recently as yesterday she told this House that she wants insurance companies to take the lead on what prescriptions and treatments are covered. That sounds like American-style health care. Why does the Premier want to hand over Albertans' health care to her friends in big insurance?

**Ms Smith:** I don't know, Mr. Speaker. They had four years to institute a public insurance plan like the one they're asking us to do. Why didn't they do it? There's a reason they didn't do it; it's because we end up with better coverage when you have a mix of public and private. Well, again, I mean, the members had the opportunity to do it. They chose not to, so I don't know why

anybody would believe, now that they're campaigning, that they would do something different than what they did in government. They're trying to make that point on a number of different cases. Any time I have spoken about people paying out of pocket, what I have said is health spending accounts, which is what every member in this Legislature enjoys.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, what the Premier said was: seeing a family doctor; is that something government really has to pay for? That's on the record. Alberta New Democrats believe that Albertans should take the lead on their health care in consultation with their family doctor. That's why an Alberta NDP government will provide universal coverage for prescription contraception, so that every single Albertan who needs that medication can get it. Now, the Premier has heard story after story from Albertans telling her how life changing that policy would be. Each time she says that Albertans should pay out of pocket instead, which means many people simply cannot get the care they need. Why is this Premier working for big insurance instead of Albertans?

**Ms Smith:** I just don't know how the members opposite can sit here, having taxpayers pay \$950 every year, year after year, for their health spending account to cover the things that are not covered by insurance and then deny that to taxpayers. Why do they think that taxpayers should pay for their benefit and for us not to extend that benefit to all taxpayers? That's what the health spending account is all about. That's part of the reason why I've asked our Minister of Technology and Innovation to scope it out, so that we can create a little bit of parity. I personally think that taxpayers deserve to have the same benefits as the politicians they're paying for.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know how this Premier can sit here and say that she should give \$20 billion dollars away to her friends and donors in profitable oil and gas companies when Albertans are having to pay out of pocket for contraception.

I'm so proud that Alberta NDP plan to connect a million Albertans with a family doctor and a family health team. After the UCP chased family doctors out of the province, we will welcome them back in. We will get Albertans the care they need when they need it, where they need it: close to home. We will take the pressure off our ambulances and hospitals and end the UCP's chaos in health care because that's what happens when Albertans lead and not the Premier's friends in insurance.

**Ms Smith:** I didn't hear a question in that, Mr. Speaker.

### Agrifood Industry in Southern Alberta

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, two years ago our UCP government embarked on an ambitious project to build a supercluster of agrifood processors in the corridor between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. We recognize the need for our government to invest in the infrastructure to make this happen, so we announced the twinning of highway 3. This will open more farmland to feed these agrifood companies as they grow. To the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: how valuable will these investments be to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and all the communities in between?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question and all the work that he's done to advocate for southern Alberta, whether it be irrigation or the twinning of highway 3. Budget '23 actually has \$94 million in

it committed to twin highway 3 between Taber and Burdett. In addition to that, in southern Alberta there are 65 projects totalling over \$200 million that's going to not only help families in southern Alberta get home and get to work safely but also unleash economic development in southern Alberta, whether that's food manufacturing or oil and gas and so many more industries.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday McCain Foods announced that they would be making the largest investment in their 65 years of operation, and given that this investment will amount to \$600 million and create 260 new jobs in my riding, can the minister let the Assembly know if McCain's decision had anything to do with the government's business-friendly approach and our ability to renew the Alberta advantage?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have to say, too: thank you to that member for his advocacy. This is an important file to that member. Work well done.

From McCain Foods' president and CEO: "The development in Alberta marks our largest global investment in our 65-year history," creating 260 jobs, two new production lines, one for french fries, one for potato specialty products. What I can assure you is that this investment, in conversations with McCain over the last year, would not have been possible without our investment in the irrigation system in the south. They needed the land. They needed the . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta boasts 70 per cent of Canada's irrigated land, making southern Alberta internationally recognized as a leader in the production of high-quality food, and given that under this government the quarter between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat will see an increase of another 230,000 irrigated acres and given that growing our agrifood processing sector creates more opportunities for primary producers while supporting job creation in rural communities, again to the same minister: what else is this government doing to keep Alberta feeding our families, Canada, and the world?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is diversification of the economy, folks. This is playing to our strengths. AIDA, Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, studies show that \$3.56 comes back to the province for every dollar invested in irrigation. This is just a piece of that. Many of you are familiar now with our agriprocessing tax credit, which hopefully will be passed by the House here very shortly. We brought in \$1.4 billion in investment and 2,000 jobs last term; next term, 9,000 jobs and \$5 billion.

#### Morinville Clinic X-ray Machine

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, All Albertans should have access to health care where and when they need it, but the Morinville clinic has been without a functional X-ray machine since February of 2020, when it broke down. Instead of doing the right thing and replacing it, AHS announced last January that X-ray services in Morinville would be permanently closed. Alberta's NDP is now promising to restore this important service if elected. To the Health minister: why did he let the health care needs of thousands of

Albertans fall through the cracks because of one broken X-ray machine?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The health and well-being of all Albertans and Albertans outside of our big cities is important to us. In fact, that's why we are investing record numbers of dollars in terms of the budget and record amounts in terms of the capital. We recognize that in being able to provide the services, not only do you need the equipment, but you need all of the supports, including the people, to do that. We are continuing to assess the viability of maintaining that service and making sure that we have all the wraparound resources to be able to do that before we actually make the decision to spend the capital.

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, given that when this X-ray machine broke down, the mayors of Morinville and Bon Accord wrote to the Minister of Health and given that they wrote how the machine was, and I quote, a valuable asset for residents in Morinville, Sturgeon county as well as members of Alexander First Nation and given that the Health minister's totally inadequate response was that the machine had reached the end of its life and that's that, will the Minister of Health admit that it's his government at the end of its life and also needs to be replaced ASAP?

2:10

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, we are investing record amounts of capital infrastructure as part of Budget 2023 on top of the record amounts that we actually invested last year. This includes not only infrastructure for new buildings, but this includes infrastructure for new equipment across the entire province, in rural areas. We understand that we need the technology, but it's not just about the technology; it's about also ensuring that all the supports around that technology show we can continue to provide the service. We are continuing to do our analysis on this, and I look forward to sharing more soon.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that Morinville-St. Albert is represented by a UCP MLA who clearly can't get the job done and given that the minister ignored the mayors, ignored the health needs of Albertans and given the minister goes on TV every day and claims the health care crisis is over and we're making great progress, how does the minister expect Albertans to believe the government can fix all of health care if he can't fix one broken X-ray machine?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members across the way know, there are challenges in our health care system. This is not only affecting Alberta, but it's affecting the entire country, all of the First World. We are taking action and responsible action to invest to expand the capacity in our health care system, not only investing in people, in terms of hiring more people, but investing more money on the expense side and on the capital side. We know that when you actually invest in a piece of equipment, you need to have all of the support services around that to be able to provide the services. We continue to provide the services for people in Edmonton and the Morinville area, and we'll keep doing that.

#### Child Care Cost-control Framework

**Ms Pancholi:** The UCP's new plan for child care means parents won't ever be paying only \$10 a day for child care; they'll have to pay extra fees for things that should be part of all quality child care programs, and the parents who can't afford those extra fees will see

their children left out. The for-profit and nonprofit operators that I've spoken to are worried that the UCP will keep underfunding them so they won't be able to provide the things that this government doesn't think are essential for quality child care, like food or activities. Does the minister really think that denying children food and activities in their child care program will actually enhance the quality of child care in Alberta?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, it's astonishing that the member opposite continues with this narrative, but on this side of the House we prefer to reject the notions of distraction and misinformation. We are engaging in a province-wide engagement session with all operators in this province to ensure that we receive their input on the implementation details of the cost-control framework. We're engaging with parents as well and will continue to do so so that we get the information to get this right.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that to date the minister hasn't made any effort to tell parents about his plans to make them pay more and they're excluded from consultations impacting their own children's care and early learning opportunities and given that the minister is probably desperate not to let parents know that they will be paying way more for child care than he promised, especially during an affordability crisis and right before an election, does the minister want to use this opportunity now to come clean to parents about his plans to increase their fees for child care and tell them how much more he expects they'll be paying?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we are listening to our operators in this province, and we are listening to parents in this province. While the NDP prefers to fearmonger about child care in this province, we are working diligently to engage with all of the relevant stakeholders to receive their input. We will implement a system that is affordable and accessible and safe for all parents and all children in this province.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that the UCP is talking about expanding school nutrition programs but at the same time they want to force child care operators to charge extra fees to feed their children in their care and given that for too many families a nutritious meal at their daycare or their day home may be the only healthy meal they get in a day and given that the minister could commit right now that operators will receive the funding they need to avoid charging fees for essentials, like meals and snacks, will the minister stand up right now and tell parents that they won't have to pay more for food and that the UCP will fund operators to provide it at no extra cost to parents? The Alberta NDP understands that nutrition is a part of quality child care.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear to the members opposite but more importantly to all Albertans in this province that we will develop a framework that is equitable. It will assist and it will provide affordable and equal child care to all of the children in this province. I want to make it absolutely clear that we reject the idea of a tiered system, and the only tiered system that we know about is the failed NDP pilot project, the \$25-a-day program that failed children and parents all across this province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is next.

### Federal-provincial Relations

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has always been and continues to be a proud member of the Canadian Confederation. As

the leader in entrepreneurship, technology, energy, and so much more, our province has a strong and prosperous future within Canada. Now, despite Alberta's role as a major economic driver, job creator, and innovator, our strong resource sectors, energy sectors, and entrepreneurs have been under attack by the federal government. Given that many Albertans are eager to remain a part of Canada while growing and promoting our leading industries, to the Premier: how can Alberta continue to assert its own interests while remaining a proud member of Canada?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has risen.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things, I think, about drawing boundaries with the federal government is that it allowed for us to have collaboration in other areas. There are some things we're going to fight – that's for sure – but we were able to get a health care deal with the federal government that brings \$518 million more to be able to support primary care and to be able to support mental health and addiction and be able to support some more reporting to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. I noticed that the minister of seniors, community, and social supports scored a bit of a victory as well in getting – I'm going to have to answer that on the next one.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for her answer and strong defence of Alberta's interests. Given that the federal government, supported by the NDP, aims to introduce the just transition bill by the summer of 2023 and given that there's a growing concern regarding continued investment attraction and support for entrepreneurship in Alberta and given that there will be strong demand for Alberta energy for decades to come, to the Premier: what exactly is our government fighting for when it comes to defending and supporting Alberta's energy sector within a united Canada?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite supported the just transition, which just transitioned our coal workers completely out of jobs, and they were supportive of the just transition for oil and natural gas workers, too, until we raised a fuss and said: absolutely no way. The federal government has backed down on that, which I think is good, but we still have to fight them on a couple of other things. Number one, we have to make sure that clean electricity regs do not come through that would prevent us from adding natural gas to our power grid. We also have to make sure that the emissions reduction plan does not end up phasing out our energy sector. They want to bring through an emissions cap of 42 per cent on oil and gas by 2030, and that's not on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for her answer. Given that there are many areas in which we are productively working with the federal government and given that Alberta plans on continuing to be a leader under Confederation and given that our government has committed to standing up for Albertan workers and industries, to the Premier: how are you planning to work and negotiate successfully with the federal government to ensure we can support Alberta's interests and industries?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I was happy to see in their newly named sustainable jobs plan is the recognition that Alberta is going to be a leader in hydrogen, that Alberta is going to be a leader in carbon capture, and I was pleased to see that our neighbour on the coast, B.C. Premier David Eby, just signed a new deal on LNG development with the Haisla Nation for the expansion of the Cedar LNG export proposal. These are the kinds of things that we can work on collaboratively with our partner in British Columbia. We just have to get the federal government onboard and understanding that the more LNG we export to the world, the more it will reduce global emissions, and that will achieve both of our targets.

#### Premier's Office Staff

**Ms Ganley:** Before being elected, the Premier was pushing for a \$20 billion giveaway to a small number of delinquent companies to clean up their wells, something they're already obligated to do. The Premier said that she loved the idea after having a lobbyist named Kris Kinnear on her podcast. Now Mr. Kinnear works in the Premier's office implementing the \$20 billion handout while being listed as a corporate director and lobbyist of the group pushing for the giveaway. Does the Premier fail to understand the appearance of conflict in a lobbyist shovelling Albertans' money to his clients?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said during estimates yesterday when the member asked these questions, Mr. Kinnear resigned his position before accepting his role in the Premier's office. Mr. Kinnear has no personal or financial gain of any kind under any program that is under discussion or engagement. There is nothing to see here.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the Premier also claimed that Mr. Kinnear had resigned as a director of the organization SAEN – but the corporate records indicate otherwise – and given that yesterday in estimates the Premier claimed that this was just a paperwork issue and given that we are talking about \$20 billion of Albertans' money, does the Energy minister agree this conflict of interest is okay, or is he just going to plead the just incompetence defence as well?

2:20

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate again since the members across are having difficulty comprehending the facts. Mr. Kinnear had resigned from his previous positions before accepting any role within the Premier's office. There is no conflict of interest.

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, given that filing that paperwork is pretty easy and given that Mr. Kinnear also worked on the Premier's campaign team and given that the other director of SAEN is now running a third-party attack machine and is fund raising off companies who stand to benefit from this \$20 billion handout and given that the Premier refuses to scrap this terrible program despite opposition from across Alberta, will the Energy minister admit this is nothing but a scheme to give a fat payday to a small number of bad actors and insiders at the expense of hard-working Albertans?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier was clear yesterday about Mr. Kinnear and his position, and he was vetted by the Ethics Commissioner to work inside the Premier's office. This NDP critic herself, who claims to stand for the energy sector, is publicly known as an anti oil and gas activist, one who protested against oil sands producers, protested against pipelines, protested and campaigned in

favour of a tanker ban, which stranded oil and gas assets, to block market access. It's hard to take an opposition like this seriously.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:22.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning and Deputy Opposition House Leader.

#### Beef Prices

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The price of beef has almost doubled at the grocery store over the last two years, but Alberta ranchers aren't seeing the benefit. Last summer I asked the minister why, and he said that he didn't know, but there was going to be a report. Well, it's nine months later, and the beef competitiveness report is in, but the answers aren't. To the minister of agriculture. Albertans are paying almost twice as much for beef. Why aren't Alberta ranchers seeing the benefit? Where is the money?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's funny that she asked me a question about beef and I said that I didn't know. I think that is kind of humorous.

I would just say that it is very timely. The beef industry competitiveness study just went live yesterday, a joint study that we helped fund – and the federal government – with Alberta Beef Producers, with the Canadian Cattle Association, with the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association. Check it out on the Alberta Beef Producers' website. I've already called the meeting for April, which I said I would do, with the industry to talk about next steps.

**Ms Sweet:** Given that, clearly, the minister doesn't know and given that one of the findings in the report was that – and I quote – extension supports for small processors from the government have declined, which acts as a barrier to new entrants into the industry, but given that when I asked the minister about reduced extension services during estimates, he advised that our system was “the most robust . . . in the country” and given that these can't both be true, is the minister wrong, or is the beef report wrong?

**Mr. Horner:** What I said during estimates was that we had bolstered our extension services through new funding to both the agricultural research associations and our ag service boards, a pretty positive story if you talk to people within the agriculture sector.

I would also point to our processing possibilities in this province, and I would point to the fact that the reason we did that announcement at Harmony Beef is because meat processors will definitely be able to use the agriprocessing tax credit. We know we want more hook space, more processing potential in this province, and this is one way we can get it. This is why Saskatchewan will also be attending that meeting.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given, then, that I guess the minister is saying that the report is wrong and given that I'm talking about Alberta beef in the Alberta Legislature with the Alberta minister of agriculture and given that I am hearing concerns both from Alberta ranchers and beef producers about why they aren't seeing a benefit from the higher costs and from Alberta families who can't afford to buy beef, why can't the minister give Albertans a real answer on why they won't be able to afford to have their friends over for a barbecue this summer?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, I think the carbon tax would be a great place to start, and maybe you could ask your whole team to support Bill C-234, which is currently on third reading. You know, maybe that would be a good place to start, adding extra taxes when there isn't an alternative on the landscape for ag producers. I think that would be great. I would also point to the fact that beef prices currently are at a historic high and trending higher. It's great news. It is great news for ranchers, that have been through such a terrible time. This is how it usually works. It's a 10-year cycle; three years of those definitely benefit the producers and the feeders.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

#### Federal Rent Supplement and AISH Recipients

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few months ago the federal government announced a plan that would provide \$500 to millions of Canadian households on top of their rent, helping them with today's inflationary crisis. Unfortunately, the plan is leaving out nearly 73,000 Albertans living with disabilities because of the provincial funding provided to these incredible Albertans each month through AISH. To the minister: can you please explain to us what you've done to try and help fix this situation, especially the discriminatory actions from the federal government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her question as well as her strong advocacy for the disability community here in Alberta. I share her great disappointment for this gross overlook of Albertans with disabilities. Actually, Albertans with disabilities are the only Canadians that were left out of this. Albertans were left out, once again, because of the federal government's failure to consult Albertans, at the end of the day. When I heard about this, I immediately sent a letter to the minister and organized meetings with several federal cabinet ministers to advocate on behalf of Albertans with disabilities, and I'm hoping that they will overturn this gross oversight.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has advocated for change of this policy since December of last year and given that the federal program is disproportionately impacting those in the disability community – and I was so grateful that the government reindexed AISH to inflation and increased payments to AISH clients – and given that this federal policy is failing tens of thousands of Albertans who are most in need, can the minister tell the House what he's heard from our partners, from families, the opposition, and those directly impacted by this discriminatory oversight?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. You know, I've talked to lots of people within the disability community and the broader community who share our great disappointment with this oversight of Albertans. The fact that Alberta was left out once again and that again the federal government failed to consult: I'm going to hope that that's what it was, that it was a failure to consult and just a gross oversight that left 70,000-plus Albertans out of this. We will continue to push back on the federal government to make sure that we are heard, at

the end of the day. Again, I've had some productive meetings with federal ministers, who I hope will join me in advocating for the disability community here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government has refused to support Alberta's disability community – and this is 73,000 individuals in Alberta without supports that they deserve – and given our government's new budget commitments to those living with disabilities, can the minister please explain to the House why the federal government didn't consult to align along with our programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a question I don't know the answer to. I will continue to press the federal ministers to figure out why Albertans weren't included in this, at the end of the day, and to push to make sure that Albertans get a fair share.

But there's an important question to be asked here as well about the members opposite and why they have failed to stand up on this issue, especially when the leader, Jagmeet Singh, is spiking the ball right now, claiming to be the architect for this program. Did he know that Albertans were going to be left out, and why has he not advocated and why have they not made a stronger voice, a louder voice for Albertans with disability on this file?

#### Innisfail Hospital Ambulance Bay

**Mr. Dach:** Last October the Innisfail health centre auxiliary celebrated its 50th anniversary. The auxiliary's president and vice-president appeared before the town council to appeal for help to widen an undersized ambulance bay door that forces patients to be off-loaded outside in all weather conditions. It costs \$45,000 to widen the door, and the auxiliary has already raised \$25,000, including, of all things, \$10,000 from a 50/50 raffle. Why is the Minister of Infrastructure forcing the people of Innisfail to fund raise to address basic safety issues at their hospital?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As I already noted, we are investing significant dollars in terms of the improvement of capital. Now, in terms of many of these capital projects, you know, first it was identified in terms of highest needs within a particular region. That actually flows out to the region, they identify the areas up close with AHS, and then it actually comes to our office. We have over \$4 billion as part of Budget 2023 for a variety of projects. In regard to this Innisfail project I'm happy to get back to the hon. member in terms of the . . .

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

2:30

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the people of Innisfail have done the majority of work for the minister, raising \$25,000 of the \$45,000 needed to replace this undersized door, and given that even though the Premier was sent a letter on this by council, the UCP are now trying to pass the buck to AHS, further delaying the process, and given that while the Premier may support the idea of people fund raising for their health care, this side of the House will never support that, can the minister say today that the people of Innisfail will get the

money to fix the door, to widen the door for ambulances to fit in, or does he expect them to do the job themselves?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we are very thankful for the work that local communities do in terms of raising funds for additional items at their local hospitals, and this happens across the entire province. There is for a number of hospitals – and this is not a new issue – where the bays are actually too small for the ambulances. That said, sometimes the cost associated with it is not as simple in terms of replacing the door. They actually look at other renovations at the same time, and/or they actually have to rip down that particular building and build a new one. So I'm happy to get back to the hon. member on this particular project.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the local UCP MLA has had four years to fix this issue and failed and given that the UCP government has had four years to fix this problem and failed and given that the only people working to fix this problem are the people of Innisfail and they deserve some support, can the minister explain how he can call himself the Minister of Infrastructure when the volunteers of the Innisfail health centre auxiliary have done more work to get their infrastructure fixed in their own community than this government? Cut the cheque for \$45,000, and fix this serious problem so ambulances will actually fit in the ambulance bay door.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated, I'm thankful for all the work that is being done by communities to be able to support infrastructure and support health care within their communities. Quite frankly, cutting a cheque may not be the answer here because it may be actually far more expensive than that particular item. We ask all of the local charities to work with AHS on identifying not only what the highest priorities are but also how best to be able to participate in those. We are investing, as I said, over \$4 billion this year to be able to improve our infrastructure, and we'll keep doing that.

#### **Kearl Oil Sands Project Tailings Leak**

**Mr. Feehan:** I'd like to begin by acknowledging the people of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, the Mikisew Cree First Nation, and the Fort Chip Métis as they are dealing with the serious impacts of the spill from the Kearl Lake tailings pond. Recent scientific reports show that the leak is harmful to fish, confirming the fears of the ACFN and directly contradicting the claims of the Premier, who rushed to declare that there was no evidence of impact to wildlife or drinking water. Why did the Premier jump to conclusions without consulting First Nations who are living with the impact of this and experiencing it first-hand? Will she apologize to them today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To date there's been no evidence whatsoever that drinking water has been impacted nor wildlife. There are multiple layers of monitoring and testing of water up there, including on top of the AER. There are officials from my department up there, officials from fisheries Canada, officials from the oil sands monitoring. We have monitoring stations downstream. There's been no evidence whatsoever that the seepage has entered the waterways.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that after the leak was discovered, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation asked that all fish and wildlife

caught since May 2022 be thrown out but given that the Premier dismissed all claims of impact from the leak, even coming from the First Nations who are dealing with this situation first-hand, and given that these communities rely on the Athabasca to fish and to hunt and knowing the high price of food, especially in northern Alberta, can the Premier please explain what she is doing to support this region with food during this crisis, or does she still think there is no issue?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of disinformation out there. Every information I have suggests that no seepage has entered the waterway. In fact, yesterday I had a very productive conversation with the federal minister of environment to share information, and we have reached an agreement to share and mutually share information that their inspectors have, that our inspectors have. We have three monitoring stations downstream from the Kearl site that have been continuously monitoring since May, and there's no indication whatsoever that seepage has reached the waterways.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the Premier said, in her own words, on March 6, "There were no leaks that went into our tributaries, it did not go into our river system, and people need to know that [our] drinking water is safe" but given that the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo is not using the water from the Athabasca to fill their reservoirs, meaning that they will soon be short of drinking water without a plan to address the shortage of fresh drinking water, why did the Premier make the claim with no evidence to back this up? Does she acknowledge that she's wrong, and will she explain what she is doing to address the concerns about drinking water in First Nations?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I do agree that people need to understand and know that their drinking water is safe. That's why we have enhanced enforcement and water testing. The enforcement and water testing includes the AER, environmental officials, federal fisheries officials, officials from Wood Buffalo region, the oil sands monitoring committee. It includes continuously downstream monitoring. There is no evidence whatsoever to date that anything from the tailings pond, the seepage, has reached any tributaries, water bodies, or waterways. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### **Federal Energy Transition Plan**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 1980s the then Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau passed the national energy program. This program devastated Alberta's economy along with its energy industry. Not only that, but it also transferred billions of dollars to central Canada. This was Trudeau's vision of a just transition. Today our current Prime Minister is determined to repeat his father's mistakes with an ideological plan to eliminate the energy industry. Can the Minister of Energy explain to this Legislature how devastating the federal Trudeau Liberal government's policies will be for the Alberta economy?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, we saw how devastating these policies were in the '80s, and we are seeing similar devastating policies from another federal Trudeau government. On this side of the House we will not allow Ottawa to work around our constitutional right to develop our resource economy. They say that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it, but we know the story. This



province stood up and fought Pierre Trudeau's brutal policies, and we will do the same again against his son's agenda.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal NDP-Liberal coalition have Alberta's energy industry in its crosshairs and given that in 2015 the provincial NDP government of Alberta released a climate leadership report that supported a just transition of workers in the wake of their radical changes towards our energy industry and given that in my constituency the Alberta NDP eliminated coal jobs and devastated the Parkland county taxation base by 25 per cent, do the Minister of Energy and this government support the Alberta NDP's vision of a just transition?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, any plan that will remove workers from jobs that they are experts in is not only a terrible plan, but it is completely unjust. There is no such thing as a just transition. The data is clear, and I would challenge the opposition to accept and understand reality. Oil and gas are going to be in the global marketplace for decades to come. We should be increasing the amount of ethical Alberta energy to world markets, not eliminating it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP supported the just transition in its 2015 climate leadership report and implemented a carbon tax on middle-class Albertans and given that the opposition leader recently stated, "I believe that there is a path available to us Albertans and as Canadians to significantly reduce our emissions, to even ultimately find a cap which is practical," to the Minister of Energy: how does the NDP vision of lost jobs, relocation, just transition, and caps on energy production differ from the UCP's vision of high-paying jobs in our oil and gas industry?

**Mr. Guthrie:** While the talking heads in eastern Canada can bleat all they want about the elimination of fossil fuels, our government has a plan to ensure we continue to supply the most responsible, reliable, and sustainable barrel to meet world demand. If opponents of our fossil fuels, including Alberta's NDP, were as progressive and justice seeking as they claim, they would be supporting Alberta oil and gas over dictatorships as we lead the world in environmental metrics, governance, and human and civil rights, things the NDP profess to defend. [interjections]

2:40

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

That concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 207

#### Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave to introduce Bill 207, the Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act.

If passed, this bill would require the responsible minister to introduce a legislative proposal to develop an incentive for companies for making capital investments in clean tech, carbon

materials, critical mineral processing, and advanced manufacturing. It's targeted towards the fastest growing emerging sectors, where Alberta has the opportunity to compete on a global scale and bring opportunities right here in Alberta. If passed, it would create good-paying jobs, support innovation, and provide training so Albertans can have the necessary skills to work in these new sectors and to ensure that we are competitive with jurisdictions around the world, including the U.S. and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which they have brought forward.

I hope all members in the Assembly do support this bill. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table for the Assembly today a corporate nonprofit search pulled yesterday, March 14, on Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network Ltd. listing Kris Kinnear as a director.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on my list. Is there anyone tabling on their behalf, or is it not necessary?

I see the hon. Member for Peace River, and I'm dead set serious that that best not be a prop on your desk.

**Mr. Williams:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. This is the requisite number of copies of a petition I wish to table with thousands upon thousands of signatures. As Mackenzie\*, a young woman who inspired the petition, said, quote: I wish there had been someone, anyone, standing in the gap who could have asked what we needed and helped me and my baby get on our feet instead of sending us the message that we weren't worth fighting for. In this petition petitioners are seeking to expand Alberta adoption services in the province to help work with pregnant mothers who feel they're unable or not yet ready to be mothers, to promote counselling for unplanned pregnancies, and to consider increasing emergency allowance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the provincial judges and masters in Chambers registered and unregistered pension plans regulation the provincial judges and masters in Chambers registered and unregistered pension plans 2020-21 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:22 the Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Accepting a Member's Word

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2:22 I called a point of order under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member;" (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;" and (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-Mountain

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

View I heard the Minister of Energy specifically accuse that member of being an anti-oil activist protesting against pipelines, protesting against tankers, very specific accusations in telling the Assembly that this member had done those things.

Mr. Speaker, the only protest that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has attended is protests against tuition hikes. She was part of a government that got the first pipeline to tidewater in decades, and as you would know from *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494, "statements by Members respecting themselves . . . must be accepted." The member has said her support for Alberta's energy sector and has done that throughout her role as critic for Energy.

I think that the minister's comments were out of order. If he had perhaps accused the caucus or the group of us within this House – we've been very clear on the differences between talking to a group of people versus a specific member. Certainly, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View did not deserve those aspersions. They're incorrect, false, and I ask you to rule them out of order.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I think this is clearly a matter of debate. There is a case to be made that the members opposite have in their constitution anti-oil sentiments, including not liking the oil and gas sector, supporting the Leap Manifesto. I think that there is really no real point of order here. I'm not really sure how much more I can say on this besides that I disagree with the Opposition House Leader's assertion that this is a point of order, and I suggest we move on.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to add to the point of order?

I am prepared to rule, and I do have the benefit of the Blues. At approximately 2:21 the hon. the Minister of Energy said the following.

This NDP critic herself, who claims to stand for the energy sector, is publicly known as an anti oil and gas activist, one who protested against oil sands producers, protested against pipelines, protested and campaigned in favour of a tanker ban, which stranded oil . . . assets.

And he continued.

I would like to highlight a paragraph in *Beauchesne's* as a reminder, which the Opposition House Leader did reference. Paragraph 494 says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

I will also point you to a ruling made by the Speaker on March 22, 2022, where I also referenced *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 619, that states, "Remarks which question a Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order." I would suggest that these types of direct statements directed at the hon. member may in fact call into question the member's integrity, honesty, or character. With that said, it is also not unparliamentary to temperately criticize the statements. I'd provide caution to the Minister of Energy when he makes such suggestions directed immediately to a member of the Assembly.

This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Prior to proceeding, let me speak directly to the hon. Member for Peace River. He is a learned and knowledgeable member of this Assembly, and the use of such a prop is absolutely unacceptable, and the Speaker is displeased. He will take the most aggressive approach in the future directed to that member should he choose to use a prop in this Assembly again. I consider that matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Orders of the Day. Ordres du jour.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates.

This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will continue its consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism in the Grassland Room.

**2:50**

This evening the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Public Safety and Emergency Services in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Children's Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 16, 2023

Day 20

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
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Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Barnes  
Bilous  
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Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

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Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

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Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

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Aheer  
Allard  
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Ganley  
Loyola  
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Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Deaths of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I ask you to remain standing as we take a moment to pay our respects. Constable Travis Jordan, 35, Constable Brett Ryan, 30, were tragically taken from us this morning while they were murdered in the line of duty. Both men made the ultimate sacrifice for the safety of our communities, for our people, and we are all forever in their debt. Our thoughts, our prayers, and our support is with their families as well as the greater policing community, including the sheriffs and the Legislative Assembly security service. I ask that you join me now in a moment of silence as we remember the lives of these two courageous young officers. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Ms Nicole Williams.

#### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I do have a number of guests to introduce today, and for the benefit and knowledge of all members, the introductions clock doesn't begin until the conclusion of the Speaker's introductions.

Members, seated in the Speaker's gallery is one of the most incredible, most outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills; she is my constituency assistant, Alana Gibson. She's accompanied by her husband, Alastair Gibson, and their three wonderful daughters: Charlotte, Elizabeth, and Amelia. I invite the Gibsons to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery today are very, very close, good friends of mine: Lauren Casamayor, Jack Casamayor, and Eli Casamayor. They are constituents who live in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills; they are here as part of the home-schooling association of NorthStar Academy in Didsbury. Also my favourite sister, much to the chagrin of my other sister, Naomi Pulliam, and my nephew Isaac Pulliam. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Today we are very, very pleased to have joining us the grandfather of our head page, Ayla Sevigny. Her grandfather Mr. Doug Tupper is the former executive director of the Police Commission, so it is on a particularly difficult day for him, but I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Finally, hon. members, I'd also like to introduce to you and through me six staff of the Alberta Ombudsman's office seated in the galleries. These hard-working staff are here today to watch the proceedings, and the Ombudsman is appreciative of their work. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a school group.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very happy to introduce the classes from l'école Lacombe upper elementary school. I'd like to recognize their teachers Derek Rankin and Heather Mackay-Hawkins – both have been with the school for more than 20 years – also educational assistants Angela Richter and Eden Cade. Included in this class is the granddaughter of my constituency assistant Cheryl Christie. To all the students and teachers from l'école Lacombe upper elementary school: please rise today and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has a school group.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you the grades 5 and 6 classes from Woodbridge Farms elementary school and their teacher, Antonia Triska. Thank you, all, so much for being here. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to welcome the grade 6 students from Menno Simons Christian school, accompanied by their teacher, Erin Folkerts. If we can give them the warm welcome of this Assembly and have them rise, please.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I might take a brief Speaker liberty, that my childhood babysitter has joined this school group; Mr. George Graffunder, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a terrific friend of mine, a community builder, a council member for the town of Peace River, a cancer survivor, and, more importantly, a deeply good person, Shelly Shannon. Please rise and receive the very warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has an introduction.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you my friend Nick de Gier. Nick is a lifelong central Albertan and a civil engineering student at the University of Alberta. Admitted at only the age of 17, he is also a member of the United Conservatives club at the university and is excited to learn about the work we do here. Please rise and receive a warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce Doug Tupper. As was mentioned, he was on the Police Commission. He's also a former assistant deputy minister with Alberta environment and was a trustee and board chair with Edmonton public schools, but most importantly he's a grandfather to Ayla Sevigny. He's here to watch her today in action, so please join me in welcoming him as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce to you and through you my very good friend Dr. Bhavini Gohel. Bhavini is the director and cofounder of Grassroots Global Health, an acute-care physician, site chief of a hospitalist program in South Health Campus in Calgary, and a clinical assistant professor at the University of Calgary. Thank you so much to the minister of Indigenous affairs and to Maya Echtay today for meeting with us, and thank you so much to you, Dr. Gohel, for all the work that you do here at home and across the globe. If you would please rise to receive the warm welcome.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

#### Deaths of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with a very heavy heart. Last night Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan of the Edmonton Police Service were tragically killed in the line of duty while responding to a call.

Constable Brett Ryan was 30 years old, had five and a half years of service. Constable Travis Jordan was 35, and he had about eight and a half years of service. Today the province mourns the loss of these two heroes. We send our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families and friends.

Mr. Speaker, every day police officers across Alberta put their uniforms on. They step up and protect and serve our communities. These courageous men and women bravely rise to any challenge that comes their way to protect the public. Police officers are more than just the uniform that they wear; they are an integral part of the communities that they serve.

**1:40**

Their moms, their dads, their brothers or sisters, their daughters or sons: like any other job, family members send their loved ones off to work. Unlike any other job, these family members hope and they pray and they worry that their loved ones may not return home safely at the end of their shift. For the Ryan and Jordan families this did not happen today. The sudden and tragic deaths of these officers remind us again of the dangers that police officers face – constantly face – when they serve the people of Alberta. Alberta would not be the great province that it is today without the service and sacrifice of constables Jordan and Ryan, and Alberta's government is here to support the Edmonton Police Service, their members, their families during this tragedy. To honour the service and dedication of these officers lost, the flags of the Legislature will be lowered to half-mast.

Mr. Speaker, there are no words that I can say to make up for the loss of life that occurred today. As a former police officer myself, to all my brothers and sisters out there that are on the front lines, I

mourn with you. Everybody here mourns with you. And to the members of EPS and all of our front-line law enforcement: we all here have your back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and of course thank you to the minister for his words today. It is with great sadness that I rise to deliver this statement to the House marking the loss of two Edmonton police officers killed in the line of duty earlier this morning: Constable Travis Jordan, 35 years old, a member for eight and a half years; Constable Brett Ryan, 30 years old, a member of five years. I know that there are no words that can truly capture the scale of heartbreak experienced by Albertans today, so I rise only to offer the sincerest and deepest condolences on behalf of His Majesty's Official Opposition.

I first want to speak to the members of the Edmonton Police Service and, by extension, all Albertans who serve their communities on police forces across this province. Alberta stands with you. Today's tragedy reminds us of your sacrifice and of your bravery. You put yourselves in danger for the sake of our loved ones, our children, our parents, and our grandparents, people who mean the world to someone but are total strangers to you. You work in one of the most dangerous professions in the world and the consequences of your courage can sometimes be devastating. Today all of Alberta grieves with you.

I want to speak to the families of these officers. It takes an enormous amount of strength to see your loved ones go to work every day, knowing that they will face these kinds of dangerous situations, and to receive this news is devastating. But do know that you are not alone and that all Albertans mourn with you.

Mr. Speaker, we also know there's another woman involved in this event. This was a domestic dispute, and there's now a woman fighting for her life in hospital, so we extend our condolences and support to her and to her family as well.

Finally, I wish to speak to all of us in this Assembly no matter what side of the aisle we sit on. Across this country we have lost seven officers in the last six months. We know that front-line responders are facing increased risks doing their job, keeping citizens safe. After three years of greater and greater stress on our communities all across this country, I believe that we can say that these incidents are not isolated, and neither are the solutions. It's on all of us to do everything we can to keep our communities safe and, through that, to keep our officers safe, and we can do that in our roles here by working to build more secure communities. We owe it to the memory of Constable Jordan and Constable Ryan to come together to find solutions and to provide greater support and greater strength to Albertans throughout our province. We owe it to all first responders, their families, and all Albertans to do everything we can to keep officers safe as they set out each day to do the same for us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a statement to make.

#### Automobile Insurance Premiums

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families across this province are feeling the pressure of the increased cost of living. It costs more to put food on a table because grocery prices have increased,

utilities are more expensive, and it's harder for Albertans to pay for their homes as both mortgages and rent are increasing right now.

Today I'm going to speak to the need to support Alberta drivers by making insurance more affordable. It's harder for families to drive to work, drop kids off at school and their sports games and music lessons when insurance premiums increase, and they have increased a lot over the past few years. Many families saw their premium go up as high as 30 per cent during the pandemic. This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, and it is avoidable.

I was proud to be part of a government that successfully froze insurance premiums. We did this even though the province faced many economic challenges. We prioritized this because supporting families to pay their bills is most important during tough economic times. Under the UCP insurance premiums skyrocketed. Albertans paid more even though they drove less during the pandemic. We continually called for the UCP to support drivers and stop allowing insurance premiums to increase.

I was glad to see the UCP announce that they would freeze insurance rates in January until the end of 2023; however, Mr. Speaker, that good news was short-lived because two insurance companies announced the rate increases in March for 13 and 16 per cent, which were approved by the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. Unfortunately, the announced insurance freeze is no freeze at all. Albertans pay more for the most expensive car insurance in Canada, and it's still getting more expensive. Albertans deserve real relief to bring down the costs of keeping their cars on the road.

#### Deaths of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an unthinkable and unimaginable tragedy that happened last night. The lives of two dedicated EPS officers were tragically taken. This is a tragedy that will be felt around the halls of the Legislature, around the city of Edmonton, our province, our country, and indeed around the world.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge the families and friends of the fallen officers who were involved in this heartbreaking event. Our thoughts and prayers are with you as you navigate the days and the weeks ahead.

I also want to acknowledge the security guards here today, most who are retired EPS officers themselves, many who are connected with last night's tragic event in some way, shape, or form. Yet they are here today showing the true heart of EPS members both past and present. It's a heart that exemplifies courage, integrity, and service to community. Our thoughts are with you.

I want to thank all the men and women in uniform that put their lives at risk every single day to keep our communities safe. Alberta's law enforcement agencies are world-class and part of the reason Alberta is the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Rest assured our thoughts and our prayers are with you today. We stand with you. Thank you for your service.

#### Youth Transition to Adulthood Program

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's children are the future of this great province, and securing their future should be our top priority. Children in care have survived difficult circumstances. They have lived through trauma and face barriers in work and their education when they transition out of care. The transition to adulthood program, or TAP, exists to remove that barrier. The TAP program provides children in care the supports they need to transition into adulthood. Just as the program's namesake suggests, it acts as a bridge for children in care as they age into adulthood and proceed on their journey to fulfill their full potential.

1:50

We need to remove barriers to education, employment for Alberta's youth and young adults transitioning out of care so that they can have access to the same opportunities as their peers. This is precisely the reason why I'm thrilled that Alberta's government has made the decision to change the eligibility of age to 24 while simultaneously injecting \$28 million into the program to ensure that young adults have more options once they age out of care. This will help bridge the gaps when children in care need to access postsecondary education, employment and skills training and placement, and help prepare them for everyday life once they have moved on from the foster care system.

Everyone, no matter their background, should have equal opportunities to succeed in this great province. Programs like TAP are doing just that to ensure that no child in Alberta is left behind. Securing Alberta's future also means protecting our most vulnerable, especially Alberta's youth and young adults. Thank you for making sure that youth aging out of care are fully empowered to succeed as adults.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

#### Deaths of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I know all of us in this Assembly were heartbroken, as we've already discussed, to learn of the deaths of the two Edmonton police officers this morning, Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan. These officers were killed in the line of duty, doing their jobs, serving their communities. Our opposition joins the government in offering our deepest condolences to their families and their friends and their colleagues in this devastating loss. We all share in that grief and that sadness. To the minister of public safety: can he tell us what supports are being provided to families and loved ones of these officers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, and I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Alberta's government, of course, extends our deepest sympathies and condolences to the friends and families and loved ones of the fallen officers as a result of the tragic events that occurred today. Alberta's government established the heroes' fund in 2020 for first responders who die in the line of duty. This fund provides a one-time, tax-free payment of a hundred thousand dollars for eligible family members. First responders eligible for the payment would include police officers, firefighters, paramedics, sheriffs, and provincial corrections officers who die as a result of their duties.

Again, I'd like to thank the member of the opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much to the minister for that answer. This tragedy is a sombre reminder of the dangers that police officers face each and every day in their service to Albertans. We know that police members are family and that these events have an impact on every single member of the service. We want to make sure that those members, those officers, are supported in this difficult time as well. Can the minister tell this Assembly what supports or services are being provided to fellow Edmonton police officers grieving this unimaginable loss?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, and I couldn't agree more with the Leader of the Opposition. We are united on this. The government of Alberta is going to continue to support the Edmonton Police Service through this incredibly difficult time. To these fantastic men and women who patrol our streets every day to keep our communities safe: we're here to help and offer any resources that we have available. We're, of course, in direct contact with the Edmonton Police Service and there to let them know that we are here for them, and to all the courageous officers on the front lines, let them know as well: we are all here for you.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. These tragedies, of course, also carry a deep impact on the community and on our city and on our province. I know that all of Edmonton and all of Alberta stand in solidarity with our officers today, and the people of this city and this province will be looking for ways to express their condolences. In fact, I know for a certainty that the people of this city and this province will do everything they can to show their support for these officers and their families. Will the province be planning a memorial or another way for the public to pay their respects and share their grief?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. Of course, the overwhelming support across this country has been amazing. Our government is going to continue to work with EPS to pay our respects to Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan in the appropriate manner. We're going to support EPS on memorial and remembrance opportunities. The officers' names will be included in the *Pillar of Strength* monument on the south grounds of the Legislature, and their names are going to be part of the honour roll read out at Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day. The families are also presented with copies of the dove-shaped plaques inscribed with the officers' names and placed on the monument. I can tell you that there are lots of ways we're going to support and remember these two officers, but right now we're going to support these families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has a question to ask.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are all shocked by the death of two Edmonton police officers earlier today. As critic for Justice and public safety I join my colleagues on both sides of this House to extend my deepest condolences to the loved ones of Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan and to their fellow officers at Edmonton Police Service and across this province. Can the Premier update this House on what supports are available to those grieving this loss?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much. I think we're very fortunate that the Edmonton Police Service along with the Edmonton Police Association have been extremely supportive. I have seen them. They are there for those families, who have been grief stricken over the deaths of these officers, not to mention the police officers that I saw earlier today, who also have been extremely grief stricken. I can tell you that we are working very closely with the Edmonton

Police Service and the Edmonton Police Association to ensure whatever supports they need are available to them.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. The second sudden loss of two officers will reopen painful memories for many Albertans. Alberta has lost many brave officers and first responders in the line of duty. Many people in my community are reminded of the death of Calgary police Sergeant Andrew Harnett on New Year's Eve in 2020. Can the minister talk about mental health supports that are available to first responders, former first responders, and their families, who will certainly be impacted by this tragedy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. I'll let the minister speak. Let me just say this. Sergeant Andrew Harnett was a constable when I was a sergeant with the Calgary Police Service, and I want to thank you for bringing that up. It was a very tragic event for the officers that I worked with. Obviously, the death of that officer is horrific; any death – any death – is horrific. I will just say this. Every one of us here has to learn lessons from these tragic events to make sure that they don't happen again. I will say on behalf of the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction there are enormous supports that are available to help these families, to help these police services.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I do know that you have served on the front lines.

I realize that only a few hours have passed, but many Albertans are looking for ways to express their support for Edmonton Police Service, their colleagues, and loved ones of those fallen officers. Before the details of memorial services are available, can you share with Albertans how they can express support for Edmonton Police Service, for those who have lost their loved ones?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you. I think that at this time if people want to express their condolences, I would recommend that they reach out to the Edmonton Police Service. You know, let me just say this, and this was brought up today at the press conference. If you see a police officer, thank them. Thank them for their service. Thank them for what they do. I would say that that is a first step in the right direction, but certainly if you would like to express your condolences, then reach out to the Edmonton Police Service. I know that they have a big heart, and they would probably really appreciate it.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

**Ms Hoffman:** I, too, want to express my condolences for everyone impacted by the brutal killings this morning, including the families and colleagues of constables Jordan and Ryan.

#### Affordability Plan Cash Payments

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents have contacted me to ask about why they're not eligible for the government's affordability payments despite financial hardship that they are going through. Less than a quarter of Albertans have received payment so far. Will the Premier consider expanding eligibility to help low-income folks who don't have children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors has risen.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to provide condolences to the families on the senseless violence that happened last night.

In response to the question, though, in the first 24 hours of the affordability portal, when it did open, 140,000 applications came through; that's 140,000 Albertans that were receiving this payment. It is something that – it's \$100 a month going towards those who need supports the most. It is something that we've worked very hard to make sure that everybody is receiving this payment that can get the payment, and it is something that we on this side of the aisle obviously know. When it comes to inflation and the cost of living, it's something that we try as a government very hard to reduce. That's why we have low taxes, we fought the carbon tax and other measures that have increased the cost of living in Alberta, and are continuing to find ways to make life more affordable in Alberta.

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, when these payments were first announced, the government said that it would cost approximately \$900 million in payments to Albertans. However, last month they confirmed that only \$96 million had actually been paid out to Albertans. We know that there are hundreds of thousands of Albertans who are eligible under the already-limited criteria who could really use the help, so to the government: why have so few Albertans received affordability payments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the opposition and tell all Albertans that when it comes to the fuel tax being removed permanently here in Alberta, that goes a long way to helping Alberta families get to work, drive to work, and drive their kids to soccer or hockey practice. Also, the electricity rebate is also going to all Albertans. There's a suite of measures that our government put in place to try to help with this inflation crisis that's hitting every single Alberta family, and those are two examples that help every single Albertan.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the application process for these payments isn't easy for some Albertans. While many have applied, many applications require edits to make them eligible. Registry agents have told us that there isn't an edit button so that people can make changes to their applications, and on Monday in estimates the minister for service Alberta acknowledged this issue. We are already halfway through the eligibility period, and this edit button can make a difference for people struggling to pay their bills this month. Will the Premier commit that an edit button will be added by the end of the month and that everyone eligible will get compensation for the months that have already passed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for the team that is building out the functionality of this portal, I'm happy to respond. It's a thoughtful question. I want to highlight that an edit button has been added already for individual applicants so that if there's an individual Albertan who had an issue with getting their banking information signed up for direct deposit, they can correct that already on the portal, and I encourage them to visit the portal to do that. In terms of now developing and extending that edit function to registries who then support folks face to face, that is in

the works. It will be done very soon, and we'll be happy to update this House when that's the case. I do also just want to highlight that over 1.1 million Albertans have successfully signed up . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Mr. Nielsen:** Firefighters endure great risks to serve our communities. Some of those risks are immediate, but others develop over time, which is why presumptive coverage and retroactive coverage are vital to ensure that those who protect us are protected, too. Other provinces know this, and in fact Ontario has recently provided presumptive coverage retroactive to January 1960. Is the Premier aware of this retroactive presumptive coverage that Ontario has provided to their firefighters?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears the NDP are claiming that our government doesn't care about first responders. This is a retroactivity issue. It's an issue that their government never addressed. Our government has done a thorough review. The WCB has done a thorough review. There is exactly one case that might be impacted by retroactivity. That individual passed while the NDP were in government, and the NDP did not alter the law. While our hearts go out to that family, the specific case is so complicated, that the NDP knows as well, that it remains clear that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** As Ontario's decision demonstrates, we have the power to help Alberta firefighters diagnosed with cancer and their families, including those already locked into disputes with WCB. In fact, the Ontario government has provided this coverage retroactive all the way back to 1960. It's an easy decision to make, one that provides vital protection and thanks to first responders. Does the Premier agree that if Ontario can provide this level of protection to all firefighters, surely Alberta can do as much for the heroes of the 2016 Fort McMurray fire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We find that it remains unclear whether retroactivity would have helped in these circumstances. The WCB has a fairness office that is handling this complex case. That's how it's been handled in the past. It's how it's been handled with other governments, and that's the way it needs to be handled.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Firefighters who fought the Fort McMurray wildfires are heroes who deserve our unequivocal support, and not a single one should be left out of coverage for cancers they face as a result of heroism during that fire. Making sure this bill has retroactive coverage is the least we can do, and Ontario has now shown that it can be done. To the Premier: can we agree that these firefighters deserve our thanks and our support, and can we agree to amend Bill 9, as the opposition has proposed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that the firefighters deserve our thanks and our help. That's why we've

done a thorough review. There's one case that might – and I say "might" – be impacted by retroactivity, and that individual has already passed. Alberta is, again, the leader on protecting firefighters. We'll soon be making changes to expand our leadership on this issue. Again, the policy is complex, and retroactivity risks creating more unfairness than it solves.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River has a question.

#### **Youth Transition to Adulthood Program**

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As children in government care become adults, they often are left wondering how they will be able to fend for themselves as they prepare to start their life on their own. The transition to adulthood program, or TAP, within Children's Services provides the supports they need to succeed now and into the future. To my colleague the Minister of Children's Services: could you please rise and let the House know about the supports available for TAP in Budget 2023 to help young Albertans in care and those leaving it in building an independent, healthy life?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and if you would so indulge me, I too would like to express my sincerest condolences to the families and indeed all Albertans impacted by the tragedy we heard today.

Budget 2023 is an investment in our future. By investing in the future of youth and young adults transitioning out of care, we are investing in future prosperity for this province, and that's exactly why I was proud to announce that we are investing an additional \$25.6 million to the transition to adulthood program as part of the Children's Services ministry in the next three years to support young adults transitioning out of government care and into adulthood.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that youth leaving from care often lack the network needed to find good employers to sponsor them for entry into apprenticeship education programs and given that these young adults experience training and employment barriers compared to their peers, to the same minister: could you please let us know what additional funding is available in the budget to help them find jobs with in-demand trades?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. In addition to the \$25.6 million that we've allocated, I was pleased to announce, along with my colleague and Deputy Premier and Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions, an additional \$2.5 million, which will be allocated to support youths in transition to further develop their skills and careers in the trades as well. This will benefit approximately 500 youths transitioning out of government care and into their future educational pursuits.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that youth in care have been looking forward to this kind of support to help them succeed and further given that that aligns perfectly with the views of the child advocate of this Legislature, to the minister: what is this government's plan to make sure that these children and kids continue to access supports they need as they age out of care?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the value that this tremendously important and incredibly well-received program has been providing, and the hon. member is indeed correct; it does align with many of the views of the advocate. It is because of these reasons that we have committed funding increases for the next three years, with \$5.5 million allocated in this year's 2023-2024 Budget; 8 and a half million dollars for '24-25; and, finally, \$11.6 million for the '25-26 years.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a question to ask.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. As an Edmontonian I'm very grateful for the brave service of the Edmonton Police Service and their women and men who are officers. I send my deepest condolences to the family and friends and colleagues of Constable Jordan and Constable Ryan.

#### **Deaths of Children in Care and Youth Transitioning out of Care**

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, one of the hardest parts of my role as the critic for Children's Services but, even more, as a mother is to every month see the growing list of children and young people who have died while receiving child intervention services. Last year was the worst year on record in Alberta: 49 children and young people died. We all hoped we wouldn't see another year like it, but this year is no better. To date 45 children and young people have died. To the Minister of Children's Services: what is being done differently, truly differently, to make a change?

2:10

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, once again, as a father of three young children there is no greater tragedy than hearing about the death of any child, and, once again, my heart and my condolences go out to the families that are impacted by this. As the hon. member is indeed aware, any child receiving intervention services and who dies or is seriously injured is reported publicly, and we conduct a rigorous and thorough examination of exactly what happened. Alberta is a leader in public reporting, and that includes posting online when a child or youth has passed away in care or is receiving services and publicly posting online Children's Services . . .

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that of the 45 deaths this year to date 19 of them were actually children under the age of 12 and given that 18 of these children were actually in the care of Children's Services – the government is their legal guardian – and given that any loss of life is a tragedy and that as members of this Chamber we all owe a responsibility to ensure that every child in care has the support, services, and resources they need to thrive and given that there have been reviews and reports and promises for two years, can the minister explain what specifically this budget does differently for children in care to ensure that they are supported and, most importantly, safe?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, an increasing number of youth have died as a result of drug poisoning, leading to the Child and Youth Advocate recommendation that the government establish a specific youth opioid strategy, and that's exactly what we've done. Recently the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction announced a number of initiatives, including a 4 and a half million dollar investment into the virtual opioid dependency program as well as a \$92 million



investment in CASA for kids, which is certainly helping to address these troubling concerns.

Thank you.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that yesterday the government announced a \$5.5 million increase in funding for youth aging out of government care into the transition to adulthood program but this doesn't make up for the \$14 million per year that was cut three years ago and given that today we heard that only 120 young people aged 22 to 24 are receiving supports under TAP and this is a big decrease from the 500 young people of the same age who received financial supports under the SFAA program and given that this means that far fewer young people transitioning out of care into adulthood are actually being supported by this government, can the minister please explain what he's doing to increase the number of young people accessing the TAP program?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member failed to mention was that she heard that 120 children were receiving soft supports but that many others had already been transitioned into the TAP program, so certainly that is a good-news story regardless of how the member wishes to spin it. We are working diligently to expand and increase the TAP program as a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing youths aging out of care and into adulthood, and we'll continue to do that through the supports that we have just elaborated on through the various members' statements and the questions prior.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a question.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by offering my condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the two Edmonton police officers who lost their lives today.

### Emergency Alert System

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans rely on our emergency alert system to keep them safe, but they need to know it will be there when tragedy strikes. This requires regular testing so Albertans and our government know it will work. On March 1 the system was tested, but Albertans didn't get just one alert; they received a total of nine alerts. This left Albertans with a lot of questions about what happened. To the minister: can you explain what happened with the emergency alert system that day?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction has risen.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I would also take this opportunity to extend my deepest sympathies to the families, friends, and colleagues of constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan.

With regard to the exacts on the nine versus however many certain people received, I'll undertake to make sure that I get those for the hon. member.

I do want to just take an opportunity for the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and mention that the mental health helpline 1.877.303.2642, and 211 is also available 24 hours a day for anyone.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that the Premier suggested the issues came from other government agencies but we know that's not accurate and

given that media now reports that it was "old code" that caused the problem on the provincial side and given that the alert is critical in ensuring the health and safety of Albertans in the event of an emergency, what steps have been taken to fix this problem?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I want to just say again thank you for this line of questioning. I, like many Albertans, was surprised when I saw the numerous alerts back to back on the day in question. I want to assure all Albertans that when I saw that happen, I immediately reached out to my colleague the minister of public safety to offer the support of my department, Technology and Innovation, to look at ways that we can apply more modern tools and technology to ensure that this kind of situation does not happen again. The fact is that Albertans need to know that they can rely on this alert system, and we are going to take all of the steps needed to make sure that our systems can deliver that exact result.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that Albertans need to know that the system will be there when they need it and given that there was a glitch in a previous test and given that the minister says that it has been fixed, what lessons did the government learn from this test, and will there be another test of the system in the near future, after these problems are resolved, to ensure that it's actually working the way it's supposed to?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, we always look to learn from all of our experiences, good and bad, so we are certainly taking a look into this situation to make sure that our public alert system will be as strong as it possibly can be. As I mentioned before, my Department of Technology and Innovation will be supporting the minister of public safety and his team to make sure that we take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the system is strong, robust, capable, and secure so that we can meet the needs of Albertans today and into the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has a question to ask.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, my condolences to the families and friends of Constable Jordan and Constable Ryan, the entire Edmonton Police Service, and my thanks to everyone involved in public safety and policing to safely protect us all.

### Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, it has also come to my attention that there is presently a sizable group of freedom-minded Ontario physicians willing to relocate to Alberta. Given that our communities are crying out for doctors, particularly in the south zone, and given that on March 3 in Medicine Hat we're 18 available physicians short, including five in family medicine and three in emergency medicine, to the Health minister: please share with us what you're willing to do to cut through the red tape to accommodate a group of dedicated medical professionals who . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance has risen.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Health is actively looking at every option, every solution to ensure that we have an adequate number of physicians working and serving Albertans. That's one reason why we increased the Health budget by almost a billion dollars this year. There will be funding for additional seats for every health care occupation, including 120 new seats over the three-year fiscal plan, in our schools of medicine.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Attracting doctors is about more than spending money, however. Given that physician shortages in Alberta have become a systemic issue and given that on February 6 the city of Lethbridge had 49 doctor position vacancies, including nine in family medicine and eight in emergency, and given the fact that physician compensation and development now accounts for nearly 25 per cent of our total Health budget, is the minister really in a position to turn away any qualified, experienced, out-of-province doctors who want to practise in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the minister, again, is looking at every solution to ensure that we can onboard health care professionals, foreign-trained health care professionals, health care professionals from other provinces and other countries. On top of that, we are creating more spaces here in the province so Albertans who want to pursue a career in health care can in fact do so. We are focused as a government on expanding capacity in health care.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, more money is not buying results. Given all the taxpayer money that this government has dumped into rural physician recruitment and retention and given that physician compensation now accounts for nearly 10 per cent of this government's total operational spending and given the fact that over the past two years numerous, numerous emergency rooms across Alberta have been temporarily closed due to physician shortages, is this minister finally willing to consider options for physician recruitment that don't involve the failed strategy of just throwing more hard-earned taxpayers' money at it?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we do need to pay our doctors, and I'm pleased to say that the Minister of Health has struck an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association on a new remuneration agreement with our incredible physicians, those physicians that serve Albertans every day. I know the minister is again looking at every solution to ensure that we can provide more physicians across the province in rural Alberta and urban Alberta. In fact, there are 250 more doctors working at the end of 2022 than at the beginning, but our work is not done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for St. Albert has a question.

**Ms Renaud:** I'd also like to add my condolences to constables Jordan and Ryan, their families, friends, and the first responder community.

2:20

### Nonprofit-sector Supports

**Ms Renaud:** Nonprofits fill critical needs, employ nearly 300,000 Albertans, contribute \$5.5 billion to the economy and another \$5 billion in volunteer hours. They're struggling right now. The essential workers putting the needs of the communities first are suffering. An analysis by the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations shows instability. Will the minister rise in this House and tell us what this government is doing to support nonprofits and the critical work that they do?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Culture.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking with a heavy heart. I also want to acknowledge my condolences for the families and for the fallen officers before I answer this question.

Mr. Speaker, the question of helping nonprofits to do more is a real one. Just for your information, I had the honour of working as a social worker in the field for over 28 years. I worked with CCVO in my past. The advocacy they are advancing for the sector: we wholeheartedly support that. It is because of that reason that we increased \$11 million in support for CFEP in this Budget 2023.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that many organizations are facing higher demand, 74 per cent reporting an increase in need, and lack supports for programs with complex needs and that 41 per cent identified significant reduction in capacity and given that the current affordability crisis has major impacts in this sector, with 88 per cent citing inflation as a massive concern, with insurance going as high as 150 per cent, forcing downsizing and layoffs, while funding agreements are not keeping pace with population growth and inflation, why does this budget not do more to ensure a better future for the 30,000 nonprofits in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her advocacy for not-for-profits. I'm so proud of budget 2023-2024 because there are significant funds available for not-for-profits within this budget. Specifically, within my ministry we increased funding for the PDD sector. We increased significant funding for homeless shelters and homeless outreach programs. We increased money for seniors and seniors' groups as well as increased funds with FCSS. All of these groups do significant work. I've been spending a lot of my time meeting with not-for-profits across the province. We want to continue to work with them and improve supports as we go forward.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that Karen Ball, president and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, stated – and I quote – that when nonprofits fail, so does our society and given that I urge this government to listen to their needs and make a definite commitment to work alongside them and provide more fiscal assistance than the small amounts we see in Budget 2023, will the minister commit to working with groups like the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations to ensure nonprofits get the resources they need to continue the vital and essential work in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the answer to that question is yes. Karen Ball is actually a constituent and a friend of mine. We do talk. Actually, I'm scheduled to give her a call later this afternoon. We, of course, want to continue to partner with our not-for-profits. We've seen significant work within 2023 not just in my ministry but in Children's Services, in Culture, in Health, in Justice, in Education. There's increased funding right across the board for not-for-profits in our community. We're going to continue to make sure that we're funding these great organizations, that we're getting resources deployed.

I also want to mention the – I'll answer more later, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer my condolences to the family and friends of constables Jordan and Ryan and all first responders being affected by what's going on.

#### School Construction in Edmonton

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, Edmonton public schools expects a 2.7 per cent increase in enrolment for this upcoming year. By 2027 there will not be enough space for all high school students in the city. We all know schools take time to build, and we have all known about forecasted enrolment growth in Edmonton schools. To the minister: why has this government only provided full construction funding for one new school in Edmonton this year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to offer my condolences and prayers as well to the family and friends and all those that are impacted by the deaths. As a mother of a police officer myself it's my worst nightmare that I can think of. It's the worst thing I can possibly think of, to lose one of my children in such a way, so my heart goes out to all of them.

On the question that was asked, in fact, the member opposite is incorrect. We have allocated and announced five new schools for Edmonton public school division: the new junior-senior high in Glenridding Heights; a new K to 9 school in Edgemont; a new K to 6 in . . .

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

**Member Loyola:** Given that I was speaking about high schools and that it takes time to build a school and that modernization of existing schools only leads to a slight increase in capacity and given that the government has made it clear in their capital plan that they do not think Edmonton deserves more schools for a growing student population and given the critical need for more student spaces, with thousands of new students expected to start attending school in Edmonton, will the minister please explain how they plan to address the growing need for more space in Edmonton schools with only one new school planned in this budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the member opposite did not know that Edmonton public schools actually had two new high schools, one that is opening in May 2024, the southeast high school, and the Joey Moss school as well actually just opened here, I believe, in September 2022, in addition to the other schools that have been allocated in the future. We can say that over the last number of years we have announced 18 projects for Edmonton that will address these needs.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the government should be investing in and maintaining top-quality education in the province and given that, to this end, students must have the space they need to learn, which means that building new schools is an absolute necessity, and given that only one new school received construction funding, leaving many in my constituency to ride the bus out of their communities, will the minister commit to restarting public reporting of class sizes as student numbers rise much faster than the number of classrooms in Edmonton?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the member opposite is incorrect. We have allocated 18 projects overall to

Edmonton while the NDP, during their four years, only allocated eight projects. I would say that our record as a whole over the last four years is 106 schools across this province, new infrastructure, 58 alone this year; the members opposite during their time period, only 47. In fact, they failed rural Alberta. When we allocated 37 schools, they only allocated 14.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer my deepest condolences to the friends, family, and colleagues of constables Jordan and Ryan in the terrible tragedy that they're going through right now.

#### Deerfoot Trail Capital Plan

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes and supports the important role transportation infrastructure plays in building our province's economic corridors and communities. In acknowledging that role, we must include one road that my constituents of Calgary-Peigan know far too well, Deerfoot Trail. Deerfoot Trail is currently the busiest road in Alberta, and both daily commuters and businesses are feeling the pains of this. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors inform the House of the important contributions that our government is taking to improve Deerfoot Trail?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is tragic events like we all heard about today that really do put things into perspective.

Regarding the question, Calgary did receive \$2.2 billion in Budget 2023; \$430 million actually went towards upgrades to Deerfoot Trail. Just last November we actually announced significant improvements on the south side of Deerfoot Trail, improving the Bow Bottom Trail and Anderson Road, Southland Drive, and Glenmore Trail interchanges. Seven new bridge structures, Mr. Speaker, are going to be built on the Deerfoot, and construction will begin this spring.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone in Alberta who's driven on Deerfoot Trail can agree that this is a welcomed investment to improve our province's busiest road. Given that these improvements to Deerfoot Trail would further develop Alberta's economy, can the minister tell the House about how these investments into Deerfoot Trail will drive our economy forward?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of jobs indirectly will be created by the improvements to this, the construction work on Deerfoot. Deerfoot is obviously a major trade route through the province of Alberta, shipping goods not just from the airport but up and down highway 2, throughout the province. The economic benefits of improving the Deerfoot from Bow Bottom Trail to Glenmore Trail will provide about a \$23 million economic boost to the province but also allow Calgarians to be able to get home sooner to spend more time with their families.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that those who use Deerfoot Trail daily are not limited to the semi-trucks that keep our grocery shelves stocked and help our local businesses take goods to market and given that there are many thousands of people that use Deerfoot Trail daily, whether it's to go to school or going to and from work, can the same minister tell the House about how the Deerfoot Trail upgrades will benefit Albertans who commute daily on this road?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making lives better here in the province of Alberta. Calgary commuters will actually see a 15 per cent improvement in their morning rush-hour commute and also a 22 per cent improvement in their evening rush-hour commute once this construction is done. In total, that means about 900,000 hours a year will be saved with the completion of these Deerfoot Trail improvements. At the end of the day, that just means Calgarians will be able to spend more time with their families and less time staring at tail lights.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is next.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with my colleagues in this House, I'd like to give my condolences to the families of constables Jordan and Ryan and, of course, also acknowledge their friends and colleagues.

### Seniors' Support

**Ms Sigurdson:** Alberta seniors deserve a dedicated Seniors Advocate. This role was created to ensure that the voices and concerns of Alberta seniors would be heard by the government. I was disappointed that the UCP terminated the position of the Seniors Advocate. The recent report of the Auditor General shows the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on seniors and that there is a need for seniors to have a dedicated, independent voice. Will the minister support the re-establishment of an independent Seniors Advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question and her advocacy for seniors. Of course, this government cares about our seniors. We want to make sure that our seniors are supported and that they do have an advocate. The good news is that seniors do have an advocate within the Health Advocate office who is speaking on behalf of seniors' issues and concerns. Part of the reason why we merged these two offices is because over a third of the concerns that were coming in to the Seniors Advocate were health related, so by merging these two offices together, we're actually able to better serve seniors to make sure that their concerns are being addressed. As we go forward, there's going to need to be a strong relationship between the minister of seniors and the Minister of Health to address these issues.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this budget proposes a 2.4 per cent increase in accommodation rates for seniors in continuing care and given that this increase comes during a cost-of-living crisis, which could mean that families face difficult choices between paying their bills while ensuring that their family member is being cared for, and given that as we deal with this affordability crisis, ensuring that the seniors who built this province have the support they need is critical, will the minister reverse this proposed increase in accommodation rates?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for her question and her advocacy. This government is taking action in regard to addressing affordability challenges for seniors. Indexing seniors' benefits as well as supplementary benefits was a big part of that but also bringing in the affordability payments to help seniors get through this affordability crisis. We're also working towards expanding out affordable housing for seniors right across this province in the communities that seniors have raised their families and built their lives in. We know how important this is, and we're going to continue to work with the community and our not-for-profit partners and housing providers to improve affordability for our seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that Albertans are in the debt of the seniors who built this province and that we in this House need to provide them with the support that they need and given that seniors' voices should be heard by their elected representatives, Minister, please explain what steps are being taken to ensure that no seniors fall through the cracks during this affordability crisis. When will the minister reinstate the office of the Seniors Advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Of course, we are making sure that seniors' voices are heard through the Health Advocate's office, through the Seniors Advocate within the Health Advocate's office, to make sure that the concerns that seniors have – that they're able to present that to the Health Advocate office, of course, compiling that data to help inform government on how best we move forward and to make sure that seniors' concerns are being addressed in this community. We are committed to improving the lives of our seniors, and Budget 2023-2024 has significant investments in addressing affordability and providing additional supports for our seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to begin by offering my condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of the fallen officers who passed away today.

### Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act

**Mr. Eggen:** Yesterday I had the honour of introducing Bill 207, the Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act. If passed, the bill would direct the ministry to develop a tax credit that would provide investment incentives to companies making capital investments in clean tech, carbon materials, critical minerals processing, and advanced manufacturing. The bill is targeted towards the fastest growing emerging sectors, where Alberta has the opportunity to compete on a global scale and bring these opportunities right here to Alberta. For all of these reasons, I would ask: would the government consider supporting Bill 207?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member opposite putting forward a bill that he believes will further Alberta's economic growth and diversification. That goal, that

objective, has been the objective of this government since day one, in 2019. That's why we worked hard to create the most competitive business environment of any province in the nation. We started out by reducing our business tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent. We've been focused on reducing red tape, and our plan is working. Our business environment is competitive, and investing is coming.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the competition for investment in new, emerging sectors is increasing after the United States passed the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 and given that Alberta has some of the lowest capital investment growth in the country – our proposed tax credit is estimated to leverage a projected \$10 billion in incremental investments and will create an estimated 20,000 jobs – I would ask: why would the government continue with their tax cuts when we know that, in fact, tax credits allow growth and compel growth in the province for Albertans and for our economy?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we believe that broadly creating a competitive business environment is really government's role and responsibility. Now, we also believe that where we have sectors where we're naturally competitive and we're competing with other jurisdictions, at times specific incentives and tax credits are worthy. That's why we brought in the Alberta petrochemical incentive program. That's a targeted tax incentive grant program that is attracting interest from investors around the world. We have tens of billions of dollars of investment lined up to come into the sector in Alberta.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Bill 207's incentives are also designed in a way that allows for good-paying jobs, supports innovation, and provides training so that Albertans get the necessary skills to work in these sectors and given that Alberta currently has the slowest wage growth in the country, will the government, then, support Bill 207 as a means of accelerating wage growth for Albertans, using tax credits rather than tax cuts?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite dislike tax cuts. That's abundantly apparent. But in Budget 2022 we allocated \$600 million for skills and jobs. We've added to that in Budget '23 with over \$300 million, again, to ensure that Albertans can step into training opportunities, to ensure that all Albertans can be skilled to flourish in the economy of the future. Every Albertan needs to participate in the Alberta advantage.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** My deepest condolences to the family, friends, and co-workers of the fallen officers.

### Federal Energy Transition Plan

**Ms Lovely:** The just transition plan to phase out oil and gas will harm not only my constituents but oil and gas workers across our province. An important dividing line between the provinces and the federal government is that natural resources and their development fall under provincial jurisdiction. Gibson Energy, that claims 1 of 4 barrels exported from western Canada, runs through Hardisty. To the Minister of Energy: will the provincial government be prepared to defend and protect our constitutional rights and maintain and develop our own oil and gas industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not the first time that we've seen devastating policies from Ottawa for our energy

industry. The key phrase here is "constitutional rights." Alberta has a long history of protecting those constitutional rights. Let's take a walk down memory lane. Whether that's Peter Lougheed fighting against Justin Trudeau's father and his national energy program or the drama teacher Justin Trudeau's terrible just transition plan, I assure you we are doing and will continue to do everything to guarantee that our rights remain our rights.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

2:40

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Ottawa's just transition plan is clearly to hinder Alberta's production of oil and gas and further given that there is an ongoing energy crisis where energy is a necessary part of life, from heating our homes to fuelling our cars, to the Minister of Energy: is the government of Alberta prepared to export our morally and responsibly sourced energy to the world struggling with energy security?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta we produce the most reliable, responsible, and secure energy of anywhere in the world. Recent events have made it clear that energy security is a huge priority for jurisdictions like Germany, Japan, and South Korea. Last year the German chancellor came to Canada looking for Canadian LNG, and Justin Trudeau turned him down. I recently visited Germany and Norway to advocate for Alberta because Ottawa clearly doesn't have the compassion or the best interests of Albertans or Canadians, for that matter, in mind. The world needs more Alberta energy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that Justin Trudeau has gone down the path of just transition and given that others support this misdirected notion, to the Minister of Energy: how has Alberta contributed to the welfare and well-being of the rest of the country?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 2,500 coal plants operating globally right now, with 189 under construction, many of which are located in China. Our responsible, reliable, and ESG-leading energy, especially our natural gas, can off-set increasing global emissions if we can move those coal plants to Alberta LNG. We contribute leadership, technological innovation, and the highest standard of ESG throughout the world. We should be and are the standard that every other country tries to live up to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

#### Edmonton

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be a representative in this Chamber in Alberta's great capital city of Edmonton. As MLA for Edmonton-North West I have seen Edmonton grow and develop into the great Canadian city that it is today, with endless potential for the future.

However, this is certainly not by accident. Through partnerships in all levels of government down to the community level, Edmonton has been able to build a welcoming home for the thousands of people who move here every year. It is critical that we do not let up in this effort. We need to ensure it by investing in Edmonton, by building schools and hospitals and also supporting nonprofits who serve this city. We need to continue to invest to ensure that our city's most vulnerable are supported in every way.

Importantly, the city needs a partner in the Legislature to ensure that these needs are acted on. I was proud to be part of a government that was such a partner to the city and the people of Edmonton, and I will never stop advocating for Edmonton and the people who call it home, because when Edmonton succeeds, Alberta succeeds, too.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington has a statement to make.

#### Deaths of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our men and women in uniform are heroes. It hit me very hard to learn that just after midnight this morning Edmonton Police Service responded to a family dispute in northwest Edmonton, and two police officers were killed in the line of duty. Two young EPS veterans, 35-year-old Constable Travis Jordan and 30-year-old Brett Ryan, did not come home to their families after the night shift this morning. Though all of the details of this horrifying act are not yet known, we know that the officers' colleagues rushed these heroes to the hospital and worked bravely to save these members, but sadly they were declared dead in the hospital.

I can tell you without any hesitation, Mr. Speaker, that I stand with the Premier, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, a former police officer himself, and all of my colleagues in this Chamber in full unity with these heroes in uniform as well as the family and friends that have lost their loved ones this morning. The first priority after this tragedy for all of us should be to support these two heroes' mourning friends, family, and colleagues in EPS in any way that we can, and the next one should be to do whatever we need to keep a tragedy like this from happening again.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government always will stand proudly with our men and women in uniform, a career that all too often, I'm sure, feels thankless. I'm going to say right now with no reservations on behalf of my colleagues in the Alberta Legislature: thank you.

#### Federal Energy Transition Plan

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, in the last few months Ottawa has once again misunderstood Alberta with their paternalistic just transition. It's not surprising, but it is frustrating and disappointing. At a time when our international allies are suffering due to lack of access to essential oil and gas energy, with people in Europe burdened by astronomically high prices, the NDP-Liberal government not only refuses to send them what they need but simultaneously seeks to dismantle Alberta's industry and jobs.

Just transition is a proposal that could not be more ill timed or falsely named. The colonial Ottawa Liberals are blinded by an agenda that has little bearing on reality and, in its pursuit, are happy to afflict Albertans with joblessness by way of a government crusade against the industry that literally fuels our nation's economy. It's one thing to promote the positive benefits of green energy technology, a sector Alberta has embraced as a leader; it's another thing entirely for an NDP-Liberal coalition to institute top-

down bans and restrictions on an industry that constitutes the lifeblood of modern civilization.

As Alberta moves diligently towards a low-carbon future, it is undeniable that oil and gas produced here is among the most ethically sourced in the entire world, but the woke would sooner import oil from dictatorships produced with zero environmental standards. As we continue to innovate and diversify our economy here, it would be foolish and short sighted for Ottawa to abandon or, rather, eliminate Alberta's fuel industry with the stroke of a pen. Our allies are in desperate need of these resources, and developing nations will continue to source energy somewhere as they grow their economies and improve their people's quality of life. Not only would just transition destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs and set Alberta and Canada's economy back for a generation, but it would also be clearly unjust to continue refusing our allies and developing nations the basic energy supplies that they so desperately need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Mr. Nielsen:** Firefighters are our heroes. They keep our communities, our cities, and our province safe from fires as well as many other hazards. They protect our families, friends, and loved ones from danger, and they risk their lives in the process. I thank them for their continued service, but I know that words are simply not enough, not when the realities of their job can lead them to develop cancer.

The Fort McMurray wildfire shook our province. It was devastating, but I'm proud of the way Albertans rallied around each other to offer support during this time. Albertans did everything they could, from fundraising to donating needed items to opening their homes, all while Alberta firefighters did everything they could to stop the fire as quickly as possible. So it is hard now to see the ways in which the spirit of community care, friendship, and support seem to have fallen away, and in its place has been an unnecessary fight: when coverage should be provided and to whom.

We have the power here and now to end these disputes and do the right thing, to make sure Bill 9 includes retroactive coverage for cancer that firefighters develop as a result of their job, as the province of Ontario did earlier this month. I want to remind the UCP that this support is possible, that we have the amendment at the ready to correct this wrong and align Alberta's policy with provinces like Ontario.

Our firefighters have given us so much. Let's work together and provide them with retroactive coverage. It's just the right thing to do.

2:50

#### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River has a petition.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I request leave to present, in accordance with Standing Order 98(2), one petition that has been received for private bills, the petition of Dr. Shawn Flynn, president of St. Joseph's College, for the St. Joseph's College amendment act, 2023.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I've received a message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

**The Speaker:** The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, and recommends the same to the Assembly.

Please be seated.

The hon. the Treasury Board president and the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to table the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates along with an update to the '22-23 fiscal plan as required by the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. This 2022-23 fiscal plan update contains no changes from the information provided in the '23-26 fiscal plan tabled for Budget 2023.

The documents I'm tabling today reflect the realities we've faced and the needs we've addressed since I tabled Budget 2022 in February of last year. The numbers in these documents reflect this government's commitment to save for the future, increase the capacity of our health care and education systems, and adapt to the changing global economy. These funding requests will also provide for the planned spending to enable electricity rebates and other affordability supports that have provided relief to Albertans struggling with our current affordability crisis. The unique and challenging circumstances of this last year called on the government to act fast and to make life more affordable, and we responded.

Mr. Speaker, in total the supplementary supply estimates will allow additional spending by 19 government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$2.7 billion in expense funding, \$500,000 in capital investment funding for the government, and \$292 million in financial transactions. Of this funding the four highest expenses are \$753 million for Treasury Board and Finance for investment in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund; \$636 million for Energy, primarily for the cost of selling oil and the site rehabilitation plan; \$553 million for Health, primarily for physician payments and the new Alberta Medical Association agreement; \$355 million for Affordability and Utilities for rebates and grants under the affordability action plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

23. Mr. Toews moved:  
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the creativity in my title today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Government Motion 23 is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(i). Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate.

[Government Motion 23 carried]

24. Mr. Toews moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates for three hours on Monday, March 20, 2023.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

**The Speaker:** Just one second. It appears to me like the hon. the Government House Leader is rising or wanted to rise prior to calling the Committee of Supply. Does he have a question? The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise to request unanimous consent to allow for one-minute bells in Committee of Supply, including the first division.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent. It would shorten the bells in Committee of Supply, including the first division. It's a relatively uncommon request, so I want to ensure that everyone understands what we are agreeing to. I will ask only one question: is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent for one-minute bells upon the entry into Committee of Supply, including the first division?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to now call the committee to order. Prior to beginning, the chair will outline the process for this afternoon. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented.

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The vote on the main estimates will then take place.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3), which we have decided is not relevant anymore given the previous unanimous motion.

3:00

### Committee Reports

**The Chair:** I would like to now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2023-2024 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Executive Council; Ministry of Advanced Education; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development; Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions; Ministry of Technology and Innovation; Ministry of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'd like to now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report.

**Ms Lovely:** As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I'm pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2023-24 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Children's Services; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction; Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services; Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services; Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2023-2024 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Affordability and Utilities; Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas; Ministry of Indigenous Relations; Ministry of Municipal Affairs; Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors; and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

I'd like to thank all of my committee members for their participation. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2023-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates general revenue fund. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2023-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024: \$180,409,000.

Agreed to:

Offices of the Legislative Assembly \$180,409,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

### Vote on Main Estimates 2023-24

**The Chair:** We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:03 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Long	Rowswell
Allard	Lovely	Savage
Amery	Madu	Sawhney

Dreeshen	Nally	Schow
Fir	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Nixon, Jason	Smith, Mark
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Gotfried	Orr	Toews
Guthrie	Panda	Turton
Hanson	Pon	van Dijken
Hunter	Reid	Williams
LaGrange	Rosin	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Sigurdson, L.
Carson	Loyola	Sweet
Eggen	Sabir	

Totals: For – 37 Against – 8

[Motion carried]

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

I would now like to invite the hon. Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2023-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates general revenue fund and the 2023-24 government estimates general revenue fund.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report the 2023-2024 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates general revenue fund and the 2023-2024 government estimates general revenue fund.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2023-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates general revenue fund and the 2023-24 government estimates general revenue fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, have been approved.

The offices of the Legislative Assembly: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$76,763,000; office of the Auditor General, \$29,620,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$4,480,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$42,397,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$1,000,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$8,534,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$16,205,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,410,000.

**3:10**

The government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,416,985,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$1,060,100,000.

Affordability and Utilities: expense, \$87,128,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$96,970,000.

Agriculture and Irrigation: expense, \$679,936,000; capital investment, \$7,177,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$2,319,912,000; capital investment, \$10,000,000.

Culture: expense, \$301,380,000; capital investment, \$2,331,000; financial transactions, \$1,710,000.



Education: expense, \$5,479,943,000; capital investment, \$565,000; financial transactions, \$18,920,000.

Energy: expense, \$571,581,000; capital investment, \$1,000,000.

Environment and Protected Areas: expense, \$553,936,000; capital investment, \$59,396,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$35,245,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Forestry, Parks and Tourism: expense, \$397,957,000; capital investment, \$85,110,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Health: expense, \$25,037,760,000; capital investment, \$28,865,000; financial transactions, \$88,876,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$225,693,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$477,704,000; capital investment, \$1,692,856,000; financial transactions, \$28,114,000.

Jobs, Economy and Northern Development: expense, \$249,693,000; capital investment, \$1,970,000.

Justice: expense, \$648,842,000; capital investment, \$17,816,000.

Mental Health and Addiction: expense, \$275,005,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$993,931,000; capital investment, \$600,000.

Public Safety and Emergency Services: expense, \$1,107,941,000; capital investment, \$6,275,000; financial transactions, \$4,196,000.

Seniors, Community and Social Services: expense, \$5,066,076,000; capital investment, \$4,072,000; financial transactions, \$19,700,000.

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: expense, \$143,677,000; capital investment, \$45,520,000; financial transactions, \$5,500,000.

Skilled Trades and Professions: expense, \$218,811,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Technology and Innovation: expense, \$948,075,000; capital investment, \$112,385,000.

Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism: expense, \$85,874,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Transportation and Economic Corridors: expense, \$1,722,148,000; capital investment, \$1,837,114,000; financial transactions, \$134,644,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$240,261,000; capital investment, \$25,000; contingencies, \$1,500,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my report.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, just like reconciling the home chequebook, isn't it? Great job on all those numbers, but, hon. member, if we could request some clarification on the following: financial transactions for Affordability and Utilities, expenses for Culture, expenses for Energy, expenses for service Alberta, expenses for Tech and Innovation, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long week.

In general our government main estimates clarification on Affordability and Utilities expense is \$87,128,000 . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** The financial transactions for Affordability and Utilities, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Oh. Are they financial transactions for all the requests?

**The Acting Speaker:** No. Administrative expenses, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Financial transactions for Affordability and Utilities . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** . . . is \$96,970,000.

Financial transactions for Culture . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Expenses for the rest, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Expenses for the rest.

Expense for Culture: \$301,380,000.

Expense for Energy is \$571,581,000.

Expense for Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction is \$143,677,000.

Expense for Technology and Innovation is \$948,075,000.

Mr. Speaker, are we squared up?

**The Acting Speaker:** You're square. Thank you very much, hon. member. I'll say that I'm really glad I'm in this chair and not your chair today.

Hon. members, does the Assembly concur on the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

I would also like to alert the hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(7) following the Committee of Supply's report on the main estimates, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills

### Bill 11

### Appropriation Act, 2023

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 11, the Appropriation Act, 2023. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This bill requests a total of \$57.4 billion from the general revenue fund, consistent with Budget 2023 presented in the House, this House, on February 28. I ask my all of my colleagues in this Assembly on both sides of the aisle for their support in this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has caught my eye.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a wonderful week of work here in the Legislature, but the time has come to head on to our respective directions. You don't have to go home – I encourage that you do – but you have to get out of here. With that said, I do move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:19 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022-2023)**

**Activity to Thursday, March 16, 2023**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 cA-33.8 ]

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft.*), 342-49 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 361-72 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve.*), 421-25 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 430-31 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 446-50 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c19 ]

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 325-29 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 375-78 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c23 ]

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 321-25 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 372-75 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 392 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 426-29 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c17 ]

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 314-21 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 392-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 429-30 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c20 ]

**Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 309-14 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 349-54 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 399-408 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 409-21 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 431 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 450-51 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2022 c22 ]

**Bill 7 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No.2) (Schow)**

First Reading — 329 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 378-79 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 398-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 425-26 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c21 ]

**Bill 8 — Alberta Firearms Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 503 (*Mar. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 536-43 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 9 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Nally)**

First Reading — 523 (*Mar. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 536 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 11 — Appropriation Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 617 (*Mar. 16, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft.*), 354-60 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 289-97 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 445-46 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2022 c18 ]

**Bill 203 — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-303 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., adjourned*), 480-87 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 487-92 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft.*), 557-64 (*Mar. 13, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205 — Official Sport of Alberta Act (Lovely)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 564-71 (*Mar. 13, 2023 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 206 — Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sabir)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 207 — Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act (Eggen)**

First Reading — 601 (*Mar. 15, 2023 aft., passed*)









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 20, 2023

Day 21

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)	Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Deputy Government House Leader	Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)	Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)	Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)	Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC), Premier
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees	Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

### **Executive Council**

Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 20, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Members we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Joemy Joseph. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us 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.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Francophonie in Alberta

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this year marks the 25th anniversary of Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, a nation-wide celebration of French-Canadian language and culture. Today, on International Francophonie Day, we recognize Alberta's vibrant Francophonie community.

The French language was integral to the development of our province, and it remains one of the most important and prolific languages in Alberta today. French is the first language of an estimated 88,000 Albertans, and more than 380,000 Albertans are of French descent.

I had the honour of hosting an event earlier this afternoon to celebrate the Francophonie culture. I am sure the members who were able to attend or watch online agree that each performance illustrates that music is the international, universal language that speaks to us all; truly beautiful performances on this important day, including our national anthem today.

Please proceed to your seats.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this morning I also had the privilege of meeting a very special guest, who is now joining us in the Speaker's gallery. Please welcome the high commissioner for New Zealand, His Excellency Martin Harvey. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Speaker has a number of introductions today, as do many members of the Assembly. I will

remind members that introductions are to be no longer than 20 seconds until one of you becomes the Speaker, at which point you have some leniency to take some additional time.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery today is our very talented singer, who led us in the singing of the national anthem earlier. Mr. Joemy Joseph lives in the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud but was born and raised in Haiti, came to Canada in 2014 with his wife, Laura Westfall, who also joins us. He has been passionate about singing since he was a young child, having recorded several religious albums in English, French, Spanish, and Haitian. He's currently a software engineer, musician, and full-time father of two young daughters. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery, it's my pleasure to introduce perhaps my very best friend on the face of the planet. He is one of the few people that I can call at 3 a.m. when I need to get out of a jam. He is a resident of the constituency of Highwood, my good friend Mr. Stephen John Schaufele. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise to introduce the five most important people in my life. I ask that they stand when their names are called: my parents, Andreas and Maria Nicolaidis; as well, my amazing wife, Michelle; and my two beautiful daughters, Eleftheria and Christina. I ask that they rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture has an introduction.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly very special guests here: Pierre Asselin, president of ACFA, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; and Amy Vachon-Chabot; with Rheal Poirier, the executive director of the Francophone Secretariat. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome from this House.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you one of my constituents from Edmonton-South West, who is a recipient of the Queen's platinum jubilee medal, Don Patterson, as well as my younger brother, who is visiting from Nigeria, Henry Madu. Please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a school to introduce.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to introduce the students of St. Augustine school in Ponoka. With them today is their teacher Sharon Hackett and one of her colleagues. To the students and the staff of St. Augustine school: please rise as I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Decore has an introduction.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 more of some of the brightest young minds in the province, in the constituency of Edmonton-Decore, from St. John Bosco elementary school. I look forward to meeting them later on this week at School at the Legislature. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly 24 students from, in their words, the most awesome and bestest school in the entire province, Waverley elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher Don Douglas. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my good friend Cara Burtis, who has recently relocated from Calgary to Calmar, Alberta – go, Oilers – her daughter Julia Burtis, and her niece Chloe Weslowski. Unfortunately, Katie Burtis couldn't join us today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a real mensch, Jeremy Prete, and his amazing wife, Sarah, and their boys Jake and Tyler. Together the Pretes run Epic, which is a youth centre in Cardston that runs after school programs, everything from basic etiquette to mental health awareness. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce you to some of the members of the Edmonton Raging Grannies, who are here in attendance. Please rise as I say your names: Anna Novikov, Cassie Aziz-Few, Marilyn Gaa, Edda Loomes, Audrey Brooks, and Louise Swift. They're here to gather and protest in solidarity with other women from across the province and to stand up for Alberta families. Thank you so much for being here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**1:40**

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you two constituents from the great riding of Leduc-Beaumont, Anna and Krystle Linic. If you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Member Irwin:** On behalf of our fabulous MLA for Lethbridge-West I am so very happy to introduce the feisty five from the Lethbridge Raging Grannies. Please join me in welcoming Barb Phillips, Maria Fitzpatrick, Karen Gay, Judy Millard, and Gerry Dyck.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you councillor Sonny Rajoo from Two Hills; councillor Elroy Yakemchuk from the county of Two Hills; as well as Ruven Rajoo, former school board trustee; Jan Rajoo, St. Paul education trustee; and their girls: Xylia, Xaraya, and Xianna. I'd also like to note that Sonny, Elroy, and Ruven are all Queen's platinum jubilee medal recipients. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North has a statement to make.

### Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the honour of attending the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers. After the first launch last year the summit now provides an annual opportunity to connect, learn, and initiate positive action. Alberta has a rich and diverse cultural landscape, and we are proud to be leading the way in the important work of creating a more open, inclusive, and educated province. The government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that every newcomer can reach their highest potential and has access to the supports they need to help them integrate into this province that they now call home.

This includes the ability to build rewarding careers to support themselves, their families, and communities. This journey for newcomers comes with numerous struggles, many of which still affect many newcomers to this day. Eliminating barriers such as unemployment, underemployment, education recognition, and settlements is crucial to support newcomers' success and drive economic growth. Newcomers deserve reassurance that they are embraced and valued in the workplace and the community.

A key focus for this year's summit was listening. Throughout the program there were numerous opportunities to listen to each other. It is through listening, Mr. Speaker, that we better understand the perspectives of others. Every newcomer, regardless of their role, has something unique and worthwhile to contribute. Each one of us has the opportunity to listen and to learn. My hope is that we will enrich ourselves in knowledge and in awareness and be ready to act.

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the panelists, presenters, and participants for this year's summit as well as to the many staff and volunteers who brought this event to life. Your contributions are valued and help us to build a better ...

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

### New Democratic Party Policies

**Ms Sigurdson:** On December 14, 2022, something wonderful happened. I became a grandmother for the very first time. My grandson, Henry, was born to my eldest son, Maxwell, and his wife, Emily. As all grandparents know, a grandchild brings much joy to families. There are, of course, the jokes about just being around for the fun part of helping Henry grow. The parents are responsible for soothing him when he cries and getting up at night to care for him; grandmothers get to cuddle and play when he's in a good mood. Seriously, though, beyond the intimate connection I have with him, I want our society to be vibrant and caring so that Henry is supported to fulfill his dreams.

As a grandmother and a member of the Alberta Legislature I know the kind of province in which I want Henry to grow. In fact, I've worked my entire life to ensure all Albertans have opportunities to achieve their dreams. Creating a fair, inclusive, and equal society has been my life's work. Before being elected, I did this work through my profession as a social worker. For more than 30 years I worked to support vulnerable Albertans. However, there came a point in my career when I knew I needed to address the difficulties before me and my clients at a higher level. That's when I decided to seek public office.

I'm so proud to be part of the Alberta New Democrat caucus, a caucus that shares these values of fairness and justice. An Alberta NDP government will ensure that all Albertans have equal opportunities. We will protect and improve public health care so that Henry and all Albertans have a family doctor and never have to pay out of pocket to see a doctor. An Alberta NDP government



will help families manage the cost of living by getting their utility, insurance, and tuition costs under control. An Alberta NDP government will work with business and the energy sector to grow our economy with good jobs, more training, and more innovation. This spring election is an opportunity for Albertans to choose a government that will create a vibrant and caring society. Vote Alberta NDP for Henry and all Alberta's grandchildren.

### Women's and Girls' Participation in Sport

**Ms Fir:** Mr. Speaker, I am by no means a great runner, but on March 8 I was given an inspiring reminder of how I do have that right and ability. In many parts of the world women and girls are not able to go for a run outside. When Zainab Hussaini tried to go for a run in Afghanistan, people threw rocks at her, insulted her, and threatened her. They believed that because she was a woman, she should not be allowed to run outside. But Zainab had a goal to become the first Afghan woman to complete a marathon in Afghanistan. When she ran, she felt free, and she wanted every woman in Afghanistan to have that experience. So despite the challenges she faced, she trained for the marathon in secret in a small, enclosed courtyard not much larger than the average one-bedroom apartment, running in loops over and over so she could make a difference. Against all odds and facing threats to her life, in 2015 she became the first Afghan woman to run a marathon in Afghanistan and, in doing so, was an inspiration to so many.

Zainab and women like her are why the 93rd Girl Guide unit with Girl Guides of Canada chose to participate in the Secret 3K run, a Canadian organization promoting girls' participation in sport. By exercising their right and ability to walk and run freely within Canada, these girls honour those who do not have that freedom. I was happy to personally sponsor my constituency manager's daughter and her amazing Girl Guide group for the run. The event is an opportunity to reflect on the courage and determination of women and girls world-wide. Nations thrive when women are allowed to fulfill their true potential.

In Alberta our government is committed to uplifting female athletes. We support women in sport through the podium fund, through recreation grants, and by providing funding to organizations like the InMotion Network. To Zainab, to our Girl Guides, and to all female athletes who are paving the way for all girls around the world to participate in sport: Alberta stands with you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Government Record

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP opposition is at it again, this time claiming that crop insurance premiums will be increasing by 60 per cent. This type of fearmongering and misrepresentation of the facts is just one of many reasons why the NDP will never be able to provide stability or security to Alberta. But I'm not here to indulge in the NDP and their alarmist rhetoric. As a lifelong farmer and the parliamentary secretary for agrifood development I'm here to set the record straight about what our government is really doing for the agriculture industry.

Our government has spoken out against the federal carbon tax and federal fertilizer reduction targets. We've provided MELT exemptions to farms amidst driver shortages. We've negotiated millions in agriculture funding through a five-year sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. We've increased the feeder

association loan guarantee program from \$100 million to \$150 million. We've invested \$3.2 million into solution-seeking projects through Alberta Innovates, \$4 million into agrifood recovery support due to supply chain disruptions, \$3.7 million into agrifood education expansion, a projected \$150 million into the twinning of highway 3, \$933 million, Mr. Speaker, towards irrigation expansion and modernization, just to name a few.

As a result, we've seen major producers like McCain choose to double the size of their Alberta facilities. Alberta has attracted \$1.5 billion in new agrifood investment. We have created 3,000 agriculture jobs for Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we've proudly hit every expansion target that this administration set for the agriculture industry and then some. Building on this momentum, our government has projected the creation of 9,000 jobs and \$5 billion in agrifood investment. The agriprocessing investment tax credit will be instrumental in helping us achieve that goal.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

#### Misericordia Community Hospital CT Scanner

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day in Alberta when ER doctors are forced to beg this UCP government just to get one imaging machine fixed. Doctors at the Mis say that the CT scanner is so broken and unreliable, it means that hundreds of patients are being transferred every month it's down, causing both serious delays in treatment and more EMS transport calls that should be avoidable. ER doctor Jarrod Anderson says, quote: that in and of itself is completely asinine. End quote. UCP spokespeople say that the Premier won't fix it. A simple question to the Premier: why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has the call.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I learned when Dr. John Cowell was appointed the official administrator is, in point of fact, that there were a lot of things that we needed to fix in the health care system, and through the direction of the doctor, the Minister of Health, and our newly appointed CEO, Mauro Chies, we've begun addressing these issues one at a time. Part of the issue that we face, I think, is that there's sometimes miscommunication between the front line and the decision-makers, and I'm confident that we're going to be able to solve these issues as we go forward.

**Ms Notley:** Well, the solve would just be to say: sorry; it's going to get fixed.

Over the past year multiple staff at the Mis counted almost two months that the machine was not functional. Dr. Anderson says that even after the emergency room upgrades, without fixing this machine, quote: you're immediately going to hamstringing us from being able to do our job properly. End quote. So to the Premier: why is Alberta spending \$65 million to update the Mis emergency room and still not fixing the broken scanner? How does this make any sense at all?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we're working through the problems one at a time, and in point of fact we discovered that there were 55 operating rooms within our public hospitals that were not in operation, including one that was out of operation in Camrose simply because the HVAC needed to be fixed. These are the kinds of things that we're discovering now that we have got Dr. John Cowell in place as our official administrator. I work very closely

with him as well as the Health minister and the new CEO, Mauro Chies, and we'll be able to address these issues as we find them.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, these folks have been in charge for the last three and a half years, regardless of when Dr. Cowell showed up.

Now, Dr. Anderson said that it is difficult to get some patients the necessary CT scans within the recommended four-hour window for proper stroke care. This includes delaying treatments that would otherwise reverse the effects of strokes. Now, Mr. Speaker, if even one Albertan avoids lifelong disability, quite frankly, the investment is worth it. This is for a whole hospital. Will the Premier today reverse her decision and commit that this machine will be replaced?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, proper governance is that we let the CEO make decisions overseen by an official administrator, and the nice part about having an official administrator in place is that I and the Health minister are able to raise these issues. So I'll be raising the issue with Dr. Cowell. I'll be happy to get back to her.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Hundreds of doctors have been raising the issue, Mr. Speaker.

#### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Ms Notley:** Now, meanwhile the Alberta NDP has recently proposed a life-changing policy for women's health care, universal access to contraception at no cost, yet for more than a week now this Premier has refused the idea, arguing that somehow it's about choice. Last week she said, quote: we want to make sure there's a full range of coverage, and that's the reason we continue to support choice. Mr. Speaker, if the choice is between free-coverage NDP and the pay-more UCP, why won't the Premier just admit that the best choice for Alberta women is to vote NDP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times before, Alberta's government supports protecting choice for women, accessing reproductive health care services and products in Alberta. We have coverage for many contraceptive drug and health products. It's provided to Albertans who are enrolled in government-sponsored drug and supplemental health benefits plans. It includes oral contraceptives. It includes injectable contraceptives. It includes intrauterine devices and other support for women in their reproductive health care choices. We're quite happy to provide this level of support.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this goes to the heart of who this Premier is. She doesn't understand the conceptual difference between universal free health care and health care people pay for out of pocket. That's why she can't answer this question.

Now, Cathy\* says: I have a great plan, but it doesn't cover IUDs. Diane\* says: relying on private insurance will again leave out some of our most vulnerable women. And Joanne\* says: someone should inform our Premier that very few young women have their own private health plan coverage. Why is the Premier ignoring these women?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that the Canada Health Act ensures that no hospital services and that no doctor services are paid for out of pocket. We do know also

because she has a health spending account, along with all the other politicians who are in this Chamber, that covers all the variety of things that are not covered by health care. This is the reason why we support having lots of options. That includes both public as well as private so that women are covered in the full range of choices that they make, and we're going to continue to support that choice.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, for so many women the choice to pay is no choice at all. J.J.\* says: money should never be a barrier to accessing birth control. Rhiannon\* says: if it was free, I'd have saved enough to pay my student loans or put a down payment on a house. And Rebecca\* says: including contraception in health benefits is what true equity looks like; I can't wait for May 29. Me neither because that's when Albertans will get better universal public health care, no question.

**Ms Smith:** I didn't hear a question there, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the Official Opposition House Leader.

#### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago the Ontario labour minister announced that they were expanding WCB coverage of firefighters impacted by two specific types of cancer. What's more, Ontario made the coverage retroactive all the way back to January 1, 1960. This government now for weeks has been claiming that it is impossible to provide retroactive coverage specific to the heroes of the Fort McMurray wildfire. Now, this government has had a few weeks to look at what Ontario is doing. Will they follow their lead and support our amendment so that not a single hero from the Fort McMurray wildfire has to fear not being covered?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'm tired of the member opposite playing politics with this issue. You know who was in power when the one member died in the Fort McMurray fire? That minister. That government was in power. That member was the minister. She had the opportunity then to make it retroactive. She did nothing. This government is actually doing the right thing. We're not going to follow Ontario and do the wrong thing; we're going to do the right thing. That's what this government is all about, being smart and caring.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, that minister has been part of this government for four years, and they have done nothing to support these workers.

The UCP seems to think that it's a small number of firefighters who will not benefit from Bill 9 and that they've done enough. On this side of the House we believe that every firefighter who went to fight the Beast should be covered. The UCP talks about a fairness process, but real fairness would be to pass our amendment and ensure that not a single firefighter or their family is forced to fight a bureaucracy to have their claim covered. Is the Premier truly interested in fairness for firefighters, and if so, will she overrule this minister and make sure they get coverage?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the WCB in Alberta follows the principle that today's employers must pay for today's claims. Now, the issue is retroactivity, but the truth is that the solution is the fairness process in the WCB. The WCB there is for employers. This member is playing politics, and she knows that there is only one possible member that might have been covered by the retroactivity, and that member knows that that member died on her watch. Why didn't she come forward then and deal with

\*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

retroactivity? She knew it was the right thing to do not to deal with it that way.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the Ontario labour minister said when announcing retroactive coverage that it was important that front-line workers get the care they need, and we agree. The Conservative government of Ontario has provided retroactive coverage going back 62 years, but this UCP government can't bring themselves to provide retroactive coverage for seven for a unique, catastrophic event. It's not too late to do the right thing. We can pass this amendment together. Will the Premier support our amendment to provide coverage for all of these brave Albertans, or does she think it's their fault for developing cancer?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we are a smart and caring government. That's why we're here on this side of the House. The people of Alberta rejected them because they had chances to make serious amendments to different pieces of legislation and they didn't. What they want to do instead is play politics with firefighters' lives. I'm not going to do that. We're going to make sure the fairness process is there. We're sending a clear message to WCB that they better cover these firefighters. They know it. We know it. Why won't they get onboard and cover it and support our firefighters?

#### 2:00 Energy Company Liability

**Mr. Schmidt:** I've heard loud and clear from Albertans that they don't want this Premier handing over \$20 billion to bad actors to clean up messes that they are already legally responsible to clean up. I know the Premier and every member of the UCP cabinet and caucus have been hearing this feedback from Albertans as well. I have a motion before the House later today, an opportunity for all MLAs to uphold the principle of polluter pay and to condemn any use of public revenue to pay off companies to do something that they're already legally required to do. Will the Premier support this motion?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I do support the concept of polluter pay. It's part of the reason why this government, starting this year, has required all energy companies to spend 3 per cent of their liability cleaning up their existing well sites, \$740 million, and it's going to be increasing year after year by 9 per cent per year. They're going to be spending their own money cleaning up their own liability. We know that we have a \$30 billion liability, and we've got to get started.

They had the opportunity to come through with a similar type of program when they were in power; they chose not to. We're going to make sure that we have the investment there so that we can clear the liability.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I'm quite proud of the fact that we didn't start a \$20 billion giveaway to oil and gas companies to clean up their messes.

The UCP has a nasty habit of refusing to debate issues that highlight how totally out of touch they are with regular Albertans. When my colleague brought forward a motion opposing separatism, the UCP used procedural tricks to make sure that MLAs never got a chance to speak to it. It's deeply antidemocratic and disrespectful to private members and the Albertans who sent us to the Legislature. Will the Premier instruct her House leader that there will be no procedural tricks this afternoon and that all MLAs will be able to vote on this \$20 billion giveaway to oil and gas?

**The Speaker:** I know that the hon. member knows that question period is the time to ask about government policy. This seems to be a question specifically addressing private members' business,

which isn't the purview of the government, but if the Premier wants to answer it, she's welcome to do so.

**Ms Smith:** I think debating the issue of the outstanding liability on our inactive well sites is important. I've been thinking it's important since I first started talking about it, all the way back in the 1990s. As a result, as a landowner lobbyist, you bet. As a landowner advocate, I think landowners deserve to have these well sites cleaned up. Landowners deserve to know that they're going to be investing year after year in making sure these inactive sites are finally taken care of once and for all. It's unfortunate that too often they've just been pushed forward decade after decade. We're not going to let that happen anymore.

**Mr. Schmidt:** It's unfortunate that this Premier wants landowners to pay oil companies \$20 billion to clean up the problem. On this side of the House we oppose the giveaway of \$20 billion of Albertans' money to a small group of the Premier's friends. But Albertans want to know where their UCP MLAs stand. They want to know which MLAs are in favour of handing over \$20 billion to a small number of bad companies who have failed to clean up their own messes. Will the Premier allow a free vote of all of her MLAs, including cabinet ministers, on this motion this afternoon?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, if you do the math on what it is that we're requiring energy companies to pay out of their own pocket year after year, \$740 million this year, increasing 9 per cent year after year, within 20 years, maybe 25, we should be able to address the \$30 billion inactive well site liability. The approach that we've taken as a government has been to make sure that we're holding these energy companies to account, and that's what we're going to continue to do. I think this is a very important issue to debate. I just wish they'd take yes for an answer. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a question.

#### Support for Newcomers

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immigrants are key to continuing Alberta's economic success. They come to our province and bring skills that help labour shortages in key sectors and help local economies. Last week Alberta's government held the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers. At this conference immigrant-serving organizations and nonprofits gathered to discuss how we can better serve newcomers in our province. To the Premier: can you tell Albertans, especially new immigrants, what the government learned at this conference and how the government is moving forward to support newcomers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that great question. The member is correct to say that newcomers are paramount to Alberta's success. I heard from newcomers and immigrant-serving agencies how we can better support them when they arrive in Alberta and how the programs we already have in place are working to help these newcomers settle in our province. We are working hard to attract and retain newcomers in the province, and I have good news: it is working.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Deputy Premier. Given that Alberta's government has made it a clear priority to increase immigration into the province through the

Alberta advantage immigration program and given that Alberta has received a substantial increase to the number of nominations through AAIP and given that newcomers are the key to Alberta's continued success, to the Deputy Premier: can you please inform Albertans what this government is doing to ensure that these newcomers have the tools and resources for Albertans?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we are laser focused on helping newcomers settle in our great province. With the increase to AAIP nominations, we will need to continue to support newcomers as more of them make their way to Alberta. At the summit our government announced that Budget 2023 will provide \$23.8 million for vital settlement and language support. In addition, Budget '23 is providing \$27.3 million for displaced Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war machine, and for them, we have changed the AAIP program to prioritize newcomers with close family connections in the province to ensure that when newcomers come to Alberta, they have the support they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Deputy Premier for the answer. Given that Alberta is a province where many people of all nationalities, cultures, and religions come together to create a province that truly embodies multiculturalism, once again to the Deputy Premier: can you please inform Albertans what is being done to tackle racism and hate in the province and what this government is doing to ensure that everyone, from all walks of life, feels welcome and safe in Alberta?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, we condemn all forms of racism, hate, and prejudice. We have done a lot to tackle racism. Let me list some of the things that we have done. We are working closely with the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council to help shape policy and learn from lived experiences. At the summit we announced \$8 million over three years for the new and groundbreaking ethnocultural grant, \$1.5 million over three years to fund the continuation of the multiculturalism and antiracism grant program. We are establishing the Premier's council on multiculturalism, and much more to be done.

#### Anaesthesia Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, surgeries are being cancelled and delayed across the province due to a shortage of health care workers. This is a crisis that's a direct result of the UCP's war on health care. The biggest bottleneck in the system is the ongoing shortage of anaesthesiologists, indispensable members of surgical teams that the UCP have made it harder to recruit and retain. Now, recently I've heard concerning reports that anaesthesiologists are being sent out of public hospitals to go work in privately run clinics. To the Health minister: is he aware of any plans whatsoever by the government or AHS to pull anaesthesiologists out of our hospitals to work in private surgical clinics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We have one public health system. Alberta Health Services has contracted with a number of chartered surgical facilities to continue to be able to provide surgeries. The most recent example is in regard to hip and knee surgeries in Calgary. AHS assigns the doctors to do them – so they may be at the Rocky – as well as the anaesthesiologists. Anaesthesiologists are being assigned to chartered surgical facilities, but this is part of our overall approach to get caught up on surgeries.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that I'm hearing these plans to pull doctors out of Alberta hospitals are driven by contracts that guarantee a certain number of cases and the staff to perform them if needed and given that that type of contract would provide all the reward to private clinic owners and pile all the risk and delay onto our hospitals and Albertans waiting for surgeries, can the Health minister tell Albertans if he has approved such contracts, contracts like that, that would result in private operators getting rich at the expense of Albertans left to wait longer for their surgeries?

2:10

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, the assumptions that the hon. member is making are simply incorrect. This is one public system. It is publicly funded and publicly administered. We have made agreements with chartered surgical facilities to expand the capacity to be able to do surgeries. We've had success in doing this with ophthalmology. We are having success in driving down the times in waiting for hips and knees. We are assigning the same doctors, whether they're at the Rockyview, the Foothills, or a chartered surgical facility in Calgary, for example. It's the same doctors, the same anaesthesiologists, and we're getting success for . . .

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that I didn't hear a no and given that contracts like that would be designed purely for private clinics to profit from and not to promote the health of Albertans and given that one of the ways that's done is by sending only the simplest, lowest risk surgeries to private clinics, leaving the most complicated and hazardous procedures for the public system, and given that Albertans have a right to know how their health dollars are being spent, a simple question for the Health minister: will he commit to releasing all of the contracts signed with these private surgical clinics? Yes or no?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, sadly, that question demonstrates a lack of understanding by those on the other side in terms of how our surgical system works. This is a single public system. It's publicly paid for, publicly administered. Even though we're using chartered surgical facilities, that's to expand capacity to get surgeries done, because, quite frankly, Albertans are waiting far too long, but we're making progress. In fact, by using chartered surgical facilities, not only are we reducing the wait times, but we're actually reducing the costs. But it's the same doctors, the same anaesthesiologists in our entire system. We're making progress, and we're going to continue to do so.

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

#### Content on Somalia in Educational Curricula

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few hours ago we announced that, if elected, Alberta's NDP government will create a Somali curriculum for Alberta schools. The Somali community is growing significantly in Alberta, and we want to make sure Somali students have an opportunity to learn their language and culture in Alberta classrooms. I am so proud to be an MLA with a party that acknowledges and values creating and championing diverse curriculums and cultures for Alberta students. To the current minister: why didn't the UCP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to announce to all of the Assembly here that that's what our school authorities do each and every day. They have the ability to react and

to promote the languages that are within their schools. In fact, in my former school division we had over 53 different languages being spoken, and the school authorities themselves, when there's a large community, will actually introduce language instruction, language culture. They're announcing nothing, really.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that that's false and given that creating a Somali curriculum is about celebrating the vibrant language and culture of Somalia while ensuring that youth are supported in their learning in Alberta schools and given that we in the NDP are committed to making sure that all students in Alberta schools have the tools they need to be supported and given that that clearly hasn't been a priority under the UCP, we are committed to offering a Somali curriculum. Why didn't the current Education minister or anyone in the UCP make this a priority? They've had four years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, school authorities have the flexibility to develop or acquire locally developed courses to address particular student and/or community needs, including language and culture courses. We do that on an ongoing basis in education each and every day. We celebrate every community: the Somali community, the Filipino community. The member opposite made an announcement a week or so ago on the Filipino community, but you know what? I had an opportunity to speak to the consul general of the Philippines. We had a great conversation about what we can do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the UCP's curriculum set off alarm bells for students, staff, and families due to its Eurocentric approach to history and its lack of cultural diversity and given that Alberta's diversity is our greatest strength and should be reflected in our curriculum and given that we are honoured to work with educators, parents, and community leaders to ensure that Somali customs, traditions, language, and song are taught in Alberta schools, can the current minister explain why she would rather spend time defending Chris Champion and his backwards curriculum instead of offering students a chance to learn about the many cultures and languages and histories that make Alberta such a great place?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll defend our curriculum any day of the week, because it is knowledge rich. It allows for students to learn. They want students learning from decades-old curriculum. The science curriculum: 1996, for heaven's sake. That's what they want. Our curriculum, in fact, had more to address antiracism. The previous draft from the previous government: zero on antiracism. We actually have more to celebrate communities. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.  
The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Rural Mental Health Services

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every young person in Alberta deserves the opportunity to access mental health supports, access treatment, pursue recovery, and live a healthy life. Since being elected as the MLA for Livingstone-Macleod, I frequently hear of the struggles that rural Albertans, especially students, are facing when trying to access mental health supports. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: how will Budget 2023 increase

accessibility to mental health supports for rural Albertans and ensure that more families will get the help that they need and deserve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supporting all Albertans in their pursuit of recovery from mental health challenges is a priority of my ministry. We're supporting funding to Counselling Alberta to expand mental health services so Albertans, especially in rural areas, can get accessible and affordable counselling services. We've also increased funding to 211 to better connect callers to locally relevant supports, including in rural communities. We will continue to expand services to support more Albertans in their pursuit of recovery.

I want to thank the hon. member for the timely question given the fact that we have the Rural Municipalities of Alberta spring convention on . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for his answer. Given that the government will invest \$92 million over three years to provide critical mental health supports for children and youth across Alberta in partnership with CASA Mental Health and given that the Livingstone Range school division in my riding recently received a grant to provide students in southern Alberta with a new and innovative mental health pilot program, what other approaches is the government taking to address the mental health needs of young rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2023 contains record-level investments for my ministry, \$275 million in total. Contrast that with – in 2019, when we came in, that was only \$87 million according to the line item under them, so huge gains to fix problems that were left behind courtesy of the NDP. However, I do want to mention, as spoken by the hon. member, that, yes, just recently we announced \$92 million in funding for CASA Mental Health to expand youth mental health supports to ensure youth across Alberta can receive treatment closer to home.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that students in rural communities have a hard time accessing mental health supports in their communities and given that our teachers often bear the burden of trying to provide mental health supports in our schools, to the same minister: how will pilot projects like the one in Livingstone Range school division be evaluated and implemented in other schools across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Over the next two years Alberta Education is supporting close to 60 mental health pilots across the entire province to improve K to 12 student well-being. Each of these community-based projects is unique and will bring school authorities, mental health service providers, and other local organizations together to directly address the underpinning issues. I look forward to reviewing the outcomes of these pilots along with

the Minister of Education, and I just want to say that this is a perfect example to underscore just how important youth mental health services are to this government.

### Small-business Support and Employment Training

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, this government claims that they are investing in the economy and boosting job growth. While we see millions and millions in corporate handouts to big businesses, the UCP budget shows that their actions don't match their words. We all know that the backbone of Alberta's economy is actually small business, and the lack of support this government is providing to support Alberta small businesses is appalling. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development: why are you leaving small-business owners behind?

**Mr. Jean:** Interesting question coming from this particular member, Mr. Speaker, and his creativity with small-business enterprises.

But, Mr. Speaker, 97 tax increases in four years from the NDP, a carbon tax – a surprise – on everything: I don't think this member or the party that he used to belong to until he was removed have anything to talk about on small businesses at all.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister clearly has nothing to say about the issue with any substance and given that small-business owners continue to say that there isn't enough support, that costs such as inflation continue to threaten their livelihoods and families, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development again: can you explain to small-business owners why more funding and resources aren't being invested into expanding programs like the Alberta jobs now program, which is actually aimed at creating jobs?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware. If he came to the House more often . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jean:** . . . he would recognize that the parliamentary secretary of small business is actually doing a tour across Alberta to find out exactly what small businesses need right now, Mr. Speaker. What they don't need more of is the NDP. Let's be clear; 97 tax increases along with that special surprise called the carbon tax on everything did not help at all. What is helping is a government that is laser focused on making sure that there is enough labour here in Alberta to fill the jobs, and there's just not. We need more people. Come on out to Alberta; there's a job waiting for you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister is a learned member of this Assembly, and he'll know that referring to the presence or absence of any member is wildly unparliamentary, and I think it may be possible that an apology will be coming later.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has his third question.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government seems more focused on spending millions of dollars buying advertising space and injecting jobs into downtown Toronto than Alberta – we know that Albertans who are already here want real opportunities for skills training. Can the minister explain to this House why there isn't a plan in place for skills training, upgrading, and support for a larger workforce?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We have the lowest corporate tax in Canada. We have received the highest grade from the CFIB on red tape reduction. We have no PST. We have the lowest personal taxes. We have some of Canada's lowest urban housing prices. We have so much to offer here in Alberta. We need more people. We need more people to fill the jobs. There are 100,000 jobs right now in Alberta waiting to be filled, and that includes in the small-business sector. That's what we're trying to do. That's why we invested over \$600 million in creating jobs and training people here in Alberta. We're getting the job done.

### Delton Elementary School in Edmonton

**Member Irwin:** Delton elementary in my riding is a fabulous school with great teachers and students, but it's currently bursting at the seams. Due to three previous school closures in the area, Delton now takes in students from all over central Edmonton. The library has been cut in half, and the daycare has been displaced to make room for all the kids. Delton has also been slated as the catchment school for the new Blatchford development, which is expected to bring hundreds of new students into the community in coming years. It needs to be replaced, so I just ask: will the Education minister please do the right thing and prioritize a new school for the Delton community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. The member opposite should know, if she doesn't know, that, in fact, it's school authorities that prioritize the schools that are needed. In fact, Edmonton public school did get all five of their top priorities in the capital plan. As Edmonton public continues to put forward their school authorities, of course, they do look at all the metrics. There is a very, very detailed gated process that it has to go through.

**Member Irwin:** That's a no for Delton. Not only is Delton dealing with space issues; the school is also inaccessible, with access to most of the nearly 80-year-old building not possible for those with mobility challenges, and the school is aging, no longer meeting modern health or safety standards. In the past year they've experienced basement flooding, rodent concerns, and challenges with temperature control. The conclusion from all assessments is clear: a full replacement of the building is the most cost-effective approach for Delton. Given these serious concerns, a replacement is absolutely needed, but the Education minister, as you just heard, won't commit. So will the Infrastructure minister please do the right thing and step up for the Delton community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, just to detail the gated process, it is a 10-step process. School authorities gave us their top asks. It goes through the process. It is determined whether it is a health and safety issue, whether it is an enrolment growth issue, whether it is a legal issue, whether there are additional measures that need to be looked at. It is the school authority that has the ability to put forward its top asks, and this has not risen at this time.

**Member Irwin:** A whole lot of mental gymnastics from that Education minister, because we know the cost of a replacement school for the communities that I represent is but a fraction of this government's budget surplus and but a fraction of the \$20 billion

that this Premier plans to give away to already profitable oil and gas companies. Albertans know that an Alberta NDP government will prioritize good schools, good schools for kids in all neighbourhoods, mature or otherwise. Can the Premier just explain for all of us why she's forcing kids to learn in overcrowded classrooms in old schools so she can just help her Premier's friends get a handout to clean up their messes? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member certainly knows the stretching of boundaries when it comes to a preamble. For future reference we will use that question as a perfect example of what is not allowed.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that in the past the Edmonton school district had put that as one of their asks, but when it was evaluated, it was not a health and safety issue, it was not in a high-growth area, so it did not rise to the top. In fact, Edmonton public school has prioritized its high-growth areas, and they did receive their top five asks.

**Some Hon. Members:** No, they didn't.

**Member LaGrange:** Yes, they did.

Whether they tend to say it or not, they did receive them. Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, only four schools in Edmonton; under us, 16. Sorry; eight schools . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

### Crop Insurance Premiums

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks the opposition has fuelled much confusion and misinformation about crop insurance premiums, and farmers in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are worried by rumours of a 60 per cent increase in premiums. Since I know this number is incorrect, can the minister of agriculture please set the record straight and inform the Assembly of the actual change to crop insurance premiums?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm happy to continue to debunk these myths that are out there. The budgeted change from last year's actual will be about 22 per cent. It will align closely with the year-over-year changes in the crop values – for example, hard red spring wheat, 17 per cent increase; canola, 12 per cent; barley, 9 per cent; yellow field peas, 2 to 3 per cent – as it always does.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that crop insurance premiums are meant to reflect the value of crops and given that the average 22 per cent increase in premiums this year seems like a much more reasonable number than the 60 per cent that some opposition members have been pushing, can the minister please explain how crop insurance premiums, including the 22 per cent average increase this year, are determined?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Horner:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. The formula is set. It includes your area risk rating, which does change year to year over time; your own individual historical yield data; the premium rate; your elected coverage – you can choose between 50 and 80 per cent coverage – and the crop price. I just would like to say for the House that coverage has increased

from \$4.8 billion to almost \$10 billion over the last two years, and \$4.1 billion has been paid out by this program over the last two years to Alberta farmers.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that our farmers are the backbone of not only Alberta's economy but our very sustenance and given that Alberta's government stands with our farmers and our agricultural sector, can the minister of agriculture please share with this House some of the many steps this government has taken to support our farmers?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. If you ate today, thank a farmer.

We've done many things for the agriculture industry. One thing we're all very proud of is the ag processing investment tax credit, which hopefully over the next two weeks will be passed by this House. I think it'll do some great things to level the playing field with some of the jurisdictions next to us. I should point out another \$49.9 million to continue the expansion and modernization of our irrigation network; \$58.5 million for the first year of our new five-year partnership with the feds, the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. The list is long.

### Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

**Ms Goehring:** In the UCP's most recent and, hopefully, last budget they completely failed the digital media sector in this province despite promising to restore the digital media tax credit after cancelling it in their first budget. The sector was left empty-handed. On the very same day the UCP's budget was tabled, B.C. extended their tax credit for another five years. Why is this government risking our competitiveness by not restoring the digital media tax credit?

2:30

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, what does risk our competitiveness as a province is an NDP government. We had four years of their leadership showing us exactly how detrimental that would be to our entire economy. We saw 183,000 jobs lost under their leadership, and it comes as no surprise given their attachment to the federal carbon tax. If they really cared about business and investment in this province, they would stand up to Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh and demand that they rescind the carbon tax and put Alberta back into the most competitive position it could possibly be in.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that a report from the Entertainment Software Association of Canada showed Alberta only received 4 per cent of national investment into the industry while Quebec captured 43 per cent of investment and British Columbia received 27 per cent and given that Quebec and B.C. have their own digital media tax credit and given that the report also showed Alberta is missing out on investment by not implementing a digital media tax credit, why is this minister so determined to send job-creating investment to other provinces?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, if there's anyone who has a track record of sending investment out of Alberta to other provinces, it's the NDP. Look at what they did in their four years in power, chasing tens of billions of dollars away from Alberta. When we were knocking on doors talking to Albertans, you know what we heard? We heard grown men crying because they had lost their jobs and lost their ability to provide for their families. That is what the recipe

of the NDP will bring back to Alberta. We won't stand for it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that a digital media tax credit could also support a wide variety of other work for talented Albertans in the film industry and given that Alberta has seen major movies and TV shows such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Ghostbusters*, and *The Last of Us* filmed here and given that many people who have jobs in the interactive digital media space also work in film and television – so these talented Albertans may be losing other opportunities – I will ask the minister again: why hasn't he gotten the job done, and why is the UCP sending these jobs out of province?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite highlighting our success in Alberta under our leadership. We've gone from a hundred million dollars a year in film and television investment to almost a billion dollars this year in film and television investment. The choice for Albertans in May is clear. Do they want another NDP government that will make everything more expensive through the carbon tax and through their partnership and cozy relationship with Justin Trudeau and shutting down our energy industry and chasing investment away, or do they want responsible, fiscally prudent management from a Conservative government that is compassionate and will deliver jobs for the future? I know which way I'm voting, and I know which way the majority of Albertans are most likely to vote. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

#### Government Adviser Contracts

**Mr. Bilous:** David Knight Legg is notorious for his lavish expenses while working in the Premier's office. He billed taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars to stay in the finest hotels that included marble bathrooms, vitamin showers, and an art nouveau champagne bar. He is a symbol of all the waste and entitlement of the Jason Kenney government. In estimates we found out that Mr. Knight Legg is still being paid almost \$10,000 per month by Albertans. Mr. Knight Legg no longer works for the government nor Invest Alberta, so can the minister please explain why Alberta taxpayers are paying him this generous salary?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, in a globally competitive environment it's important to get the Alberta brand out there to generate leads and build the relationships and, ultimately, close deals. That is the work Alberta was created to do. Mr. Knight Legg has been helpful in his advisory role during the evolution of Invest Alberta, and he's also been working on investment leads, including the EV battery manufacturing, family office investments, and energy companies and private equity firms, just as examples.

**Mr. Bilous:** Given that Mr. Knight Legg was earning almost \$200,000 as a principal adviser to the Premier while expensing tens of thousands of dollars to Albertans and given that all we know is that he stayed in a boutique hotel which promises a one-of-a-kind luxury hotel experience at a home to aristocrats since 1867 and invites guests to release your inner bon vivant and given that it's not clear what Mr. Knight Legg accomplished in his role besides racking up points on his credit cards, what exactly has Mr. Knight Legg delivered for Albertans for the hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars he's received?

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that our sponsorship with Alpine Canada was a three-year agreement, and it started in 2021, and it's in its last year now. This agreement provides advertising, branding opportunities for Invest Alberta at key Nordic events. These opportunities are aimed at attracting attention from European businesses and audiences overseas watching the events. They're also opportunities to host events, with some citing Alpine events as their catalyst for finally deciding to come to Alberta.

**Mr. Bilous:** A \$750,000 boondoggle is what Alpine Canada investment is.

Given that Mr. Knight Legg left the Premier's office to become CEO of Invest Alberta, where he got a pay bump to \$250,000, and given that he left that role after less than a year but stuck around as an adviser to the board and given that he's still being paid by Albertans while living in Singapore even though Alberta already has a trade office in Singapore, why is the UCP still shovelling cash at someone with such a terrible record of abusing taxpayer dollars?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I find it really rich coming from the members opposite concerned about . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Whoa. Whoa. Whoa.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous hearing from the members opposite about their concern for taxpayers' dollars. When they were in office, they didn't respect Alberta taxpayers for one minute. They raised taxes. They brought in regulatory burden. They chased tens of billions of dollars of investment out, with it 183,000 jobs, and perpetual deficits. We've done better. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East has a question.

#### Homeless Supports

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy is thriving, with more families working better jobs and more revenue into our province. This has allowed Alberta's government to support the most vulnerable populations, which includes those experiencing homelessness. In Calgary a recent decline in homelessness is showing that our government's efforts are working. To the hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: what has our government done to support Albertans experiencing homelessness?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Unfortunately, homelessness is a devastating reality that too many Albertans are facing in our communities. It's a complex issue, and it's an issue that this government has taken seriously. It's why we've significantly increased funding in this most recent budget but also over the last three years to help make sure that we have more resources and supports for our homeless-serving agencies and those who help people overcome the experience of homelessness. It's why we've also significantly increased funding for building and expanding more affordable housing as well as put more funding into our rapid rehousing programs. It's working.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that there are thousands of Albertans living with addiction



who are also experiencing homelessness and given that this has significantly increased the need for recovery supports across the entire province, what supports are being provided to those experiencing addiction in Calgary, and how is this government's approach different from the previous government's?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Addiction and homelessness have affected every community in Alberta, and Calgary is no exception. In Calgary, as part of the \$187 million commitment to address addiction and homelessness, there will be a series of initiatives, including further increasing addiction treatment capacity, expanding medical detox services, and, of course, services that reduce harm. Albertans experiencing addiction or mental health challenges can contact 211 for information on services within their community. Again, if passed, Budget 2023 will add \$275 million to . . .

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. minister. Given that here in Alberta our winters bring an immense amount of danger to those experiencing homelessness and given that the challenges being faced are extremely complex and require significant supports, including emergency shelter, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services tell the House: what have you done and what are you going to do to provide warmth and safety to those experiencing homelessness in Alberta?

Thank you.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. Of course, as I've already mentioned, we're investing in increasing affordable housing as well as our rapid rehousing program to make sure that people experiencing homelessness have a home as well as what the Mental Health and Addiction minister just talked about, filling out that continuum of care so people with addictions and mental health concerns are able to find the appropriate supports within their community. We're also working at expanding out services in communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton so that people can get the support that they need in their hometowns. We're also working to partner with Indigenous communities to make sure that we have culturally appropriate supports as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

## Members' Statements

*(continued)*

### Journée internationale de la Francophonie

**Ms Renaud:** C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends la parole devant vous en cette journée spéciale pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie en Alberta. Comme nous le savons, la Francophonie n'est pas seulement la langue française

mais plutôt une communauté de personnes qui partagent un lien, des valeurs et des traditions communes qui ont été transmis de génération en génération.

De la France à l'Afrique en passant par l'Asie et l'Alberta, la Francophonie a enrichi le monde de la littérature, de la musique, de l'art et de la cuisine. Ici en Alberta nous avons le privilège d'avoir une communauté francophone florissante qui incarne l'esprit de la Francophonie.

Ici en Alberta aussi l'éducation en langue française est devenue une partie de plus en plus importante de notre système d'éducation. Que vous soyez étudiant dans une école d'immersion française ou quelqu'un qui a suivi des cours de français jusqu'à l'âge adulte, la langue française a ouvert de nouvelles possibilités et expériences pour beaucoup d'Albertains. Nous savons qu'il faut que l'éducation de la maternelle jusqu'à la 12e année et l'éducation postsecondaire soient accessibles en français à tous les Albertains.

Souvenons-nous aussi des personnes qui ont travaillé si fort pour préserver la langue française et la culture francophone en Alberta. Des enseignants et éducateurs qui inspirent nos jeunes aux leaders communautaires qui organisent des événements et des activités culturelles, nous avons une dette de gratitude envers ceux et celles qui ont contribué à soutenir notre communauté francophone.

En terminant, je tiens à féliciter tous les francophones de l'Alberta et du monde entier en cette journée spéciale.

Merci beaucoup, et joyeuse Journée internationale de la Francophonie!

### Mental Health and Addiction Strategy

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, did you know that I went from the most trusted profession to the least trusted profession? Before the glamour of all this – that being a legislator – I was a paramedic firefighter. My job was to help people. The emergency calls that I hated the most, though, were the calls for the homeless and the drug addicted. Over the years responding to so many, I found those incidents to be the most frustrating. I was cursed at, and I was spat at. I'd pick them up soaked in urine and covered in feces. I've had these customers take swings at me, threaten me, beg me for drugs, fake an injury for a shot of morphine, and I'd lost all sympathy for them. I was bitter, and I was jaded.

Interestingly enough, it was this job working as an MLA where I learned a different perspective. I still remember walking into the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, where I was surprised by the ex-addicts working in there. They took the time to tell me their stories. Then I was visiting my local shelters, meeting the staff and, more importantly, their clients. I was introduced to a whole different world, where people are trying to break free from a terrible cycle.

I realized with pride what our government was doing, and it was doing good. From thoroughly investigating the concept of safe supply to creating recovery communities to provide long-term treatment to addiction, I can say that it's all been honest and noble. The fact that our government has been focusing on recovery and treatment, doing things like creating 8,000-plus treatment spaces, removing user fees for addiction treatment, developing drug courts as an alternative to simply jailing addicts for their petty crimes, and so much more, demonstrates the real desire demonstrated by government to truly help the most vulnerable.

Though politicians might be perceived as the least trusted profession, I can say that being an elected official taught me the most about having compassion for the most vulnerable. I hope that people respect their elected representatives just a little bit more, because the work they often do goes unheralded and does truly impact so many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## NDP and UCP Policies

**Ms Ganley:** An election is a conversation about the future. Albertans have a choice between two starkly different visions of that future. One vision is the UCP vision, where we seek the future in the past; where our curriculum teaches children all the skills they need to survive in the 1920s; where we deny science, whether it's vaccines or climate change; where we scorn or hide our differences rather than celebrating them; where we pit the economy and the environment against each other and fail at both; a future where we survive by being at one another's throats; where a child's potential is determined not by her ideas or her effort but by her parents' bank balance; a UCP future where seniors can't be sure if the pensions they paid into will be there; where we give \$20 billion away to insiders while people struggle and their government muses about making them pay for a doctor and tells them to get a better job. It seems pretty bleak.

But there's another way, a better way, a better future, a future where we move forward together; where we invest in the technologies that we need to grow our economy and protect our environment; where we invest in people and in their skills through postsecondary; a future where each and every child gets a world-class education; where cancer is something we treat you for, not blame you for. The Alberta NDP has a plan, a better plan to create a resilient economy and good-paying jobs, to create a better medical system, where Albertans can see their family doctor within 48 hours.

In just 70 days Albertans will have a choice. We will pick a vision of the future: one where we look to the past, where insiders get rewarded while everyone else gets left behind, or one where we look with hope to the future, where we invest in each other and build a better future together. I think we all deserve a better future, and I believe that on May 29 that's exactly what Alberta will get.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:22 the hon. Member for Edmonton-South rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of a Member

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the House, I'll try to keep my comments brief. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development made a statement during question period similar to: if he spent more time in this House.

Now, I would draw your attention to chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, where it's referenced: "Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable." I'd also further refer you to a ruling that was made on December 3, 2020, which is in *Hansard*, page 3783, where the former Deputy Government House Leader argued that it was well established these allusions were prohibited by clear precedent. Mr. Speaker, in that case you ruled that it was indeed a member from the opposition caucus who had made a comment alluding to the presence or absence of a member and that they had to withdraw and apologize.

I'd also further refer you to *Hansard*, page 2049, on July 15, 2020, where you rejected comments from the former Government House Leader where he argued that referring to someone "while he was away" was still unacceptable. You ruled in that case that despite not including the words "while he was away from the Chamber," this allusion was still inappropriate and demanded a withdrawal.

In this case I believe it is clear the minister referred specifically to the presence or absence of a member in the Chamber without even the allusion that it could have been at other times. I'd ask that you find this to be a point of order and the minister be asked to withdraw and apologize.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Those sound like good rulings.

The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say how pleased I am that the member is following rules and pointing out rules that this House should follow.

As a member I want to withdraw and apologize for that comment. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres du jour.

2:50

## Orders of the Day

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

#### Bill 203

### Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Madam Chair, every day Canadians across the country tragically lose their lives as the consequence of unsafe driving. Oftentimes those who perish as a result of their own unsafe driving are our youngest drivers, testing the limits of their vehicles in an attempt to impress their friends. We had an excellent exchange in the House regarding this bill, and in light of the concerns raised, I'm proposing an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge, just wait till I have a copy of the amendment, and then we'll have you read it into the record.

Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge, please read it into the record.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 203, Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022, be amended in section 5 in the proposed section 88.21 as follows: (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "If a peace officer has reasonable grounds" and substituting "Subject to subsection (2.1), if a peace officer has reasonable grounds"; (b) by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A peace officer may not take the actions referred to in subsection (1) in respect of a contravention referred to in subsection 2(b) if

(a) the contravention occurs on a portion of a highway immediately following a decrease in the maximum speed limit on that highway, and

b) the driver of the vehicle did not have a reasonable opportunity to decelerate in consideration of the amount of the decrease in the maximum speed limit.

(c) in subsection (3) by striking out “in accordance with the subsection (1)” and substituting “in accordance with subsection (1) in respect of the provision referred to in subsection 2(b).”

This does two things. It ensures that people in transition zones aren't considered to be stunting because they are 40 kilometres per hour over. The other thing it does is that it ensures that the stiffer penalties apply to excessive speeding and not to the things that are stunting but not less safe.

This heartbreaking reality is something that we as elected officials should do more to prevent. Vehicle stunting is a criminal act that does not only endanger the drivers themselves but all other Albertans who use the roadways where the crimes are being committed. In order to protect the people of this province from needless, preventable traffic accidents, we must act. Therefore, I am pleased to introduce private member's Bill 203. This proposed bill would strengthen the penalties in place for stunting in Alberta so that would-be reckless drivers are more thoroughly deterred from endangering themselves and others while those who still violate the law are punished more severely.

Alberta, quite frankly, is lagging behind other provinces. When it comes to pursuing more severe penalties for vehicle stunting, other provinces have rightfully strengthened their laws surrounding these crimes, and it is time for us to follow suit to help prevent any more needless injuries or deaths. If passed, Bill 203 would make going 40 kilometres per hour over the speed limit in urban areas stunting and increase the fine for stunting to \$5,000 and introduce an automatic seven-day licence suspension for anybody caught stunting. Additionally, there would be the option of a seven-day discretionary impound, to be decided by law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.

The time to implement these more severe penalties is now. In the past few months alone there have been high-profile incidents in both Calgary and Edmonton. The two cities are plagued the most by stunting and street racing that involve avoidable situations or collisions. At the beginning of September an Albertan was killed in a single-vehicle crash that authorities believe to have been the result of a street race. Even more recently, in October, two vehicles crashed right next to us on the High Level Bridge here, both of which were involved in street racing. The saddest thing about crashes like these is that they are entirely avoidable. They're caused by reckless bravado, specifically amongst our youngest drivers. My top priority as an elected official is ensuring the safety of Albertans, and it is my conviction that passing this bill would greatly improve road safety in our province.

I'm proud to say that despite incidents like I previously mentioned, Alberta has the lowest road fatality rate of any province in Canada. Most Albertans are committed to road safety as they know that acting responsibly on the road keeps us all safe. A notable exception to this rule involves those who stunt, race, and otherwise drive recklessly. It is important that these people receive the punishment they deserve when they commit these crimes. Through mandatory licence suspensions and discretionary vehicle impounding, drivers who commit these needlessly dangerous acts will be prevented from doing so again in the immediate future. Their friends will hear about their fine and suspension and will think twice before going 40 kilometres over the city speed limit.

Deterrence is extremely important, Madam Chair. It is much better to prevent drivers from doing this in the first place than it is to give them serious penalties. On top of this, the increased fines will further contribute to deterrence so that these drivers will not act

so dangerously again after their licences and vehicles are returned to them.

As stated earlier, this bill would bring Albertans' penalties for stunting more into alignment with other provinces. Ontario's stunting penalties are similar to these changes proposed by this bill. Additionally, these penalties have been requested by the police chief association. Those who have committed their lives to protecting Albertans in all areas of life, not just on the road, believe that increasing the severity of these penalties will improve road safety. When organizations like the police chiefs' association make requests like this, I as an elected official do not take it lightly. According to research done by this association, a large portion of speeding drivers, 40 per cent to be exact, is between the ages of 16 and 24. Evidently, this same age group also has the highest traffic casualty rate of any age group.

3:00

This same age demographic is most likely to engage in vehicle stunting. When these young people engage in stunting, they endanger themselves and others. In their silly attempts to impress their friends or show off, Albertans can be severely injured or even killed. These drivers need to learn to respect the power they have when they get behind the wheel. Without more severe penalties for acts as dangerous as stunting and street racing, these people may continue to take these unnecessary risks. Parents would agree that oftentimes it is important to be strict with your children.

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Pleased today to rise to speak to the amendment brought forward by the hon. member regarding a transition between highway speed and a speed that one is required to slow down to after leaving a highway, presumably at an interchange, for another roadway where the speed limit may be increased.

But during these periods of transition between one highway to another, precisely an example that I brought forward, Madam Chair, in previous debate about the shortcomings of the bill – and I referred to my experience driving in Australia, where indeed I did suffer more than one speeding ticket while driving in exactly this situation, where immediately upon exiting the main highway onto a ramp to interchange to another directional highway, I was recorded going highway speed in that transition zone and, of course, not having had time to slow down, ended up with a ticket upon my return back to Canada. I brought this example forward, and I thank the member for recognizing it as something that should be addressed in amending the act. I plan to support the act because I think it's a reasonable amendment. We always want to make sure that people are driving safely, but we also want to avoid unfair or unjust speeding tickets while we're doing so.

But the amendment that was brought forward, Madam Chair, doesn't go anywhere near far enough to address some of the other things that this bill has. There are many sins of omission in the main bill which I think could have been addressed by this member's amendment, not just simply looking at the unfairness of issuing tickets in a transition zone. A glaring example of what could have been done and, we think, should have been done on this side of the House to embellish the bill, improve the bill would have been a coexisting amendment to define stunting, to give a more clear definition of stunting, with better examples of what that offence would entail such as those found in the B.C. legislation.

Unfortunately, the member has decided to limit his amendment to a very narrow scope, which albeit is an important and, I believe,

necessary and useful amendment that does improve – the legislation could have at this point in time, while the legislation is open and before the House, been improved even more had the member decided to take suggestions that have been raised also during the debate on this legislation, Bill 203, had they taken the opportunity to look at giving enforcement officers better direction by properly defining the term “stunting” or what a stunt might be.

I said previously that the legislation in B.C. precisely took pains to do this, and it ended up with, I think, a much better piece of legislation and was a better tool for enforcement officers in the field who were not making discretionary judgments on what a particular activity might be defined as, stunting or not, but they had clearly defined examples, that could be used in the field by an enforcement officer – police officer, peace officer – who was enforcing traffic regulations, to specifically point to and charge an individual with a specific stunting offence that was defined in the legislation.

While indeed, Madam Chair, I stand in support of the amendment that the member has brought forward to make sure that speeding in transition zones is not something that is commonly catching people who are innocently not slowing down as quickly as one would hope but not doing so unsafely – those people are not going to be captured by speeding tickets that really are not deserved or truly are not fair. I speak from personal experience about the fact that this can happen and is a surprise, I’m sure, to drivers who are receiving tickets in these transition zones from one highway to another in an interchange, that they sense the same injustice that I felt when receiving such a ticket.

The number one problem that I have with the amendment, Madam Chair, is that the opportunity was missed to go even further to, as I say, define the term “stunting” and provide specific examples of what a stunt might be so that an enforcement officer in the field would have a better, a more clear direction on what exactly stunting was and to point to a specific behaviour that was taking place in front of them and then charge accordingly in the information contained in the stunting charge. If indeed that would have been included as part of the amendment, a charge might be more easily prosecuted in the courts.

So an opportunity missed, and it’s an omission that I’m sorry exists with this amendment that was brought forward by the member. It would have been nice to see that. I would have loved the opportunity to perhaps bring forward such an amendment myself, but I don’t think that that would be permitted given that the member has brought forward an amendment of his own under the same area of the piece of legislation. Not sure if that was the member’s intent, but certainly it was an opportunity that was missed in bringing forward this particular amendment.

I think all Albertans who’ve had the experience of listening to somebody performing a pretty disturbing act, whether it be squealing tires or doing U-turns in the middle of the roadway or any number of types of stunting behaviours that we’ve witnessed on our highways, unfortunately won’t see them stop. I think that rural Albertans particularly – and some intersections in the city but primarily rural Albertans – just after school is out, after graduation, will find doughnut marks on their highways outside the local intersections on many rural Alberta highways because it’s considered to be a rite of passage for, I would say particularly, young males driving their vehicles. And they’ll spin their tires and do doughnuts and smoke their tires and create a circle on the highway in a stunt that is potentially very dangerous.

There are incidents that could be described pretty clearly and would have been nice to see in this legislation had the member seen fit to go beyond what he’s doing simply by coming forward with an amendment that talked about eliminating tickets and giving greater

discretion to enforcement officers when they’re talking about speeding in transition zones. I hope that it was not a calculated effort on the member’s part to thwart any effort on our part on this side of the House to bring forward more detailed amendments on stunting, but it certainly feels like that.

**3:10**

When you are in a position, whether you’re in a motorhome or a passenger vehicle, at night or wintertime, no matter what the conditions are, I think it’s incumbent upon the department of transportation to take into account some perhaps testing data that will show whether or not there’s enough time, from the time you exit the highway itself into the transition period, to actually slow down safely until there’s an enforcement zone that is capturing people who are going above the speed limit.

While I support the effort by the member to bring forward this piece of legislation, I think there’s also some study that needs to be done to make sure that the individuals who might actually be breaking the law and creating a safety hazard in a transition zone are not lost from enforcement by this amendment, because there are differences in our exit ramps and our entrance ramps on our highways in their transition zones. Some are extremely long; some are pretty short. There may be ample opportunity for an enforcement officer to legitimately charge somebody with speeding even in one of these transition zones, but it depends upon how long it is, whether it’s a circular, short cloverleaf or whether it’s a long, median-style runway or exit ramp. I’m not sure if this amendment takes that into consideration. It might actually hamstring an officer from making a decision to actually charge somebody in a transition zone. We’ll see.

**The Chair:** Are there others to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill in Committee of the Whole, Bill 203. Are there members wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate to stand and speak to the main bill, Bill 203. As mentioned in previous debate, the intent, of course, of the amendment act, Bill 203, Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022, is, one, to improve public safety on our Alberta roadways, and it’s, of course, something that on this side of the House we definitely support. We’re always looking to improve our roadways’ safety.

We always should be taking into account, though, when we’re drafting legislation, Madam Chair, that affects our traffic laws and regulations, that proper input is had from all those who are affected, whether they be the police, who have to enforce the laws, whether they be our traffic department and experts, who would speak to the relative safety of different measures that might be proposed, and, of course, the public. I think that on some matters we’ve heard loud and clear from the public about what they think speeding enforcement laws should be.

There seems to be a little bit of confusion on the other side of the House about whether they are on the side of caution and ensuring public safety. When we look at this particular piece of legislation, Bill 203, of course, is looking to provide a bit of relief by the amendment, but the main bill looks to properly enforce those who break the law and speed. But there was another measure that another member from the government party brought forward, and it looked to actually increase the speed limit on two-lane highways in the province in certain areas to 120 kilometres an hour versus 110.

There seems to be a bit of a Dr. Dolittle approach on the other side of the House, a pushmi-pullyu kind of a situation, where in one case they're looking at increasing highway speeds because of some pressure from members of the public on the government to do this, and in this particular case, with the Bill 203 we're talking about, the other side of the coin is to actually ensure public safety and err on that side and make sure that the excessive speeders are prosecuted and, hopefully, deterred from speeding. I kind of wish the government would decide which direction it wanted to go in. Hopefully, in the future we won't be seeing efforts to increase speeding limits in the province, whether it be on two-lane roadways or smaller Alberta highways. They always should be erring on the side of public safety and consulting properly with all the stakeholders involved.

The public certainly doesn't want to see excessive speeding. We've all experienced a situation where somebody has just completely blown by us on the highway. It's a pretty scary thing to happen, and that's something that we hope and expect to be stopped by our enforcement agencies, and that's not always the case. There are means of perhaps taking a look at enforcement that are not contemplated by Bill 203, which, of course, looks to provide tools to enforcement officers to deter excessive speed and to penalize those who do speed excessively.

I'd posit, Madam Chair, that one way of doing it might be with a timed device, particularly on roadways such as the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. For example, once again, driving in Australia, I experienced a situation where it had a certain speed limit – it was a reasonable one – and if you went from point A to point B, though, you weren't necessarily having photoradar regularly. What it did was that it actually timed the distance from point A to point B, and if you got there faster than you should have according to the speed maximum that you were allowed to go, you actually got a ticket based on that time frame. Of course, it would be doing a photoradar photograph of your licence plate at point A and then again at point B and calculating the time.

Believe me, Madam Chair, something that was very startling while driving in Australia on roadways that had this timed photoradar: nobody speeded because there was no point. I mean, you knew you were going to get caught, and there was no escaping it. It was pretty safe, and it was certainly most impressive when you would see a group of people on large motorcycles happily motoring along at the speed limit and not daring to blast over it because they knew for sure that if they got to point B before they should have, because they were driving faster than the speed limit, they were going to get a ticket. There was no escaping it.

There are other enforcement measures that this bill could have contemplated in an amendment or in the main bill if indeed the members had done their homework and would have perhaps consulted more widely on it. I'm sure Albertans would have brought forward more suggestions. I can tell you that I'd be surprised if law enforcement wouldn't have had some more suggestions as well that would have improved the legislation and done a bit more of a comprehensive job while the piece of legislation is open.

I think it's incumbent upon us, Madam Chair. When we do bring forward changes to legislation, whether it be a traffic safety amendment act or whether it be on any type of issue, it's important to have a wider lens and to look at what things could be done to improve the legislation and improve the health and safety of Albertans when a piece of legislation is open. Unfortunately, that opportunity was missed by the government member on that side in this private member's Bill 203. It really was a narrowly scoped piece of legislation, and even though it is a private member's piece

of legislation, it is something that could have been much more comprehensive.

I hope that the member feels that he has solved the issue that he wanted to solve with respect to excessive speeding, but when one gets the opportunity to move forward with a private member's bill, one would hope to do as much as possible to benefit Albertans when you have that opportunity, which is pretty special. We all know that many members have served a career in this House of three, four, or more terms and have never had the opportunity for a private member's bill to be given to them by way of a draw. I suggest to the House that much more could have been done by this member to take advantage of that very special opportunity to bring forward a piece of legislation by way of a private member's bill, and it was, unfortunately, an opportunity missed.

3:20

I don't plan to oppose the legislation because, of course, the small changes that were brought forward by the member certainly are going to, I believe, improve safety on our roadways. You know, it's just law enforcement, but they don't go anywhere near as far as they could have, and it's not anywhere near as comprehensive a piece of legislation as one would hope a private member would bring forward when dealing with something as important as safety on our roadways.

It affects every age group in our population, from young drivers to our seniors. Everybody is concerned about safety on the roadways, and the opportunity that we had here to really take a more comprehensive look at how indeed we could improve safety on our roadways in a more comprehensive way, even by way of a private member's bill, Madam Chair, is something that I think was unfortunate. I won't belabour the point, but I'll suggest that this private member and other private members, even those on our side of the House, when given an opportunity to bring forward a piece of private member's legislation, really look more broadly at how wide a benefit they could have for everybody in the province by increasing the scope of the legislation that they bring forward.

With that, I'll take my seat.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 203 as amended in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill. Of course, I think one of the things we often hear about as members in our community, from different folks in the community is people speeding, particularly in playground zones, where, you know, children are present, or really on any road where children are present. I think this is a fairly major concern, so I'm glad to see this bill brought forward to address it, because I think a lot of people are worried about this.

Honestly, you know, when you talk about dangerous activities, actually getting behind the wheel of your car is one of the most dangerous activities in which most people regularly engage in their daily lives. In my former role when we were in government, I had the opportunity to speak to a number of parents who had lost children, whether to impaired driving or excessive speeding or a number of other things. I mean, it's heartbreaking. It doesn't have to happen, it's easily prevented by simply not doing those things, and it's very troublesome.

You know, in terms of increased penalties for these sorts of activities I think that this is definitely the right call. I do think that there are concerns potentially with this bill, in part because what we're doing here is sort of increasing the penalty and also adding on the ability to do certain other things like seize vehicles and

operators' licences. It's a pretty heavy hammer. Generally when we use heavier hammers, we want to make sure we have the necessary administrative protections in place. Sometimes that's in a courtroom. Sometimes that's an administrative tribunal. It just sort of depends on the situation, but I think the more harsh the penalty is, the more important it is to have in place clear abilities to deal with it.

I think the concern is that in the act there isn't a definition of stunting, so the result is – what this does is that it changes the penalty, and in this case it's for section 115(2)(f) and 115(2)(p) under the Traffic Safety Act, and (2)(p) specifically is if it's at least 40 kilometres per hour over the maximum speed limit that is 80 kilometres per hour or less. Essentially, excessive speeding is (2)(p), and then (2)(f) is stunting. The challenge is that it's not totally clear what will or won't be caught, so that's sort of actually problematic on both ends in terms of ensuring that we're preventing the behaviours we want to prevent and ensuring that we're providing the appropriate procedural safeguards. That's a bit problematic, and it's unfortunate because I think that's an amendment we would have liked to have seen.

This is not a weird procedural thing, but for the tens of people watching at home, one of the procedural things we have going on in the House is that once a section has been opened to be amended in a bill, another member can't reopen the same section. Because we have this amendment, that has now been passed, having to do with speed change zones, we would have to open the same section, potentially, in terms of making other changes, so that sort of becomes out of order, if you will. I think it's unfortunate to see that that amendment isn't able to go in because I think, again, it's important both to make sure that we're preventing the behaviours we want to prevent and to make sure that we're not catching things we maybe didn't intend to catch, which are both important things in the law.

I think, though, generally I remain supportive of this bill because I think it is a good bill. It does do a really important thing, and it is something that is, in my opinion, very much on the minds of Albertans and particularly Alberta parents. I think, you know, people stunting or driving too quickly is extremely problematic, and it has impacts not just on, like, people being worried about what will happen but on the lives of people in Alberta. Those traffic accidents can be some of the most horrific things to respond to. They can be incredibly tragic. They can be life changing for folks. I happened to once, long ago, volunteer at a hospital, and, yeah, some of the people had – it was a neurorehabilitation ward – their lives sort of permanently altered by the poor driving behaviours of others. It's not intentional, but it only takes a second to destroy other people's lives.

So I think that this is very good. I think that there is an enormous amount of evidence that this is the sort of penalty that sort of impacts on people's brains. It's like people don't – yeah. I don't really know what the psychological mechanism behind it is. People don't think that a tragedy will happen to them. They don't think that they'll wind up in a position where they have injured someone and they're facing criminal charges and jail time and that sort of – like, people just don't seem to think that's going to happen to them.

For some reason these sorts of penalties – and we have a lot of evidence of this from across the country – seem to have a greater impact on people's behaviour. They can more easily see, I guess, maybe more easily envision the scenario in which they are caught by the police and they receive this penalty, so this alters their behaviour in a way that perhaps the potential of injury to themselves, to their loved ones, or to others doesn't. Again, I don't really understand the psychology fully behind that. It's actually a little bit counterintuitive although, as it turns out, most things about human psychology are a bit counterintuitive.

Yeah. I think it's a good bill. I think it will have a positive impact. I do wish that it was a little bit better in this way, but I think that as far as it goes, I am supportive of it, and I think it's something that will impact the lives of Albertans, which is something very, very positive.

3:30

I imagine the member, like all members of this House, has heard from constituents about this. I know that probably one of the most well-attended town halls I've been to in my role as an MLA was specifically about people speeding too much. It included law enforcement and the community association and members of the community. People are really concerned. They want their children to be able to play outside, and rightly so. They want their children to be able to walk down the street. We have had a number of very public, very tragic instances in Calgary, you know, where someone's car went through the window of a restaurant, people driving into houses, all sorts of things. There's often alcohol involved in those incidents, but sometimes it just is excessive speed and excessive silliness, and no one should ever lose their life that way. No one should ever be permanently injured that way. It's entirely preventable and easily so.

I guess over here we don't often say, "Good job," but for, again, the tens of folks watching at home, we can occasionally agree on things, and in this instance I think we absolutely do agree that this is a step in the right direction. Good job to the member for bringing this forward. I know private members' bills can be a difficult thing, to sort of come up with a concept and translate the concept into actuality and that sort of thing.

I haven't actually personally had conversations, but I assume there have been some conversations with law enforcement across the province. My recollection from, admittedly, three and a half, almost four years ago now is that generally a lot of services were looking for this sort of thing, the ability to hold people more accountable for speeding, because officers see this every day, the sort of tragic results of what really is an act that doesn't intend to injure but has the serious potential to injure others.

Yeah. I guess that sort of covers the points I want to make with respect to this bill. I would say that I will be supporting. I would urge all members to support it. I imagine that most folks will.

With that, I think I will take my seat. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 203 as amended?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 203 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Chair, I rise to request unanimous consent to waive standing orders 8(7)(c) and 9(1). I'm looking to revert to Committee of the Whole on Bill 204.

**The Chair:** We will need to rise out of committee.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes. I understand.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead. Please proceed.

**Mr. Schow:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report Bill 203.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Long:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 203. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

**Mr. Schow:** I rise to request unanimous comment to waive standing orders 8(7)(c) and 9(1) in order to proceed immediately to Committee of the Whole on Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole  
(continued)**

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

**Bill 204  
Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Chair:** Are there members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, was originally the idea of a former legislative co-ordinator I had by the name of Maureen Gough. In 2016 Maureen was one of the primary caregivers for her elderly mother, and she approached me with the idea of creating an Amber Alert for seniors. It was under her guidance and hard work by the two us that the private member's Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, was put before this House and passed.

As one of the members stated in second reading, private members' bills do not have the underlying infrastructure of researchers and legal advice that a government bill would have, so after private member's Bill 210 was passed, it was discovered that there was a conflict between the Missing Persons Act and private member's Bill 210 regarding how information would be released to the public and would be handled during a silver alert. This explains why private member's Bill 210 had been passed by the Legislature, but it was never proclaimed and therefore could not benefit a senior that had gone missing.

It also explains why this private member's Bill 204 is necessary, as private member's Bill 204 is designed to make amendments that address the shortcomings in private member's Bill 210 and to provide police and Albertans with another tool to use in order to

help find and protect a senior that has gone missing and is deemed to be at risk.

During second reading of Bill 204 a member had asked the question: why have these amendments not been brought back into the Legislature before this year? It's a good question. The answer to that question is that I had to find out exactly what the conflicts were that had created the problems between private member's Bill 210 and the Missing Persons Act. Then a solution had to be found. Finally, since this was a private member's bill, I either had to wait until I was drawn again for a private member's bill or see if I could find a private member willing to pick up this idea and propose the amendments. As luck would have it, I was once again drawn for a private member's bill in my last sitting in this Legislature before I retire as an MLA.

**3:40**

As this House considers the amendments brought forward in private member's Bill 204, it must be understood that a great deal of effort by the Ministry of Justice and all of the stakeholders that were interviewed has gone into addressing the shortcomings in private member's Bill 210. The amendments in private member's Bill 204 were designed to both address the privacy concerns as information was released to the public but also to address some of the other insights brought forward by stakeholders. Some have been concerned that introducing a silver alert may create alert fatigue, so several elements were built into private member's Bill 204. Firstly, private member's Bill 204 follows the same pattern of thresholds as an Amber Alert before it can be activated.

A police service may activate a silver alert when an individual is reported missing to the police service [and only] if the police service determines that the following requirements are met:

- (a) the individual is [indeed] a missing person,
- (b) the individual is a represented adult under the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act or an adult with a cognitive impairment, mental disorder or medical condition that may render the person vulnerable,
- (c) the individual's safety and welfare are feared for given the individual's cognitive impairment, mental disorder or medical condition, and
- (d) there is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the individual's safe recovery.

Madam Chair, as you can see, not every senior that goes missing will result in a silver alert. They must be a represented adult or cognitively impaired or have a medical condition that would make them vulnerable enough to fear for their safety. Any information put out in a silver alert must be capable of assisting in a safe recovery.

Finally, the police are the ones that determine if the issue of a silver alert will be of benefit in helping to return a missing senior that is at risk. When discussing this with stakeholders like the Calgary and Edmonton police services, it was determined that if the police remained in control of when to call or when not to call a silver alert and if we built into the legislation a geospatial element where police would determine the geographical extent of a silver alert, this would reduce the chance of alert fatigue.

It is also the case that private member's Bill 204 allows the police to decide the extent and the means of the distribution of the information. The police service could decide to limit the alert to a posting on the Internet or to Twitter. They could decide that the circumstances of the missing person – for instance, if the individual did not have access to a vehicle or public transportation, they would then limit the alert to a particular geographical area. All of this will combine to reduce or eliminate alert fatigue as a silver alert is actually implemented.

During second reading the question was asked: will private member's Bill 204 allow for sufficient collaboration with other local agencies on the ground? I believe that private member's Bill

204 will do exactly that. Firstly, it will allow police to collaborate with the families, institutions, TV, radio, Internet, and agencies in the dissemination of the necessary information that could help save a missing senior's life. Secondly, it has already helped to connect some of the local police services with other seniors' organizations.

In meeting with stakeholders for this bill, I met with the Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network, and they have produced a resource for families with vulnerable seniors called the Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing. This is an excellent resource that helps families prepare ahead of time should their loved ones go missing.

Part of that is called the Herbert protocol. The Herbert protocol is a form that details the important information that could be used by police should they believe it is necessary to have a silver alert. The Herbert protocol helps families gather the information police will need, like photographs, personal details, contact information, personal circumstances, general health information, et cetera. The use of the Herbert protocol would be an example of how local agencies like the Missing Older Adult Resource Network could help both police and families when their loved ones go missing. I would highly recommend that all families concerned about a senior's potential of going missing should access the Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing. Reading through and filling out this resource before your loved one may go missing will be of great use as you begin to contact police and your local community networks.

One of the questions that has been brought forward revolves around the cost of the silver alert. When I talk with stakeholders, especially the police services, costs were not thought to be a concern. I've asked the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services whether or not the cost of implementing a silver alert would be prohibitive. After much digging and further conversations with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency it was determined that at present there would be no additional cost because AEMA co-ordinates with the national agency that oversees national alerts, and the app that the provinces and the national alert system interface with is free. So if there are any costs, they will presently be picked up by the federal agency. However, even if that were to change in the future, it was felt that the cost would be minimal. Last week at budget estimates I was able to ask the minister a question on this, and the head of AEMA outlined that the entire alert system costs Albertans about \$180,000 a year. To add in a silver alert, it was his belief, would not be a burdensome cost as the individuals and the systems are already there.

Lastly, it must be remembered that before any silver alert can be implemented, it must meet the criteria outlined in private member's Bill 204.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to stand up and support this bill. I think that when we are concerned about individuals that fit the criteria that the previous speaker was talking about, they need help, and that's what the silver alert intends to do. It intends to disseminate information – and the previous speaker kind of talked about things like geographic activations and where the postings might occur – to ensure that a targeted approach is being undertaken to find that person as quickly as possible.

Maybe I should back up a little bit. Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022: we're seeing this for the second time in this Legislature, and the mover was talking about why we're

seeing it here for the second time. It's totally understandable, I think, that members, particularly members who don't have a lot of research support, who do not have the background that researchers, that drafters of legislation can give them, that the government does have, are working with a bit of one hand tied behind their back. They're trying to do the best job they can, but there may be things missed. From listening to the mover talk about the previous bill that was before this House and the challenges it had and why it wasn't proclaimed, it's understandable, as I was saying, that it wasn't proclaimed, and we're back here today to try to address that in this Bill 204. For instance, if you're a member that doesn't have a party, if you're sitting as an independent, you have some resources but not the full resources that opposition does, perhaps, or the government. I think that this bill in that respect addresses those shortcomings as we understood them, told to us just a few minutes ago.

3:50

I want to say that I think the intent behind this is to focus attention and try to get resources marshalled so that people who do go missing – and the bill talks about the kind of criteria those persons have to fit before a silver alert is triggered. If a person does go missing and they have those kinds of challenges – they're missing, they're a represented adult being looked after by other individuals, they're vulnerable in some way or in some medical condition – then we know that their safety and welfare are potentially at risk if they are not identified, found, and brought back to where they can be safely cared for. That is something that I think this bill tries to address and does.

It's a good thing, because we have in Canada, Alberta times of the year where inclement weather can put a person's life at risk. We see far too often people who go missing – young people, older people – found in dire situations and sometimes even to the point where their life has ended because of exposure to cold, or in many parts of this province we have significant wilderness areas or geographic parts of the landscape where a person can get injured. If that person is represented in the kind of criteria that's identified here, then they will not be looking out for their own best interests, and they need to be identified and found, as I say, as quickly as possible.

It's good to know that there is a trigger in the sense that police will be the ultimate decision-makers on when to issue an alert, how broadly to issue the alert, how much effort to put into the alert, all based on an understanding of the situation of the person who has gone missing. I believe, too, that there'll be sufficient collaboration by a number of stakeholders, agencies on the ground once an alert has been triggered so that that person can be found, hopefully, as quickly as possible and returned.

I, too, was in the estimates for Public Safety and Emergency Services last week and heard the discussions about the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and understand that, you know, there wouldn't be a significant incremental cost on issuing these kinds of alerts on – we don't know on how regular a basis, but we do know that when it is necessary, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency can be a partner in making that judgment call about police personnel issuing the alert.

There, of course, is a history of these sorts of alerts being put into place across the United States since 2005. It's been legislated in almost all states in the U.S., and there's some experience with Canadian provinces, not territories yet, doing the same thing and having legislation in place.

Things that improve the quality of life that older persons can continue to have if they're found, if they leave their places of care without the knowledge of caregivers, is a good step to take, because it's been pretty challenging for seniors in this province over the last



three, almost four years. We know that many are not doing as well as they could in the sense that they don't have the support brought on by having more money at their disposal as a result of some of the decisions of this government. Bill 204 will go some way to assisting those seniors most in need who have left their safe place to be, and organizing a way to let the public know that there are missing persons who need to be returned to their loved ones, often, is a really good thing.

The number of people who are experiencing cognitive difficulties, we know, is increasing. We probably would do well as a government to participate with other governments to spend more time and energy on research around how to address those cognitive impairments so that there'd be fewer people who might get into difficulties, as is proposed in this Bill 204. I think adult citizens who need our support – we should not feel like the effort to . . . [Member Ceci's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** I just thought I would rise and make a few comments with regard to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Thank you for standing up and supporting this bill. You know, you were talking a little about who some of these seniors could be and where they could come from. I think probably every one of us in this Chamber has somebody that we've loved that has fallen into this category and could've gone missing. I know that in my life it was my mother-in-law, just how much concern my father-in-law had as she battled with Alzheimer's, trying to make sure that he was awake literally 24/7 so that she wouldn't go wandering and leave. This would've been something that very well could've been used in our family as we moved forward, and they lived in the city.

I can remember meeting with a constituent a few years ago who was talking about driving down a country road and seeing a car being driven at slow speed rather erratically. He followed this vehicle for many miles because he was worried about the old gentleman that he saw in the car. Didn't know him; wasn't a neighbour. Eventually, he got on his phone, phoned the police. The RCMP came, pulled the car over, and they find out that the gentleman had come from Red Deer. He'd gotten lost, and he didn't know where he was. This can happen to anybody, whether you're rural or whether you're urban.

Private member's Bill 204 had to be flexible enough to allow the police to be able to make judgment calls as to how wide a scope they would spread a silver alert or how narrow they would keep it and look at the situations and look at the cognitive impairments that may be there and address them. So I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for bringing forward the whole issue of, you know: well, who are we talking about, and where are we going with this silver alert?

4:00

The member brought forward the idea of being able to compare provinces and that there are other provinces in this country that are moving forward with silver alert legislation. We know that right now in Quebec there is a pilot project going through – I believe it started in January – so, you know, there are other provinces that are moving forward on this. I think this piece of legislation will move us forward, and I think it's a good piece of legislation that deserves the support of this House as we move forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing this private member's bill forward not once but twice, actually. It shows a true commitment to this issue, and it's very clear from the member's comments that he is quite passionate about this. I do very much appreciate that he has, you know, seen an opportunity to make some change that would make a difference in people's lives, and he has pursued this with this private member's bill both in a previous Legislature and again in this Legislature.

I know how it's by chance, really, that any of us as private members get an opportunity to bring forward motions and bills. I have not had the opportunity, and it doesn't look likely that I will have the opportunity in this Legislature to bring either a motion or a private member's bill forward. I do think it is, you know, incumbent upon us as a Legislative Assembly to treat the private members' bills that are brought forward, particularly over and over again, as, really, somebody's truly trying to make a difference and trying to make an impact.

I do have to say that I am disappointed, as we draw close to a close on this Legislature soon, that we have not had the opportunity for any private members' bills from the opposition side to have been brought forward and to have been passed in this Chamber throughout this entire Legislature. I don't mean to bring that up to take away at all from what the member here has brought forward, but it does speak to many members on all sides of the House that come to this Chamber with issues that they are quite passionate about, and we do all enter into this public service with the goal of making some change.

It's disappointing when, I believe, politics – as we know, we all engage in politics in this place and outside of this place as well – prevent private members from bringing forward changes that they are quite passionate about, either because they were affected by it personally or they've seen people close to them affected or they've had some constituents who brought forward something that is very meaningful to them. I do hope that in the future, whichever members of us are here again in the next Legislature, we are more cognizant and respectful of the importance of private members' work, because it can be really important things that may not make the light of day in other cases, so we should treat it with respect.

When it comes to Bill 204, I'm proud, like my colleagues, to offer my support for this bill. I did not have the opportunity to sit in this Legislature when it was first brought forward by the member but certainly have listened to the thoughtful discussion and debate and the reasons as to why this was perhaps not proclaimed the first time around and why it was brought back again, and it is a testament to the persistence and the commitment of the member that he did make the changes and seek out with the ministry what changes were required in order to make it a private member's bill that would hopefully be passed and proclaimed by this Legislature.

I also take to heart the member's comments about that we all know somebody, a senior, who this could apply to. I'll begin by saying, of course, I know how valuable Amber Alerts are. As all Albertans know, that's critically important, and we've come to a consensus around the importance of coming together when there is a child at risk, and I believe it is right that we do the same for when there is a situation where a senior is at risk as well. It is part of those moments where we remember that we are a community, that we are collaborative, that we do work together for common good. Certainly, protecting the health and safety of somebody who is vulnerable should be something we can all get behind, and I'm sure we have and we do.

When I saw this private member's bill, I actually thought of a story that happened in my neck of the woods in south Edmonton, which was just last summer. I want to give my respects to the family

of Hongsang (Howard) Rho, who was a 64-year-old gentleman from south Edmonton, lived in the Twin Brooks area, which is not part of my riding but is very close to where I am. It's in the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. Mr. Rho was a retired transit worker and an avid outdoorsperson. He went missing in August of 2022, and I believe it was well over a week before the information of his absence and that he was lost came to get any sort of media attention. I remember seeing the pictures. It was suspected that he might have been hiking in Blackmud Creek ravine, which is an area that I know well and a lot of, you know, families that I know know very well. There was also concern, because he was a retired transit worker, that he might have gotten on to transit, so he might have actually been quite far out from where his home was.

I'm very sad to report that he was found over a month after he went missing, and he had passed away. Of course, we'll never know with retrospect whether or not a silver alert would have made a difference, but certainly his family was really beseeching people to keep an eye out for him and to report, and I know people were doing that. It is very possible, one could hope, that had a silver alert system existed at that time – who knows if the outcome would have been different? But, certainly, it doesn't take much for most of us to think of an instance like that, even if it's in the news.

Also, I am a daughter of an aging parent, and I know very well that – they call it the sandwich generation, right? We're caring for children; we're caring for parents. You know, my mother is experiencing health issues as well, and I certainly know what it's like to worry about a senior. I think we all have that experience of knowing somebody in our lives that we would worry about, so I think this is certainly something that all of us have some personal contact with and some personal affiliation with and can certainly see that.

One of the things I have to say, Madam Chair, is that I think about the community that I live in. When we first moved into the community many years ago, we were the only family with young kids. There were a lot of, actually, seniors in our little cul-de-sac that we live in. At first, I was like: oh, who are my kids going to be friends with? There were a lot of seniors who didn't answer their doors on Halloween. I was like: come on; they need some candy on Halloween, and nobody is answering the doors. But it's quite remarkable how that community of seniors has become part of our community and part of our family that we care for very much.

There are lots of young families that have now moved into the cul-de-sac but still a lot of seniors, and it's actually – you know, I see them walking around in our neighbourhoods. One of my neighbours down the street was struggling to find a knee replacement for quite some time; another was struggling with a hip replacement. We just kind of collaborate and come together. When I think about the purpose and intention behind a silver alert, it's really about being a community, and it's really about keeping an eye out for each other and looking out for each other and reminding ourselves that we all are kind of responsible for each other. We are responsible for ensuring that we're safe and protected.

I listened carefully to the member's comments about the requirements of, you know, what standards would have to be met, and I do believe that it is appropriate for the police to have the discretion about when to use this kind of silver alert. We want to make sure that it is – yeah; that people do not become immune to it. We want people to take it seriously, just as we want people to take Amber Alert seriously. I just want to say that there aren't as many opportunities as we would like in this Chamber for us to agree on certain things, but I do think this is something we have been clear in this House that we do have consensus around.

We always want to make the legislation as good as possible, as precise as possible. We want it to work the way it's intended to

work. We want it to have the benefit for the highest number of people as possible. I can appreciate and I believe the member has worked very hard to do that and that we can have some consensus around here to come together and make that happen. I do hope that this private member's bill has the opportunity to get to third reading, as it may not.

I know that the esteemed member – we will not be seeing him in the Legislature again because of his decision not to run again, so I do hope that if by some chance this is not – and I would never presume the outcome of the Legislature, but if it were to not pass this Legislature, that perhaps that work can continue on and somebody will make sure that it is done in the next Legislature, because I think, as we've heard from the comments from the members of the Assembly, there is pretty much consensus that this is a good thing to do, and we want to do it well.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll take my seat.

4:10

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased today to rise and speak in support of this bill. I think, I mean, we're seeing fairly wide-ranging support with respect to this, as my hon. colleague just mentioned. You know, I think it has a lot to do with the fact that we all have in our lives some experience with this, a person that we would be worried about under these circumstances. I think this definitely fixes a piece of the problem.

I do think we've seen a number of tragic circumstances. Certainly, I know that down in Calgary we've had a few high-profile instances, and I have talked to a few folks who have been, unfortunately, in the position of having a missing loved one, and that is – yeah; it's really hard for them. It's hard not knowing what's going on, it's hard not being able to do anything about it, and I think this would help in a lot of circumstances, so that's good.

I think, you know, it's worth discussing the fact that as demographics change, as populations age, and as we expect to see a bit of a shift here, or we're seeing a trend in demographics here, this becomes, potentially, a bigger issue. A lot of folks in health care or in seniors' care will refer to the possibility of sort of a dementia crisis – right? – more and more people coming forward with these challenges. It creates challenges for the whole system, and this is definitely one of them, so I'm really glad to see this come forward.

I would congratulate the member on that because I think as private members it's rare; it's rare to get a bill, it's rare to get the opportunity to bring something like this forward. It is, of course, somewhat rarer now that we have a committee that will prevent these bills from coming forward to the floor, which I think is problematic. But yeah. I mean, in terms of this bill, it's a real opportunity, and I think it's something that we can support on all sides.

Obviously, the member wouldn't be able to do this, but I think that going forward as legislators, governments are really going to need to be investing in this problem. I think, you know, as we see more and more people with dementia – and it can be extremely challenging to care for someone with dementia.

I think most families would have a preference to care for a person at home, but that can be extremely challenging. I think most members of this Chamber probably have experience with this. You know, especially as dementia progresses, it becomes extremely challenging because it can bring with it not only sort of confusion and a failure to remember but also a level of anxiety and fear that can prompt violent behaviour, that people aren't always able to

cope with. Having a loved one – whether they're a parent or a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle, a spouse, even – with these sorts of challenges can be very, very difficult for the family, and it can be increasingly difficult for the family to care for the person, depending on the circumstances.

I think we will need to see more and more dementia-care beds coming on stream, and I think that requires investment. It requires investment in the public system. The reason I say that is because, you know, we do hear a lot about private systems, but they do tend to be those lower level of care beds, and there is a big difference – a big, big difference – between levels of care. In fact, this bill itself, I would say, addresses an issue that can arise both at home and in a care setting.

Usually in care facilities they do a pretty good job of streaming people and making sure they get to the right level of care, but sometimes, you know, someone can start in one facility, and then they will need a higher level of care as that progresses. It can be challenging to move the individual, so sometimes you'll have people sort of trying to manage individuals that require a higher level of care, that require – I keep saying “a higher level of care”; a higher level of care is essentially more staff. The staffing ratio changes. When you have your basic-level-of-care bed, you could have a staffing ratio of even, like, 1 care provider to 10 or 20 people, and by the time you get up to a dementia-care situation, you're talking about maybe 1 or even 2 people to 1 individual being cared for, depending on what their behaviours are.

I do think that this is a very important thing. I think it will help families a lot. But I do think that the government as a whole and we as legislators do need to concern ourselves with this challenge, that it is coming.

Returning somewhat to what is before us, this is a good piece of the puzzle, and potentially, you know, for those situations where – and, again, as I was discussing, people will need a higher level of care over time. It doesn't take much to find yourself in a situation. If you are trying to find care at home, it doesn't take much in terms of turning around for a minute or forgetting to lock something for this sort of thing to happen, or people can be in a position where they're fine to go out for a walk by themselves and they just get confused, right? Dementia sort of has a tendency to come and go. People are not always at the same level of ability. It tends to sort of vary, sometimes over the course of a day, sometimes over the course – but it can change quite quickly, so this will provide families with sort of a level of assistance they need.

I do think it is right to leave some discretion with the authorities to determine what exactly is going on because we don't, obviously, want too many of these going out, not just because the public sort of becomes desensitized to them but also because it's very important to bear in mind that these are still people, and they have privacy interests. You know, obviously, a safety interest would trump a privacy interest, but there can be circumstances in which it's very scary for the family members, but the person was fine and they don't necessarily want their name and their information to sort of be spread across the province. I think that that's a very, very good feature of this bill. I think the member has done a lot of work on this over a number of years, and I think that's important.

A lot of people who watch politics sort of watch it at this very high level, the fightiness of it, I guess, for lack of a better term. I'm not necessarily even against that. You know, politics at the end of the day is a conversation about values, and sometimes values are pretty fundamental, and people have very strong opinions about it. But something like this can sort of bring people together, and this is something that politics does, too. That's the thing people ask me a lot of the time, especially as a woman, why on earth it is that I

would do this thing. This is one of the reasons, because you can have an impact on the lives of the people around you in a way that you never otherwise could.

You know, when I moved from being a lawyer to this job, as a lawyer, at best, you're advancing the cause of an individual case or a group of people. You can win some big victories. I think of the Vriend decision, for instance. You can, like, move the world forward. But in this job you can have the ability to affect the lives of people that you will never even know that you've touched. This bill could save a life, and the member won't know whose life, might not even get thanked, but it is very important, that . . .

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

4:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill. This particular bill on silver alerts is, I would say, an essential step towards improving the way that we care for Alberta's seniors and vulnerable adults. Amber Alberts, as I think most if not all of us are aware, can be a really effective way of finding young people during periods of time when they need to be found, they need to be cared for. In the rhythm and full circle of life sometimes older people get to the point where they could use a similar service.

I don't think I'm quite there yet, but I will be a senior this year, and for everybody else that's smug right now because you're so much younger, remember that there are only two kinds of people in the world: seniors and those that hope to be. I know no one was unpleasant with me, but that's what I try to remind people. There're only two kinds of people in the world: seniors and those that hope to be. And when our turn comes, we want to look after ourselves for as long as we can, perhaps for the whole distance, but sometimes, again, life is such that some of us will need more care along the way than perhaps we anticipated and perhaps than we hoped.

Sometimes one of the most important measures that you measure society by, of course, is how we treat the most vulnerable. It's our government's commitment to ensure that Alberta is a place where everybody can rely on each other for protection and help in situations when it's needed. I would compliment our Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his commitment to caring for other people, as reflected in the bill before us right now. Thank you.

Now, silver alerts, of course, will work towards shoring up the protections we provide our seniors and vulnerable adults and the families of at-risk individuals, and the emergency services that we all rely on in one form or another are made just that little bit stronger. Of course, it could happen to anybody, that they could need this service.

Madam Chair, I've had some experience with this. My own father, who is no longer with us, actually made it pretty far. He made it to 93, and about the time – part of the reason I don't remember exactly when the dementia in some form started to affect him is because I lived about 2,500 miles away from where I grew up. But, fortunately for me, I have four amazing sisters back there that helped look after mom and dad when they were around, but I will say that it was – it's pretty hard on the senior when they go through the part of their life where they might need a silver alert.

I remember a few years ago my son and I went back to where I grew up, and we spent three days with dad, and it was three completely different events. The one day it was like old times, just like everything was great. One of the other days he drifted in and out of lucidity: you seem like a nice young man, but why are you buying me a hot chocolate, and who are you? Then on another day

he had no idea who my son or I were, and it wasn't because he didn't want to know, and that is the hard part about it. Now, there were a few – I'm certainly not making fun, but there were a few fun events that cropped up as a result.

I know a friend of mine whose father was going through the early stages of where he actually could've used a silver alert, because he was just at the point where he would drift in and out. He still had a driver's licence, and the reason that – I'm not sure he got his driver's licence taken away, but one day, miraculously, the vehicle didn't work anymore and just nobody got around to getting it fixed. In other words, somebody had taken the cable off the battery because it was time.

He, the friend of mine, lived in south Calgary. His father was missing for six or eight hours until he phoned from his cellphone somewhere on the side of the road on the other side of Cochrane. He had no idea where he was, and he finally had to admit defeat in terms of, you know – to find his way home. It was a little bit sad, but that was one of those situations where if a silver alert was available, even having the person's licence plate number might have helped to stop him. I guess none of us will ever know, at this point, whether he drove perfectly or some way other than perfectly, but just to prevent injury or death or damage from happening, the ability to have a silver alert system would have been very valuable back then.

Should the House see fit to pass this before the election is called, then I think we can all feel good about putting that service in place for seniors now. And, as it goes, it could be some of us that need the service; I would say that almost for sure somebody in this room will need that service at some point in their life. Won't it be nice if it's actually there because of the good work that we're able to do in this place?

Madam Chair, silver alerts help every Albertan with a cellphone to become a watchful protector who is given a little more power to look after our fellow human being. So many situations and examples, some of which we've heard in wonderful debate from other members on this bill, seniors – and you know what? I'm sure we've all heard it. I have heard it. I guess it's not a silver alert, but sometimes you'll hear it on the radio where somebody's family member is missing. It always concerns me because, of course, while there are a lot of happy endings where somebody was found, there are other endings, too, where somebody was walking between places when the temperature was cold and they just froze to death or drowned or fell and hurt themselves or some other thing. All those people are loved by somebody, and those that love them will be very, very relieved if a silver alert was in place to bring them home safely to where they belong. And in some cases it's people that – as we get older, more of us need medication on a regular basis, and it could be somebody not back in time for their medication, and that could have a detrimental effect on their lives.

I guess I could go on for hours, and you'll all be glad to know I won't, but the fact is that I think that we're doing something good here if we pass this. I think the bill is intended to be structured in such a way that the private and personal information of people that are subject to an alert is largely protected, at least to the extent that it can be after allowing the public to identify them to bring them back to where they're safe. I think it's also intended to avoid an excessive number of alerts over a larger area; in other words, I think, hopefully, to have the ability to be targeted to the area that an individual may well be capable of travelling to, and of course part of that would be whether they're driving, whether they're walking, whatever it happens to be. So I really think that there was some good thought put into it.

I know that there's legislation in some American states as well as the province of Manitoba, and in all those places a silver alert type system has saved lives before, and I have no doubt – in fact, I'm very sure – that it will save lives here in Alberta.

Madam Chair, I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk about something so positive and something that it sounds like all sides of the House can perhaps get behind and something that, since there's no guarantee any of us will be back after May 29, if we get this done, we'll all be able to look back at, I think with some pride and satisfaction, saying: there's definitely one good thing. There are lots of good things that happen in here, but this will be one more good thing that happened during this term of office. I certainly support the bill as before us. I hope and expect that other members will. I think that might well be the case. Let's get one more good thing done before we're finished.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

4:30

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, and commend the member for bringing it forward. I know that, as has been mentioned in this House before, most of us have some connection, either direct or indirect, with seniors, elderly individuals in Alberta who may be at risk of actually requiring a silver alert to be called if they go missing. Most individuals in this province wish to continue living at home as long as possible, but of course many of us will need to be in a long-term care facility of one kind or another, and our seniors will go missing from either a home location or potentially from a long-term care, private or public, facility.

This piece of legislation will allow authorities to alert the public to engage in a search that will help find the missing person as quickly as possible and give every opportunity for that individual to be found safe and healthy and returned to either home or the facility from which they went missing. Of course, Madam Chair, it's all of our hope and wish that every senior doesn't have to see the protection of this silver alert and that they are able to live at home as long as possible, but indeed if somebody does go missing as a result of their confusion or their dementia, this legislation is something that will assist authorities to find them and, hopefully, have a good result in returning them to their home or the facility that they went missing from.

The one thing that I wanted to mention, of course, was that all of our seniors deserve to be supported no matter whether you're in a long-term care facility or living at home. As had been mentioned briefly by the Member for Calgary-Hays, who talked about Alberta seniors who have drivers' licences and may actually go missing while driving their vehicle and perhaps, as a result of this, end up losing that driver's licence, well, Madam Chair, what happens in that situation and others is that the remaining spouse, should there be a remaining spouse, is the one who has the driver's licence and becomes the caregiver who is responsible for getting that individual with dementia to their appointments, to doctors' appointments, and even just to go out on outings to enrich their quality of life.

One of the things that this government has done, Madam Chair, is make it more expensive for that remaining senior to keep their driver's licence, to renew their driver's licence, and it behooves me to wonder why indeed they did take the measure to force Alberta doctors to charge seniors for required, mandatory, drivers' medical examinations to keep their licence, \$85 to \$150 in many cases, so that they can maintain their driver's licence, in many cases in a

situation where they're struggling with extra costs already of a family member who has dementia.

[Mr. Turton in the chair]

There are many, many costs associated with that, whether that be bringing in respite care to a home or whether it be other pseudomedical needs, whether it be incontinence issues or whether it be bringing bars and walkers and so forth into the home to help. There are a lot of costs that add up to thousands of dollars a year, Mr. Chair, for a family member looking to keep a spouse or an elderly family member in-home under their care. That responsibility is a big, big burden, and almost everyone in this Chamber will know somebody, if not themselves, who is undertaking to look after an elderly loved one in-home or even during a stay in long-term care, because there are costs involved, and there's a huge time commitment.

The difficulty is that, you know, the government, on this hand, looks to pat themselves on the back for looking after seniors and providing an opportunity for seniors at risk who may be even going missing to be found more quickly using a silver alert – that's certainly commendable – but on the other hand they neglect to really look at the harm they're doing by causing a senior to have to pay 85 to 150 bucks to renew their driver's medical exam when, in fact, they may be caring for a senior who they want to remain in their own home or visiting a senior in a long-term care centre that may or may not be close to their own house. That extra burden on a regular basis of \$85 to \$150 is something that this government could easily have dispensed with, but they neglected to do so and ignored the pleas of seniors to have this cost eliminated.

That's another reason, Mr. Chair, why a Seniors Advocate is a good idea in this province, so that individuals' voices, the seniors' voices would be listened to so that a cost like that, an expense like 85 to 150 bucks for a driver's medical, would be avoided if indeed they had their voice listened to. A Seniors Advocate would help do that so that a senior who is looking after a spouse or partner who's living in long-term care or at home, who actually might end up being at risk of drifting away or wandering away from their home or long-term care facility, would actually have the benefit of a caregiver with a driver's licence who could actually afford to keep it.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You know, it may seem like a small burden, but if you look at \$85 to \$100 on a regular basis, it could take a chunk out of an individual's income. I mean, many seniors are operating under pretty low incomes already, and you're looking at \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month. By the time you deduct utilities and heating costs and maintenance and groceries, especially now, that \$85 to \$150 that they have to fork out for a driver's medical so that they can keep their driver's licence and actually look after their loved one, who may be a senior in long-term care or living at home, is an unnecessary burden. It was a bit of a slap in the face, Madam Chair, for the government not to recognize that and to eliminate that driver's medical exam fee for our Alberta seniors.

I think that I can safely say that it's something that we would look at doing promptly should we form government after the next election. I think Alberta seniors can look forward to that small measure to improve affordability in their lives in the province.

Certainly, the legislation before us, Madam Chair, is a very worthwhile expenditure of this Legislature's time and, of course, of the member's effort to bring it forward as one of his last acts in this Legislature before he retires from this career. It's commendable that he spent the time that he has on it, but I'm saying to this House and

to Albertans that it's incumbent upon the government to have a consistent approach to seniors' care and that everything they do has to be able to be reflected in that approach. The matter of the charging for a driver's medical for our seniors isn't indicative of that. Whereby, on one hand, the member will claim that this is a measure that's going to assist our seniors – and that's something he can rightfully claim – the government's approach is not reflected in this private member's bill when one looks at the cost of maintaining a driver's licence. Requiring doctors to charge \$85 to \$150 for a driver's medical is inconsistent with this private member's bill's approach to seniors and caring for seniors.

If you add it up, it's certainly something that anyone on a fixed income, any seniors on a fixed income, without, you know, benefits beyond the regular ones you might receive through Alberta health care, would find a burden on a biannual basis or however often they need to go ahead and renew their driver's licence.

That's just one example, Madam Chair, of the extra costs that seniors have had to pay that this government has neglected to cushion them from, especially during a time when we're seeing the cost of living so high, when everything has gone up, including the cost of groceries, the cost of fuel to keep that car operating, the cost of caregiving materials, that every family is kind of shocked to learn that they might have to pay. Wheelchairs, for example, are not something that are provided to seniors free of charge.

4:40

**The Chair:** Are there others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and add some comments to Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022. I see this is very similar to an Amber Alert but for missing adult citizens, generally focusing around senior citizens with dementia. As many of my colleagues already mentioned and the member who moved the bill also acknowledged, this bill makes changes to Bill 210, that was passed in 2017. It was not proclaimed due to some issues.

Looking at this, first of all, I just wanted to congratulate the member for bringing this kind of piece of legislation to the House. I think this is a privilege, whenever we as legislators or public representatives get a chance to do something to help people, specifically, particularly those in dire need, you know. That needs to be appreciated, and I do.

Looking at the bill, a few questions that are in my mind – a lot of feedback and many personal experiences I had in my mind. I don't know how much time I will have to share those, as my dear colleagues also have a lot to say on this. As I read the bill, it says Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022, when it was initiated. The scope of the bill seems a bit narrower. It's basically limited to senior citizens, as it says, the age of over 55. I think, from my personal experience – I don't know what kind of feedback the member had before bringing the bill into the House. There was scope to expand, actually. There was an option to expand the scope of this bill. I see many, many individuals struggling and suffering from mental disorders or mental health issues dealing with similar issues as well. Those people are under the age of 55. Sometimes they're very young; they're youth.

I lived in a complex. I witnessed those issues. I have my own special-needs son. I've heard many stories, and I experience this issue myself. These people, the patients with dementia and mental health and many different types of disabilities, are very lovely people. They need extra care, more than an ordinary patient will probably need. Many times that is 24-hour supervision. You cannot even, you know, just ignore them for a second sometimes. They

don't do anything intentionally. They don't know what they're doing. They're lovely people. Sometimes they think they're trying to do something best, but they don't know, like: what is the risk in this? The risks are, like, huge.

There was a time – I think it was two years ago – when I was in the house of a constituent to pay condolences to the family member that he lost. He was pretty healthy, I think in the range of 60, 70 years of age. Two months later I heard that he got a severe dementia condition. They could not believe it. How could it trigger like this? More unfortunately, three or four months later than that, we found out that he was missing. It took a few days. It was good that he was recovered safely, but he didn't live very long, unfortunately. You know, he passed away. It got very severe.

I heard from back home, experience in my country, and I still think, when I'm looking at this bill, that if there could be a system or options and reasons to help or support like this, then young individuals could have been saved. By seeing many members and my colleagues, including yourself, I think you do understand issues with people supported by home care and many other things. Particularly when I represent many of those communities – they speak different languages. Not only do constituents come to my office; also, those Albertans feel they can easily communicate with me in their language on their issues. The biggest problem is that, you know, we do not have culturally delivered home-care support services at all. It doesn't exist. There are a huge, huge number of communities and people and citizens that need it.

The language barrier. I don't know how much you can do without language communication, how much you can help that individual that is in critical condition, who can't do much for him- or herself, and how much home support can help if they do not know their cultural backgrounds and they don't know their cultural food and the other stuff. Those kinds of problems: it's beyond explaining how critical it is.

Unfortunately, I was not one of those members, you know, that had the opportunity where I could bring forward this kind of motion. I still appreciate that you are doing something and that we have something to discuss, but there is a lot to do. A lot to do. I often talk to the home-care service providers. You know, they're lovely people. They try to do their best, whatever they can. The majority of the time in critical, critical health they are allotted the maximum of, like, a half-hour. Their people come in to help for 10 minutes, 15 minutes. Sometimes, if there is some time, giving a bath or doing the extended duties, they're allotted, like, a half-hour time. Out of those half-hours, they are given just 10 minutes for travel time, only 20 minutes to spend on the individuals.

They're also not, you know, paid enough, almost minimum wage, \$18. There's huge talent in the province that exists. I speak of all those professionals and skilled individuals that are moving into our province from abroad with professional degrees in health care and all that. You know, they are not being used. They're not being used. They're being wasted.

There is a lot to say. I appreciate and I support your bill, but I had hoped it would have been, like, a bit expanded, you know, in scope. That's all I wanted to see. I hope I have the opportunity, once again, maybe sometime in this government session or maybe the next – definitely, those are very serious concerns, and we need to take a look at them as legislators collectively.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Being cognizant of the time here, I will keep my comments brief. This is an important piece of legislation that I do thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing forward. I also appreciate his tenacity for making sure that we keep this bill in front of us.

As was mentioned, Bill 210, unfortunately, tripped literally at the finish line, so, you know, if I could take an opportunity, Madam Chair, to make a shameless plug towards private members' bills, perhaps the Legislature in the future could look at some kinds of resources for private members, sort of on the back end, in terms of looking over legislation, any potential conflicts which, hopefully, might have then prevented Bill 210 not being proclaimed.

4:50

I wish the government had been able to identify that, maybe taken it under their wing as a government bill. Then, you know, we could have gotten this through a lot sooner. But it is what it is. Hopefully, now that we've gotten all our ducks in a row, we will be able to get this through. As the Member for Calgary-Hays had mentioned, maybe we can even get it through before the end of this session, because I'd hate to see it again almost trip at the finish line now that, fingers crossed, we've got it right and all the language lines up.

I'd just reconfirm my commitment here today to Bill 204, as I did for Bill 210. I do appreciate that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon did manage to answer some of my questions, too, that I had originally had in second reading around any potential costs. My hope is that should there be any additional costs, we won't see Bill 204 perhaps fall to nickel and diming. We have seen a few instances where that has occurred by the government. Hopefully, that's not the case with Bill 204. They'll just simply look at it, and it will just be the right thing to do.

As I had mentioned in second reading, I too have seen a couple of cases where seniors in north Edmonton had gone missing. One of the things I forgot to mention was that I even went driving for half an hour or 45 minutes around Edmonton-Decore to see if perhaps I noticed something. The good news was that in those cases it was a happy ending, and those family members were able to get their way back home. But in the case when it's not, this system, I believe, could be the difference between life and death. There's no doubt about that.

From the speakers that I've heard today and throughout debate, I suspect that we will see this bill pass Committee of the Whole and on its way to third, and hopefully maybe we can get this over the finish line.

With that, just on the off chance, I'll make that plug to every single member. As I will be supporting this piece of legislation, I certainly urge you to support this piece of legislation. Let's do what's right for our seniors, make sure they're protected, make sure they get home safe when maybe they are, you know, unfortunate and find themselves somewhere else.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I, too, wanted to just get on the record today. It has been really nice to see the unanimous support – well, so far – in the House on Bill 204. Of course, I must note that I, too, am disappointed that we haven't had an opportunity to debate private members' business from members on this side of the House. That is certainly a shame. But, like I said, I want to get on the record just to thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his work on Bill 204. From some of the really moving stories that we've heard today and in previous debate on

this, you know, I think the Chamber can agree for once on one thing: we can agree that we're doing the right thing.

With that, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the House for the wonderful debate.

**The Chair:** Are there other members wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

[The clauses of Bill 204 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 204.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 204. 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? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I ask for unanimous consent from the Chamber to recognize the time as 5 o'clock and move immediately to Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Abandoned Oil and Gas Well Cleanup

505. Mr. Schmidt moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) endorse the principle of polluter pays; and
- (b) oppose the use of government revenue to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally responsible for that cleanup.

**Mr. Schmidt:** If you make a mess, you clean it up: it's a rule that all of us were taught to live by by our mothers, a rule that our spouses or significant others reinforce every time we leave a pair of dirty socks on the floor or dirty dishes in the sink, and a rule we remind our children to follow every time they walk through the house with their dirty shoes on or leave garbage lying around on the floor in their rooms. When the rule is followed, people generally live pretty happily together, and when it's not, conflict arises.

Taking responsibility to clean up your own messes is an obligation that we all believe we should take on, and we've enshrined this obligation as the polluter-pay principle in federal and provincial environmental legislation. The Supreme Court said that it's a well-recognized tenet of environmental law. For the oil and gas industry polluter pay means that oil and gas companies must pay for the environmental costs of their activities. That's been part of the social contract between the oil and gas industry and the Alberta public since the start of that industry in our province.

The sad truth of the matter, though, is that those responsible for enforcing the contract, this UCP Premier and her government, want to rip it up and write a new one, a contract that will make Albertans pay \$20 billion to oil and gas companies to clean up oil and gas wells that they are already legally obligated to pay for. It's a bad deal for the people of Alberta, and by voting in favour of this motion, members of this House can show the public that we are standing up for them.

When we raise this issue in the House, the Premier and her government deny it. "It's nowhere in the budget," they say. But the evidence that the UCP is intent on fulfilling its commitment to developing this massive corporate welfare scheme couldn't be more clear. The Premier herself was a paid lobbyist for the program. Kris Kinnear, also a paid lobbyist for the program, now works in the Premier's office to develop the program and is still, at least on paper, a director of the organization who lobbied for the program.

The Energy minister shilled for the program when he was a private member of the government caucus, and I have no doubt that it was his enthusiasm for the program that was a key factor in his appointment to that post. His mandate letter specifically mentions the creation of an incentive program as a key responsibility the Premier expects him to fulfill. To that end, he's held invitation-only meetings with supportive stakeholders and made comments to the press committing to a \$100 million pilot program.

The Premier herself has defended the program on her own radio show. Currently, if the UCP were to deny they were doing the thing that they were doing, I'd accuse them of having a hidden agenda, but their agenda to pay \$20 billion to oil and gas companies to clean up messes that they're legally required to pay for is out there in the open for all to see. The only place it's hidden is in the budget, and I think that should give all Albertans reason to be skeptical about what the UCP has put forward in the budget documents.

It's also plain for all to see that this \$20 billion giveaway is a rip-off for the Alberta taxpayer. You don't have to take my word for it. That's what Scotiabank had to say about the program. They said that "the program goes against the core capitalist principle that private companies should take full responsibility for the liabilities that they willingly accept."

Paul McLaughlin of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta has said that the program is exactly how a fox would design a henhouse. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that he's a hundred per cent against R-star because it's corporate welfare. Political scientist Duane Bratt says: it's a disgrace on so many levels; you've got the corporate welfare element, but you also have the corruption element. Even the now environment minister rejected the idea when the Premier was lobbying for it, saying that it went against the polluter-pay principle and didn't align with Alberta's royalty framework. It seems she's now changed her tune, just to add to the list of the Premier's bad ideas that she was vocally opposed to back in September but proudly supports now that she's back in cabinet. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I hadn't heard a single Albertan speak out in favour of this program unless they personally stood to gain financially from it.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, in recent years the people of Alberta have already picked up the tab for billions of dollars' worth of the oil and gas sector's environmental liabilities. In 2020-2021 we paid over a billion dollars in grants to companies to clean up their wells. The bulk of that money went to companies that were already massively profitable. This government spent \$1.5 billion on trans-Canada's pipeline to nowhere. We've loaned the Orphan Well Association hundreds of millions of dollars and are still waiting for those loans to be paid back. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid municipal taxes that have to be covered by residential property owners. The government has paid out more than \$60 million in surface lease payments that were owed to landowners, and they've recovered less than 1 per cent of that money from the companies that should have been on the hook. When I asked the environment minister about this in estimates, she just shrugged her shoulders and basically said: what are you going to do?

At a time when the cost of living is going through the roof and oil and gas companies are raking in record profits, regular Albertans look at what they've already given to the oil and gas industry and are asking how much more they have to pay. The Premier's answer: \$20 billion more. It's clear that the Premier is out of touch with regular Albertans, who don't want \$20 billion of their money spent to clean up someone else's mess. We here in the Alberta NDP stand firmly and proudly with those regular Albertans against this \$20 billion giveaway. This is money that belongs to the people of Alberta, and it should be spent on their priorities.

We've been listening to their priorities and are committing to getting the job done. What would we do with that money, Mr. Speaker? We'd build the south Edmonton hospital. We'd build the Red Deer hospital. We'd reopen the X-ray clinic in Morinville. We'd widen the ambulance bay doors in Innisfail. We'd put a CT scanner in the Misericordia hospital. We'd make sure that a million Albertans could finally see a family doctor with the creation of family health teams, and as an added bonus Albertans would never have to pay out of pocket to see that family doctor, unlike what the Premier has in store for them. We'd build way more than one school in Calgary, and we might even build some schools in Cochrane and Airdrie, too. We'd bring down the cost of living for Albertans, reducing the cost of their energy bills, their car insurance bills, tuition. We'd tackle the high price of groceries. We'd invest real money in the revitalization of downtown Calgary. Those are the priorities that Albertans tell me they have every day, and those are the priorities of Alberta's NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the difference between the government and the opposition on this issue could not be more clear. The UCP wants to pay \$20 billion to their friends and donors to do the thing that they should already do. We in the Alberta NDP say no. We know that money should be spent on the things that matter to Albertans: better public health care, making life more affordable, and good jobs for working people. I encourage all members to show that they stand with regular Albertans and show that they stand with their priorities as well and vote in favour of this motion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 505 is before the Assembly. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to this motion, and I thank the member very much for bringing forward this incredibly important motion. This motion essentially calls on us to endorse the principle of polluter pay, which I think all members should be willing to do, and to oppose the use

of government revenue, in specific royalties, that are meant to belong to all of us and to all Albertans, to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure, particularly because companies are already legally obligated to clean up that mess.

What, Mr. Speaker, is the problem with the UCP's \$20 billion handout? Well, the first problem is that, I mean, they're giving away royalty money, money that belongs to all Albertans, money that ought to go to support all Albertans, to private companies who already have those obligations. The contract that those companies signed to get a drilling licence obligates them to clean up their mess after they are done. It's part of the cost of doing business. This is essentially the government paying people to not break the law. It's as if the government were to begin paying private citizens not to speed. It makes no sense because if you could get paid not to speed, who's going to do it just of their own volition?

That's exactly the problem with this program. It creates what lawyers and philosophers would probably call a moral hazard, but essentially it creates a problem wherein: why would anyone fulfill their obligations just because they're obligated when they could instead choose not to fulfill their obligations in the hope of getting a giant taxpayer handout? That's a huge problem. It's a waste of money, it's not fiscally responsible, and there's no guarantee that it will actually sort of result in additional cleanup. That's the thing.

You know, we saw the Premier stand up today and say: well, we're obligating these companies to do \$740 million in cleanup. Okay. Well, I mean, \$740 million sounds like a lot of money, doesn't it? Not compared to \$20 billion, it isn't. We're talking about kind of far, far more money, more than twice as much money, being used to incentivize this – “incentivize,” scare quotes – relative to what's being required. That's extremely problematic, and I think Albertans object. I think they object because it violates their basic sense of fairness. We all are expected to fulfill our contracts. We all are expected to uphold our obligations, especially those obligations we have voluntarily taken on, you know, without being paid to do so. Albertans don't like things that aren't fair, and this is not fair. So that is highly problematic to begin with.

I think the other problem with this is that it doesn't really pass the sniff test. The Premier lobbied for this program before she became the Premier. Suddenly it's getting pushed through with very little consultation. The head lobbyist for this, one who has, according to them and no one else, resigned from his position, now works in the Premier's office. That person is still listed, incidentally, as a director on the corporate registry, and here's the thing. It's not that hard to amend a corporate registry, and it doesn't take that long. You file the paperwork, and then it gets amended. We pulled a search on that corporate registry just recently, and there's his name in black and white, Kris Kinnear, still listed as a lobbyist there. That's wildly problematic in terms of actual conflicts of interest. You know, on things like this even the appearance of a conflict like that is highly problematic.

Albertans deserve to be able to know transparently, without going to a great deal of depth, that their government is acting in their interests, not in private interests. We should be able to know that without having to pull registry searches, so this is incredibly problematic. The refusal to address it publicly is incredibly problematic. Add to that the fact that the other head of this same organization – one head is now in the Premier's office, still listed as corporate director – runs an anti-NDP PAC. That is extremely problematic, right? It's extremely problematic to see these sort of interties between groups that are ostensibly unassociated groups, that are ostensibly, you know, not affiliated, running these advertisements, lobbying for a thing, a thing which the public hates, which is not in their interests, and which is being rammed through the government. Is it a smoking gun? Maybe not, but it sure doesn't



pass the smell test. I don't think anyone would look at that and be like: that set of facts seems fine to me. I think anyone who looks at it would be troubled, deeply troubled.

5:10

Now, if there were some sort of argument that this was in the public benefit – sorry. If there were some sort of credible argument that this was in the public benefit, perhaps that sort of weird interaction between people and lobbying and government wouldn't seem quite so problematic, but there isn't. There really, really isn't. The Premier talks about the worst of the wells that haven't been reclaimed, but the thing is that to get a royalty credit, there's still an owner. These aren't orphaned wells. These aren't wells that have moved to the Orphan Well Association, because those have no owner. The company has gone bankrupt; it's defunct. Honestly, without making allegations, it feels a lot like the government is really taking some big steps not to clarify that distinction, not to clarify the distinction between wells that don't have an owner and wells that do have an owner, because only wells that do have an owner, that have a company that is still solvent, that is probably generating an enormous amount of profit, who is legally obligated to clean them up, can generate royalty credits, because you have to be getting royalties. So I think that that is wildly problematic.

I think that the people of Alberta are strongly against it, and I think when you see politicians pushing ahead with something this wildly unpopular, it raises some questions. I think that when you add those questions to the ties between these lobbying firms and the Premier and other members of the government, that all becomes super problematic.

What I think is fantastic about this motion is, because we know that there are members of the government who have stood for the polluter-pay principle – we had an Energy minister who was replaced by this Premier, a UCP Energy minister, who publicly said: I don't support this program; it violates the polluter-pay principle. I would be very, very interested to see if we can see some members of the government standing up against this because I think it is the wrong thing to do and I think that their constituents are watching and will hold them accountable for this. Yeah. I think that this program is incredibly problematic. It is problematic ethically. It is problematic in terms of responsible governance, and I'm not the only one who thinks that. The RMA thinks that. Scotiabank thinks that. They called it a violation of basic capitalist principles.

I think the government can do better. I hope to see government members stand up against this because I think that there's a far better use for \$20 billion. It's almost the entire health care budget. I think there are a lot of things that a government should be able to do with this money that aren't this. I believe that the government – well, I believe that Albertans can do better, and they have the opportunity with a new government.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Motion Other than Government Motion 505.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, I'll speak happily, Mr. Speaker, to this Motion 505, which is a pretty shocking motion to most Albertans, who believe that historically we would expect companies to be cleaning up their own messes, and that's what one would have thought would be the so-called Alberta way. I've worked in the oil patch and spun my share of wrenches on service rigs and moved service rigs. If indeed there was a spill of some kind that was caused by the company I was working with, we cleaned it up, and we admitted responsibility and took efforts to make sure that the damage that we did was taken care of.

It wasn't any effort; even back then, in the '80s, it was a matter of respect for our small business that I worked with to admit fault and pay for it. That's a principle that's enshrined not only in the ethics of individuals and small businesses in the province but large corporations the size of – the Bank of Nova Scotia has seen fit to come forward, Mr. Speaker, to reinforce the principle that if you make a mess, you clean it up and you pay for it, that you undertake to claim responsibility for the obligations you have that you've willingly undertaken. It shocked the business community that the government would be seemingly willing to shirk this responsibility by somehow circumventing this principle and allowing, by way of a royalty rebate program, handing over \$20 billion of the Alberta treasury's money to companies so that they could be compensated for cleaning up the messes that they were already legally obligated to pay for.

Believe me, Mr. Speaker; when I mentioned this at the door – it may be shocking to you, but when you say the word "R-star," it gets people's dander up. They recognize what it is, and the issue was on the table and on the doorstep in this province. It is something that people are keenly aware of, and when they sense an injustice, when they sense that there's an irresponsibility undertaken by corporations with the complicity of the government, they are not happy about it. Albertans are very much aware of this issue. They're seized with it. We're bringing it forward in the House not because it's some minuscule issue that deserves to be brought to the public light; it is already under the spotlight in this province, and Albertans are keenly aware of it.

We are rightly proud of our oil and gas industry in this province, and one of the things that we expect of that industry as well as any others is that if there are environmental concerns or issues that are the responsibility of an oil company, they will undertake to clean up the messes that they've made. You know, the now Premier, who previous to her undertaking that role was the lobbyist who promoted this R-star scheme so that energy companies could be compensated by receiving a royalty holiday in exchange for cleaning up messes that they already were obligated to undertake – now, having assumed the Premier's role, it appears as though the current Energy minister is wildly in approval of it. It seems to be a team effort to double down on this scheme to have oil companies compensated from the provincial treasury to do what they're already obligated to do from their own pockets, and Albertans are not amused. They're actually shocked and they're angry about what this government is trying to do.

I think the only disbelief, Mr. Speaker, comes from the fact that many people at the doorstep just can't believe that the government is trying to pull this off. Like, what Albertan would have expected this to have taken place in 2023, where you have a Premier who had lobbied loud and strong for this type of a measure to satisfy the oil companies' interests, to relieve them of obligations to the tune of \$20 billion they already have – who would have believed that, indeed, if that lobbyist actually assumed the premiership would continue to double down on that and think it was a winning proposition for her government? It's a pretty interesting tale, and it's reminiscent of sort of Wild West days.

5:20

You know, when I worked in the oil patch for small businesses that benefited from the production of oil and gas in this province, many of which still continue to do so, there was a respect, a dignity amongst those, at least the small businesses, to ensure that they took their responsibility seriously, and they actually paid if indeed they screwed up, if there was a spill, if there was some damage done to land. That's why we have tribunals, to ensure that this happens. The

Surface Rights Board, for example, Mr. Speaker, looks at disputes between landowners and oil companies.

It's very, very disappointing, shocking, and certainly unacceptable that we have a government led by a Premier who lobbied on behalf of oil companies to receive up to \$20 billion in compensation for doing what they're already responsible to do by law. It's very disappointing that we now have a Premier and a government who seem intent on following through on this when, in fact, Albertans are gathering their voices loudly and clearly to say: "Uh-uh. This is not right. It offends our sense of justice. It's just plain offensive, and we're not going to stand for it."

I urge the government, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider what they're doing and endorse the policy, the principle of polluter pays. You know, this motion opposes the use of government revenue to incent the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally required to pay for that cleanup. It's astounding that indeed the government seems intent to move forward on this. In many respects I know that some pundits are feeling that the government is running towards a cliff by supporting and sticking with this policy of handing over up to \$20 billion to oil companies, yet the government seems intent.

I remember times when we were in government ourselves and the opposition was saying, like, you know: just take our advice on this one; it's going to hurt you. There were a couple of times when it probably would've been a good idea. This is a time, Mr. Speaker, when the shoe is on the other foot, and we're telling the government very plainly, "Back up on this, think it through again, and don't cause yourself the trouble that you're getting yourself into with the Alberta taxpayer," who is definitely smelling something rotten. They're not comfortable at all with what this government is trying to pull off here. It's almost as if in the light of day they think they can get away with something that indeed under the cloak of secrecy might have been more difficult and they might've been accused of hiding something. Here they're right in the open. They're asking Alberta taxpayers to come up with \$20 billion to compensate oil companies to do what they're already required to do, clean up their own mess. I can't understand why indeed the government is so intent on it.

I mean, if that's what they are intent on doing, they will suffer the penalty and the wrath of Albertans and Alberta taxpayers because indeed it's on the radar of the Alberta taxpayer and the public, in my riding and right across the province, whether you're in Fort McMurray, southern Alberta. Wherever you find oil patch exploration going on, you'll find people are concerned about this, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane and Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I'm a little bit surprised that the NDP want to continue down the path of taking a position against the energy sector heading into an election. You know, even when it comes to good environmental stewardship and the acceleration of well closure, the NDP refuse to lend support.

Before I get into those details, I'd like to talk about some of the great work going on in industry because it exemplifies responsible development. As of January 1 there were approximately 464,000 wells in Alberta, including 133,500 reclaimed to date, of which over 15,000 were reclaimed in the last year alone. Contributions for this cleanup came through direct industry initiatives; the Orphan Well Association, which is a levy paid by the oil and gas sector; and through closure efforts from the site rehabilitation program.

Alberta's energy sector are setting the pace when it comes to methane reductions, having achieved 44 per cent thus far, meaning

we will easily exceed the 45 per cent goal set out for 2025. At a flaring and methane reductions panel that I participated in at CERAWEEK in Houston, many were happy to see the tremendous success within Alberta and expressed displeasure at the lack of action elsewhere in the world.

Alberta oil sands producers are also showing leadership, having brought down emissions by over 35 per cent in the last 20 years, 22 per cent in the last decade. The Pathways Alliance, made up of the six largest oil sands players, have committed to reaching the goal of net zero, or net neutrality, by 2050 and are actively working to implement carbon capture technology into their operations.

Mr. Speaker, our producers are technological innovators and have the highest level of environmental metrics, a deep concern for civil and human rights, not to mention strong governance policies. This doesn't even take into consideration the human and social factors from the energy sector's contributions to local communities, Indigenous partnerships, and their outsized contribution to public services through royalties and tax dollars.

The implication from this motion brought forth by Alberta's NDP is that the industry is not living up to their obligations, and that is completely false. It's that ideology that keeps tripping up this opposition. Mr. Speaker, we all know that both the federal and the provincial NDP are one and the same. They are one party, which means that Jagmeet Singh is the leader, with provincial parties being subordinate. So let's take a look at some of their platform policies. From the NDP's website:

Putting a price on carbon has been an important tool in efforts to drive emissions reductions. We will continue with carbon pricing while . . . rolling back loopholes . . . [to give] to big polluters. But we also recognize that carbon pricing won't be enough . . . Further action is needed.

. . . We will support Canada's net-zero target by reviewing financial legislation . . . [to] ensure that strict rules are in place to prevent big companies from using . . . offsets.

And they go on and on. They say that they will put in place legislation to ban any future oil, gas and pipeline [incentives].

Mr. Speaker, the anti oil and gas position is a fundamental, ideological NDP belief, with no incentives of any kind to be allowed to fossil fuel producers ever. That is the real message behind their motion. Naturally, this causes strife and division within the NDP ranks because we live in Alberta. Adhering to an anti oil and gas platform, at least outwardly, is an election killer, so the NDP try to gaslight the regular citizen into thinking that they support but use incrementalism to destroy resource development. They do this in a number of ways such as increasing the cost of doing business until companies are no longer viable, and then they go bankrupt. As an example, the NDP will increase corporate taxes and personal taxes while they're at it; support the clean fuel standard, which is just another carbon tax; they'll increase levies; and they're talking about another hike in the minimum wage, all things designed to increase the cost of living and make life miserable for business.

Now, we all know, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP introduced Canada's first retail carbon tax, and the purpose was to increase the cost of living so high that one would have to stop using fossil fuels such as gasoline or natural gas for heating your home. In Alberta this is virtually impossible because of the cold climate and the vast distances we have to travel, so all this does is increase inflationary pressures on families and make companies less competitive. By design the NDP set out to damage the pocketbooks of Albertans with their carbon tax, which, by the way, is a tax that they are credited for introducing to Justin Trudeau. So they've got that going for them.

The NDP have a tax-and-spend mentality, and their fundamental, core belief against fossil fuels means they believe that resource companies should pay their fair share. What's really meant by this is to shut them down, so they increase the cost of doing business, which chases investment out of the province, thus driving people to the unemployment line. Mission accomplished for the NDP.

5:30

But, Mr. Speaker, they are placing themselves in a corner with these internal struggles inside of their party around energy. Let's look at this. Previously the NDP supported the \$235 million loan to the OWA. They also created C-star, which allows companies to write off their well cost against future royalties. Does that sound familiar? It should.

Last week the Member for Edmonton-North West introduced Bill 207, that calls for incentives to a variety of areas, including critical minerals, but this creates a problem. As many NDP supporters don't realize, critical mineral development will require expertise, expertise that we find in the oil and gas sector, and hence they will play a big part in future resource development.

How does the NDP handle this direct conflict to their founding principle against any resource development? Well, this again is where the incrementalism principle comes into play, Mr. Speaker. To satisfy the turmoil within, they introduce stuff like emissions caps, windfall taxes, and they support the federal Liberals on items like Bill C-69, the No More Resource Development Act.

I'd like to add that the Supreme Court started hearings on C-69, I think, actually, earlier today, Mr. Speaker. The NDP were very upset that Alberta courts supported our government's case against C-69 and its creator, close friend and ally to Alberta's NDP, Justin Trudeau.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP drone on with misinformation about a nonexistent program, one that would accelerate site closure, which is a good thing, but I can tell you that no such program exists, nor is it contained in the budget. Many programs get considered, and for a multitude of reasons they end up on the cutting-room floor. Processwise a program must go through consultation, vetting within the department. Then it has to go to committee, cabinet, caucus, and Treasury Board, and the program that this NDP is alluding to hasn't completed even a single stage of what I just mentioned. They are desperate, and it is "create a crisis" for the NDP.

Our resource sectors are the driving force behind Alberta's economy. They invest billions into our communities and are good stewards of the environment, and to imply otherwise is categorically false. Industry has mandatory spend limits on closure that increased 66 per cent this year, to \$700 million. But as I described earlier, they do so much more to preserve and conserve for future generations. Mr. Speaker, we should be thinking pragmatically and working with industry, not against them. After all, they are the technological innovators. They complete the R and D we use to meet environmental goals.

It's in everyone's best interest to have a healthy resource sector, and that requires balance. As we have seen with the pandemic and geopolitical events, ideological positions against the energy sector such as those held by the NDP are traps, traps that lead countries like Russia to weaponize their resources against us. Again, we require balance, balance between energy security, reliability, affordability, and sound environmental stewardship. That is what this UCP government provides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and add my comments on behalf of my constituents to Motion 505. I also commend and congratulate my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for bringing forward this motion in the House, because I think, kind of based on the feedback I get in my office, these are very concerning issues not only in my riding but also among Albertans.

It is a very general principle. You don't need to do a lot of education around this. If you make a mess, you clean it yourself. You break it; you fix it. More importantly, if you're running a professional organization, a big company, then it is expected that you better understand those principles. More than that, if they're running a multimillion-, multibillion-dollar corporation or multinational corporation that is earning billions and trillions of dollars and have so many professionals and talented and skilled people onboard, then they'd better understand the content of the agreement they have signed with the government, and in this case it seems everyone understands but this government.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, you know, I appreciate he stood up to provide comments to this motion in response to my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, but it was disturbing to see that he has nothing to back up his argument, basically no information. I don't know; we need to see probably how many times he used "Justin Trudeau" and "Jagmeet Singh" and whoever. This motion was all about what he's doing with public funds, Albertans' money, to hand over to multibillion-dollar companies to do a job they're already legally – legally – obligated to do. You're doing it at a time when Albertans are going through a tough time, and you're doing it at a time when the Alberta government told them that you cannot help them enough because you can't afford to do it.

You came up with this plan. Those companies: you know, they're still walking away with hundreds of millions of dollars, tax dollars that are due to the municipalities. Instead of helping those municipalities to get those tax dollars back so they can help the municipalities and communities grow and build the economy, the UCP government came up with this plan. They say that this is a wise enough decision, to come up with public funds at a time when they could be spent on people where they are lacking a lot of support in health care, in education, an affordability crisis. They came up with a plan to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is the only one with the floor.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was looking at this bill, you know, it reminded me of something that happened in the mid-90s in the B.C. government. The then NDP Premier Glen Clark came into the news by his government signing about an \$800 contract. It turned out that the individual who worked on that contract was Premier Glen Clark's neighbour. Somebody complained. He had a really good relationship as a neighbour with the Premier, and he was often seen helping and working and mingling with the Premier's household. The Premier immediately took responsibility, saving the reputation of himself and his party. He resigned even though after that he was cleared from all those processes from the Ethics Commissioner. From the legal point of view there was nothing done wrong. He had no role to play with that \$850 contract.

On the other side we see the conflict-of-interest issue, the ethics being broken by this party. If the UCP believes in ethics, anything like that, they would have a better answer today. I was expecting that the minister, when he rose to respond to my colleague, would have had a better argument than this.

5:40

The hon. minister probably is, you know, surprised that I'm talking about the ethics issue. So that we all know how those connections work in our current Premier's office and R-star, I would just like to, for the sake of the record – I don't know how much time I do have – go over the information.

A staff member in [the Premier's] office [broke] ethics rules due to his ongoing role in an organization lobbying for a massive royalty giveaway to a small number of oil and gas companies.

According to corporate search records, Kris Kinnear is registered as a corporate director of Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network . . . The organization developed the RStar program that proposes granting up to \$20 billion in royalty credits to incentive the cleanup of wells – something companies are already obligated to do.

Kinnear also works in [the Premier's] office as a Manager of Special Projects and is currently working on implementing RStar.

Section 23.2 of the Conflicts of Interest Act (Page 33-34) reads "A member of the Premier's and Ministers' staff breaches this Part if he or she takes part in a decision in the course of carrying out his or her office or powers knowing that the decision might further a private interest of the member, a person directly associated with the member or the member's minor or adult child."

"This is corruption,"

said my colleague the critic for democracy and ethics in his public statement.

"[The Premier] and her office are using their power to help themselves and enrich their [close] friends. This is [truly] unacceptable."

In the budget estimates, when the Opposition Leader asked, the Premier

claimed Kinnear resigned from [Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network].

Corporate records indicate that that is not true.

[The Premier] was also a registered lobbyist for RStar before becoming premier.

The other director listed for [the corporation] is Mackenzie Lee who also runs the Alberta First Initiative – a third party political advertiser that is largely funded by companies that would benefit from the program.

"It's clear that [the Premier] has every intention of moving ahead with this \$20 billion giveaway to her friends and donors."

**Mr. Rutherford:** Point of order.

**Mr. Deol:** "She lobbied . . ."

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted.

The hon. the government whip.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 23 (h), (i), and (j), I think, to impute a false motive to the Premier. To say that she has every intention of going ahead with this program, when the Minister of Energy has clearly spelled out that there is no program, and doing so to the benefit of friends and donors is making an allegation against another member, specifically talking about another member, and telling the public that there's a program that exists that, in fact, does not should be an apology and a withdrawal, please.

**The Speaker:** The deputy opposition whip.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly not a point of order. We've heard similar lines of debate in this Chamber, and they were found not to be a point of order, so I would love if the Member for Edmonton-Meadows can continue with his well-thought-out points.

**The Speaker:** I do concur that this is a matter of debate. It's what we do here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you. What I was saying, Mr. Premier – Mr. Speaker; sorry about that.

**An Hon. Member:** That's okay.

**Mr. Deol:** That's okay. The Premier belongs to the House and . . .

**The Speaker:** Motion Other than Government Motion 505. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been listening to debate, as you so eloquently put it as what we do here today. We've got Motion 505 on the floor from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'm just going to read it into the record here yet again for the folks at home so they understand what's taking place.

- (a) endorse the principle [that] polluter pays; and
- (b) oppose the use of government revenue to incentivize the cleanup of abandoned oil and gas infrastructure by companies that are legally responsible for that cleanup.

On the surface, Mr. Speaker, this seems to be pretty innocuous, pretty innocuous like having a coyote on the edge of your farmyard when they keep sniffing around the chickens, but they want to keep grabbing one at a time. It's the same type of thing. Firstly, the polluter does pay. That is a principle written everywhere. We have so many laws in place to do that for the environmental protection of the province. That's number one. The second one is: to oppose any use of government revenue to clean up abandoned wells. There was a comment made in here earlier today, and it was pretty wild. You know, there's an old adage out there that to catch a thief, you have to think like a thief. Well, to see what a plan is to shut down our energy sector, you have to think like a socialist. This mandate that they've been doing has been nonstop. They like to say in here, you know: the just transition plan. No? Well, let's talk about that after the election. We don't want to talk about literally the alliance that we signed with Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau. They hate to recognize that their party is one big party that's right across the country. These are the same things that are insidiously creeping here again.

The same folks that are standing up here, claiming that they don't want to use tax dollars, say: free money. Free money. They actually said that. The leader of the opposition said "free money" in here today, talking about other health programs. The free money is taxpayer dollars. For a program that doesn't exist, they're pulling some feathers out of wherever they pull things from to make up things in fairy tale and pixie dust land again to have this pontification about saving the planet, saving the environment – oh, yeah – and saving taxpayer dollars. They're making – I can't say certain unparliamentary language. I'm trying – very comfortable here – but calling an L-word something and trying to think of a different one right now is frustrating the heck out of me. Misleading, misstepped, misguided, or just the simple just transition language about our energy sector and what we're trying to do here. They don't want to

have a made-up program in concept, that they still keep reaching for – they don't want to use taxpayer dollars or incentivize dollars to be able to fix something.

The Orphan Well Association: that's what it does. It literally takes wells that couldn't be cleaned up, thrown into a pot, that is then managed by the government basically to clean these things up. [interjection] Oh, Mr. Speaker, I've just been called an idiot by the member opposite, but that's okay because he's been kicked out more times than not. That's okay. I've been called a heck of a lot worse by socialists. Every time I point these things out, this is the same guy that sits there and jumps up and down and says things against the Premier or Prime Minister Thatcher. He says a ton of things that got him kicked out more than once, but that's okay. He's really used to jumping up and down with a protest sign.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Okay. The hon. member will speak to the motion. Better things will happen.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I shouldn't be listening to him; you're absolutely right of what he's saying over there.

Alberta has a long-standing relationship between the oil and gas companies. This is a known fact. This happens to be one of our major sectors. The members opposite support organizations like Extinction Rebellion. In fact, one of them wanted it to be put in the schools, in the classrooms, and still does, still loves to have that. This was an organization recognized on a terrorist watch list over in the U.K., and this is the type of ideological thing that we should be teaching, which goes right along with this. This is just bonkers.

Again, we're talking about a program that they're trying to stop, that hasn't even started. Here's a really novel approach. In concept, when you incentivize a group – I don't know – like lowering taxes, we've seen tons and tons of investment come in. You have to make sure that this industry can clean up the assets. You have to make sure that they're solvent.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadows was talking about how we have to make sure that these companies pay their taxes. You absolutely do. And to do that, to generate that revenue, you have to make sure that they're viable. But you can't chop off your foot and then win a hundred-metre dash.

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Getson:** This is logic. I'm trying to give him some socialist logic. I don't speak freaky-deaky socialist. I'm trying to do it as much as I can so they can understand it, but their motion is still the same point. You can't use revenue dollars that you don't have to clean up something that doesn't need to be cleaned up. We want to clean it up, but we don't want to clean it up because we don't want to use taxpayer dollars to do it because that's what's safe.

5:50

They had four years to take care of this. We've got a bunch of wells that need to be cleaned up. We've got a large inventory of inactive and abandoned wells across the province because we've had lots of activity. The current way we've been doing it for years isn't quite working. The minister spoke about some program they're talking about that the opposition is jumping up and down about – that isn't in place – is going to be the death knell for all of us. What I would like to hear is: is the minister working on programs behind the scenes, working on items that would be novel – no different than how we worked on the economy – to clean up these wells, to make sure that we get these things cleaned up that are sitting out there? The government introduced the liability management framework to help decrease the number of inactive

well sites, to support and to speed up the targets for Albertans to nominate sites for cleanup. This is a good thing.

So, again, what's taking place on this file is similar to what was said earlier on crop insurance files. The opposition loves to go out, make up a news story, get their little tweets, their little twits, whatever the things are on social media that are out there that follow and do that, so then they can jump up and down and cause disinformation. That's what this motion is, where we want to make sure that we can . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), which allows the mover of the motion up to five minutes to close debate, I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to do just that . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** It'd be another 10 minutes for you if I got up.

**The Speaker:** I might remind all members of the Assembly that unparliamentary language on or off the record is still unparliamentary. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for what was probably the most merciful interruption of the entire day. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the opportunity to close debate on Motion 505.

You know, it was interesting to hear the Energy minister stand up and talk about the motion. It was interesting because he didn't say whether or not he's going to support the motion or whether he's against it. So I guess we'll have to see, when members are called to vote, exactly how the government members are going to vote, because in neither of the statements that I listened to did either speaker from the government side indicate whether or not they support the idea of polluter pay and oppose the idea of government using taxpayer dollars to clean up oil and gas wells or whether they'd vote in favour of the proposed \$20 billion giveaway that the Energy minister has been tasked to create.

Now, the other thing that was interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that for about a minute of the Energy minister's speech he did reference the R-star program, and in the same sentence he said that the program didn't exist, but if it did exist, it would work wonderfully to clean up all of these oil and gas wells that need to be cleaned up. Well, what is it? Does the program exist or not? We know that the program has been given as a responsibility to the Energy minister to develop. It's clearly written out in his mandate letter, published on the Alberta government website, for the entire public to see.

The minister himself has said that, in his opinion, we need to incentivize oil and gas companies to do the thing that they're already required to do. Like my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View said, this is like incentivizing speeders to slow down by paying them money to stop speeding. This is the creation of a moral hazard, and it beggars belief that the government thinks it would improve the condition of the regular Albertan by spending \$20 billion on oil and gas companies' environmental liabilities rather than the priorities of Albertans, as I've outlined before.

The government has refused to entertain any meaningful action on this. The government knows that the solution to the problem exists in just making sure that the industry pays for its bills, but it refuses at every turn to take the necessary steps to make the bad actors in the oil and gas industry pay their bills. They refuse to step in and require them to pay their municipal taxes. They refuse to step in and recover the money from the Surface Rights Board that's paid out to the oil and gas industry. The minister claims that the oil and gas industry is doing an excellent job of reducing methane reductions, and that's true, but the taxpayer has been on the hook for over \$30 million in that effort.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. The taxpayers of Alberta are tired of paying bills that properly should be paid by the oil and gas industry, and I think it's rich that the Energy minister will portray this as socialists refusing to provide any incentive to the oil and gas industry. I think the difference here between our party and his party is that we want to create incentives so that companies do the things that they normally wouldn't do here in Alberta. That's the idea behind the PDP program that we implemented. That's the idea behind a bunch of the tax credits that we implemented. That was designed to encourage industry to carry out activities here in Alberta that they wouldn't normally do.

That's not the case with the R-star program. This \$20 billion that the Energy minister is intent on giving away is actually going to disincentivize the cleanup of oil and gas liabilities, because, as my friend from Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, who's going to spend their own money to clean up their own oil and gas liabilities when they can wait for a government handout? We saw that with the site rehabilitation program. Once the government announced the site rehabilitation program, all that activity stopped until everybody knew who was going to get the money. That's exactly what's going to happen.

I encourage all members to stand up for their constituents and vote for this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Gray	Schmidt
Deol	Irwin	

Against the motion:

Fir	Lovely	Schow
Getson	Nally	Singh
Glubish	Neudorf	Smith, Mark
Guthrie	Nicolaides	Toor
Hunter	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Issik	Pon	van Dijken
Jean	Rosin	Yao
Loewen	Rutherford	Yaseen
Long		

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 25
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:13 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, March 20, 2023

Day 21

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
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Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
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Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
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Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 20, 2023

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening, hon. members. Please be seated.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent of the House for members to be able to speak from seats other than their usual seat for the period of Committee of Supply.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Okay. Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. Before we commence consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to briefly review the standing orders governing the speaking rotation as provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), which is as follows.

- (a) The Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 24, approved by the Assembly on March 16, 2023, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2022-23 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$2.7 billion in voted expense funding, \$500,000 in voted capital investment, and \$292 million in financial transactions.

The estimates include additional funding to the following offices and government departments: Advanced Education; Affordability and Utilities; Agriculture and Irrigation; Children's Services; Culture; Education; Energy; Environment and Protected Areas; Executive Council; Health; Indigenous Relations; Infrastructure; Justice; Mental Health and Addiction; Public Safety and Emergency Services; Seniors, Community and Social Services; Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction; Technology and Innovation; and Treasury Board and Finance.

Among various other programs, services, and obligations, the funding in Bill 12 will help provide for additional investment in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. It will provide for the cost of selling oil and the site rehabilitation program. It will account for physician payments in the new Alberta Medical Association agreement and rebates and grants under the affordability action plan along with advertising to inform Albertans about the government's affordability relief measures. The supplementary estimates report the additional funding needed for the government's fiscal plan in 2022-23.

While we do see additional spending in this bill, it's important to highlight the work this government has done to get Alberta's finances back in order since we formed government. Madam Chair, in 2019 the MacKinnon panel found that Alberta spent significantly more than Canada's three largest provinces on a per capita basis but without achieving better outcomes. Since then this government has worked diligently and responsibly to bring spending in line with comparator provinces, and Budget 2023 shows that Alberta is at the range of those provinces on a per capita basis. We are no longer an expensive outlier. That's good news for our province and for the sustainable delivery of the programs and services Albertans rely on.

Furthermore, Budget 2023 keeps our net debt-to-GDP ratio well below our targeted maximum of 30 per cent. In fact, at the end of '22-23 we're at 10.2 per cent. Simply put, our commitment to our fiscal anchors is paying off and paving the way for a more prosperous future.

Going forward, new fiscal rules will make sure that governments continue to make responsible spending decisions. The new fiscal framework would require all future Alberta governments to balance their annual budgets, with certain exceptions, and use any surpluses to prioritize debt repayment. The framework would provide the government appropriate room to invest in areas and services important to Albertans while adding more rigour around expense increases. Setting limits would challenge the government to focus on improving programs and services while continuing to use hard-earned tax dollars wisely.

Looking at the numbers in front of us, we see that same sentiment reflected today. The largest supplementary amount in the estimates belongs to Treasury Board and Finance, where we see \$753 million provided for investment in the heritage savings trust fund. We've also brought forth, in separate legislation, changes that will enable the fund to retain 100 per cent of its annual net earnings. Right now any net income other than the amount needed for inflation-proofing is transferred to the general revenue fund. This change would result in significant annual growth in the heritage fund and mark another step, an important step, in securing Alberta's future. A compelling data point that's worth noting again, Madam Chair: if we had kept all of the previous earnings in the fund from day one without adding any additional deposits other than the ones that were made, instead of an \$18 billion fund at the end of '22-23 we would have a fund approaching \$300 billion.

The next-largest expense in the estimates comes from the Department of Energy. An amount of \$636 million is requested, which includes \$338 million for the cost of selling oil, primarily due to high oil prices, and \$279 million for the site rehabilitation

program as a result of revised federal program timelines. It also includes \$10.8 million for the Alberta petrochemical incentive program for an additional project approval.

An amount of \$553 million is requested for the Department of Health, including \$332 million for our physician payments, \$184 million for the new Alberta Medical Association agreement, and \$37 million for payments to allied health providers.

On the matter of health, it must be noted that Budget 2023 will provide funding beyond that which we see in this bill to continue to build a stronger health care system for Albertans. In fact, we're once again setting a record for health spending in this province this year by committing an additional \$965 million in operating expense in '23-24 for the Ministry of Health. This funding will ensure the government can take the urgent action needed to improve ambulance response times, decrease emergency room wait times, reduce wait times for surgeries, and attract more front-line health care workers to deliver the care patients expect and deserve.

A total of \$355 million is requested under Affordability and Utilities. This includes \$349 million for utility rebate and grant programs primarily related to electricity rebates as part of the affordability action plan. The unique and challenging circumstances of the last year called on the government to act fast to make life more affordable for Albertans. Budget '23 builds on our efforts in this area with \$2.3 billion in affordability measures in '23-24, \$1.5 billion in '24-25, and another \$1.8 billion in '25-26. Madam Chair, we're keeping more money in the pockets of Albertans, and we're continuing to provide a helping hand to those in need.

7:40

Other funding is requested across departments to provide for various services and initiatives that enhance Albertans' well-being and support opportunities for them to learn, develop skills, and enter well-paying careers, because, Madam Chair, we want every Albertan to participate in the Alberta advantage. This includes \$32 million for public security, \$31 million for court and justice services, \$28 million for homelessness and outreach support services, \$20 million for learning support funding, \$4 million for advertising to raise awareness of available mental health and addiction resources, and \$1.5 million for rural economic development, among the other program services and initiatives detailed before us today.

Overall, the amounts in these supplementary estimates are needed to help the government address Albertans' current priorities. Madam Chair, with that, my colleagues and I will now be pleased to answer questions from the members of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we'll now ask the Official Opposition to start off the questions. Would you like to combine your first 60 minutes?

**Mr. Eggen:** No.

**The Chair:** No? You just want the first 10? It's all yours. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all of the ministers and assistants that are here this evening. It's nice to see some of your familiar faces and gainfully employed still. That's great.

I'd just like to make some general comments about supplementary supply. What's clear from this request for supplementary supply is that this UCP government is campaigning on the public dime: a whopping \$6.6 million for advertising alone to promote the

government. As we heard in the Budget 2023 estimates, another \$3.5 million is on the way to keep on promoting the government. This, in our view and in the view of many Albertans, is an abuse of public dollars.

Over \$10 million of public money is being spent to promote the new Premier's government right before the election. That's \$10 million that's not even being spent to hire family doctors, for example, or \$10 million that could be spent on teachers in the classroom. Most importantly, that's \$10 million that could be spent to further the electoral interests of the UCP government. That's \$10 million of pre-election, taxpayer-funded political advertising. It's four times more than what a party can spend in a campaign. Absolutely outrageous. The House simply, on this side, doesn't stand for it.

Madam Chair, certainly, supply is a matter of course. I know as government, as minister that it's necessary to do so, but is it necessary to spend four times the amount that it is even legally able for any political party to spend during an electoral period in a pre-election spend out of the supplementary supply? There seem to be no boundaries around this; there seems to be no regulation. Certainly, the Finance minister said some words about: oh, no; well, we wouldn't do that. But there's absolutely nothing legally that would compel the government to do anything but what this was originally intended to do, which is to create a fund to promote the government's interests before an electoral period.

You know, Albertans are smart. From the barrage of telephone calls, of which I've gotten many from several of you – I didn't answer – and the pamphlets that are in everybody's mailbox all of the time, a lot of people just know that the government is campaigning on your money, on the money that comes out of taxpayer money, campaigning on that same dime. People just don't like it; it leaves a bad taste in their mouth. Quite frankly, it goes against the spirit of the difference between a budget and campaigning. It's as simple as that.

Those, Madam Chair, are my general comments around supplementary supply. I think that my colleagues will add some supplement to that, supplement to the supplementary supply comments. The bottom line is this – right? – that people need to know that this government has cut themselves a cheque that is four times greater than what they're allowed to spend during an electoral period, in the pre-electoral period, in supplementary supply. And, quite frankly, this is unacceptable.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to respond to a few of the assertions that the member opposite made here over the last few minutes. Firstly, the assertion that we are simply using these funds for campaigning is completely ridiculous. The biggest expenditure is to the heritage savings trust fund, a fund that is owned by all Albertans, \$753 million to make \$2 billion transfer in this year. Secondly, the second-largest expenditure is made for Health. I don't call that campaigning; I call that delivering first-world health care. The Health minister is ensuring that EMS wait times are shortened, that times in emergency room departments are shortened, that our surgical wait times are shortened, and this funding will ensure that he can accomplish those goals.

Madam Chair, I don't know if anyone in this House will argue that we're facing a time of inflation. Three hundred and fifty-five million dollars are going to electricity rebates, electricity rebates that are covering virtually every household in this province, and that is critically important during this time of inflation. And \$338 million are going to off-set the cost of selling oil. We are in a time



of higher energy prices. We're all thankful for that in this House, but with that come some additional costs related to selling the oil that we receive as a royalty in kind.

Madam Chair, this supplementary supply, this additional appropriations bill was put in place to ensure that we could fund the priorities of Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the supplementary supply.

**The Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. Would you like to share the 10-minute back and forth or just take the 10 minutes?

**Mr. Sabir:** No.

**The Chair:** Take the 10 minutes? Go ahead.

**Mr. Sabir:** While we were in estimates, I really wanted to share time with the Minister of Justice, and I was not afforded that opportunity. The minister of public safety also initially didn't share, but midway through the minister graciously agreed to share the time, so at least that was good.

We are talking about budget supplementary supply, one of the main instruments of government's fiscal policy, and that certainly needs to be focused on Albertans' needs, issues facing them, and how we spend the government's money. The minister talked about responsible spending and also talked about that if previous Conservative governments had spent responsibly, there would be \$300 billion in the heritage savings trust fund. However, if these figures – when we look at supplementary supply, certainly if you're spending in health, if you're spending in education, that's a good use of public money. Certainly, our health care system is in crisis. Our education system is in crisis. We are facing inflation. In fact, we are facing a fairly significant cost-of-living crisis. What's clear from this request for supplementary estimates is that the government is giving itself a whopping \$6.6 million for advertising alone to promote not just the government budget but to campaign for the next election.

7:50

Madam Chair, I heard a couple of ads on a local radio station in my area, and the government has the audacity to say in that ad: we listened to you; we are capping insurance. There are two or three problems with that, and government money is going on it. Northeast Calgary was struck by the fourth-largest natural disaster in Canadian history – fourth-largest natural disaster – and not one dollar came from this government to help northeast Calgary. Not just one dollar. The then Premier was saying – I guess he visited far too late, but I will leave that. Here we are seeing almost \$6.6 million to promote, I guess, government and another \$3.5 million, again, to promote government.

But back to that ad. Not only did we not get anything during that natural disaster; they talk about capping insurance for three years and seven months, three and a half years, but we heard from this government that capping destroyed the insurance industry. They were leaving. They were taking all the products away, and soon we will be out of the product. There will be no insurance in Alberta, so we need to remove the cap and hand the pen to insurance companies so they can raise it to whatever they think is reasonable. Now they are running a government ad, and after that, when they said that they will finally cap it, they have given huge increases to two different companies, one of them being Aviva, who holds a

significant market share in Alberta. That's the kind of thing this \$10 million is going for.

This \$10 million can help us with so many things. While the minister of affordability is here, I can tell you that we cannot afford that kind of spending to promote government spending during an election year. People are struggling to put food on the table. People are struggling to pay for insurance. People are struggling to pay for utilities. And here the same people are asked to chip in \$10 million so the government can campaign on the public dime. This is an abuse of taxpayer money. If they think their spending is that great, they wouldn't need \$10 million to tell Albertans: "Look, finally, we are spending on health care after cutting it for three and a half years. Look, we didn't build a single school in northeast Calgary, but now we have \$10 million to promote something that we are spending on education. Look, we removed the cap from insurance and let it go up by, in some cases, 300 per cent, and now we are spending \$10 million to tell you that we have a temporary cap on it."

That's not a responsible use of this money. Ten million dollars can help us with so many things. It can at least put 100-plus educational assistants, out of those 25,000 that the minister fired, back in our classrooms. It can help us with some of the PUF funding that was cut by this Education minister. That's a lot of money that can go to help people with disabilities. It can help us hire additional health care staff. And talk about responsible spending: 70 days before an election the government came before this House asking us to approve \$10 million so they can run a campaign. That is not acceptable, and I don't think there is a reasonable explanation that any of the members can provide even with the help of the public service. There is no explanation for that kind of spending, campaigning on the public dime. Certainly, that's not what Albertans expect from us. That's not what's acceptable to our constituents. That's not acceptable use of taxpayer dollars, and I don't think that there is any explanation for that.

With that, I will cede my time to my colleagues.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of affordability.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you. The member opposite touched on a number of topics, and there are experts in the room, so I'll just give high-level comments on some of them. In terms of schools I'm pleased to report that I was in my constituency of Calgary-South East on Thursday, Friday, and earlier today for three separate public school openings, two elementaries and a middle school. Three school openings, three public schools in a Calgary constituency in three days. Three. I mean, I read on Twitter that no Calgary schools were being built, yet I'm cutting cake, celebrating school – I don't know what's going on, but rest assured there are schools popping up in Calgary-South East. Families are delighted. Number one capital ask by my constituents, and they've got it. It gets better because what my constituents also asked for was playground funding to be included in elementary schools. Our Education minister here got it done: \$250,000 so elementary schools will have playgrounds when they're built. It's just wonderful.

On insurance, yeah, the member rightly pointed out that we have prevented further rate increases until January of next year. That was in response to Albertans' rightful concern about the potential price increases on yet another category that they need to spend money on. But the core of the question was the \$6.6 million, which includes \$5 million in advertising related to the affordability measures, and this I do want to talk about in more detail.

Our advertising campaign, of course, plays a key role in raising the awareness of our relief measures under the affordability action plan. Advertising is also critical to ensure that eligible families and seniors understand the steps that they'll need to take to apply for

and receive the affordability payments. So an awareness campaign has been under way to ensure that all Albertans are aware so they can take advantage of the relief measures that are available to them.

Albertans have been hearing about the affordability programs on the radio. I'm pleased to hear that the members opposite remember them. It means it's working. It means it's driving more people, more Albertans, to the affordability supports that they need. They're seeing our ads on TV and online, and the member opposite highlighted the wonderful flyer that's been sharing information on affordability to every Alberta household across the province. Again, it's tremendous. I'm going to talk about the recognition numbers because they're very impressive, but the member opposite is a testament that it is working.

It's also important that we advertise this because we want Albertans to avoid scams and safely access these supports. Without an advertising campaign Albertans most in need may miss the opportunity to access some of these benefits, especially with all the misinformation floating out there. Again, one day you hear no schools are opening, and the next I'm in my constituency opening three schools over three days, so I think it is important that we do advertise to break through the noise and to get truth to Albertans from time to time.

That campaign, which is in this \$6.6 million, runs from January 11 to April 30. It has a budget of \$5 million, and the campaign has been remarkably effective, showing excellent performance metrics to date. Just to give you some stats: our digital ads have generated about a million clicks, five times the benchmark rate for comparable ads. Our online videos have a high view rate of over 90 per cent. The benchmark: 75 per cent. Our Facebook ads have seven times the average click rate. Seven times. Our ads on YouTube, they've got a view rate of over 92 per cent. The benchmark is 50 to 55 per cent. On this side of the House, as with economy and jobs and energy, we like to excel. Our metrics on this advertising campaign are off the charts.

**8:00**

I'm glad, because there is an affordability crisis, there are inflationary pressures, and Albertans need the support. I'll remind you that we've provided affordability supports to virtually all seniors 65 and up in this province, \$600 over six months to help off-set significant inflationary pressures. We've also provided those affordability supports to Albertans on our core support programs. That would, of course, include AISH and people receiving services under PDD, income support recipients, and also everybody who's on the Alberta seniors' benefit. Families, because of the number of dependants, groceries, everything is hitting them very hard. We also made sure that the vast majority of families with dependent children would get \$100 per month per child for the next six months. I can tell you that back in my constituency they need it. I've been hearing every day about how much of an impact that's made in the lives of seniors and children, for my colleagues, especially the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services, talking about how much it's helped our seniors and Albertans on core support programs. It couldn't come at a better time.

It's also a reminder that we do need to share this news because Albertans don't just need the supports; they need some hope and optimism in what is a very challenging time. Sometimes they hear that there isn't anything available for them, and I think that's unfortunate because there's no need to fearmonger in a crisis. There's no need to spread misinformation. It doesn't help anyone.

Again, I just want to go over our affordability program. We also touched on the electricity rebates. That's a billion dollars of support, providing 2 million homes, small businesses, and farms relief on high electricity prices for 10 months, an average of \$50

directly off their bill at a time of extreme, you know, rates in electricity and volatility and a pretty cold winter.

The member also touched on disasters, the most recent disaster being, of course, them in government. On May 29 I'm looking forward to a brighter future for Albertans. With that, I'll cede my time.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Would you like to combine your 10 minutes?

**Mr. Feehan:** No.

**The Chair:** It's all you. Go ahead.

**Mr. Feehan:** No point. No good answers.

I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Chair, to speak to this supplementary supply because it gives me a chance to, you know, point out the cynical nature of the government that has spent years cutting. Literally we just listened to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talk about all the opportunities they took earlier in their time here in the House to cut, cut, cut. Then suddenly they want to be rewarded for giving back small, little pieces here.

You know, when somebody comes and takes things away from you and then says, "Well, we'll give you a little bit back of what used to be yours anyways," it's not generosity; it's cynicism. I find it very discouraging to see this government has suddenly seen the light at the end of their term. Now here we see them actually using taxpayer dollars to pretend that they didn't take all this away from the citizens of this province and that somehow they're being kind and generous in return.

But it's not what's really happening. You know, the minister stood up and said that we were spending more on government services than other provinces, but he never stops to say why that might have been, that we were spending more. Perhaps if he'd done some analysis on this, he'd realize that we really are an oil-based economy, which means that wages in this province are significantly higher than in most places in the country because oil and gas tends to pay higher wages.

When that happens, that also then pushes up the wage demands across the board. It's not that we were spending more. We happened to be a fortunate province that could give people more, and we were recognizing that the nurses who went and spent four years at university to get a degree should at least be paid as much as somebody who just got out of grade 12 and was driving a truck in an oil field. That's why wages were high. When he says, "We brought that down," what he's really saying is, "We found a way to suppress the wages of Albertans." That's what he's saying. "We found a way to take money away from you without looking like we're taking money away from you," which is essentially the consequence of his behaviour.

They only tell you part of the truth, and the same is true about what's happening with this budget. They're telling you, "Oh, we put in all these kinds of things." The minister just stood up and talked about opening schools in his riding, but what he doesn't tell you is how many schools he didn't do for three years and 10 months. All of a sudden they're opening schools, and they're doing other things in every ministry. They can all talk about the things that they're doing now, but they started by cutting and cutting and cutting. They cut health care, they cut education, they cut all of our public services, and now suddenly they want a pat on the back because they're giving just small, little increments back, and that's really not acceptable.

Not only that; they're using your dollars as a citizen to try to buy your vote by putting out advertisements just before an election using government funds, using about \$6.6 million to convince you

of only partial truths. Those partial truths are that we're giving you back a small, little segment of that which we took away from you for three years and 10 months, and now at the last minute we're going to slide a little back to you and hope that you forget that the whole intention of this government, their *raison d'être*, has been to take money away from the citizens of this province, just like they did when they deindexed AISH, just like they did when they deindexed our income taxes, just like they did when they took the cap off utility rates, just like they did when they took the cap off insurance rates, and all the other things they did to increase costs, so you can't even go for a walk in Kananaskis now without paying them.

That's what they did for their whole term, take money away from the citizens, make life more expensive. And then, suddenly – oh, my goodness – they see the light, they've been found, and now here they are, bragging to the citizens that: after having attacked you for almost our whole term, we're going to turn that around, and we're going to use your money to convince you that that's what we've done. You know, if you want to create cynicism in the populace, you have found the perfect formula for doing that. You do that very well. You create cynics all the time, and I want to congratulate you; I've never seen a government that did a better job at that.

You know, I find it very discouraging that here we are, yet again, seeing the government actually use the resources of the province of Alberta against the people of Alberta by creating an advertising campaign that is really about them trying to convince the population to ignore 90 per cent of their time in government and pretend that somehow they are concerned about you after increasing your rates, taking your drug coverage away, after causing everything to be more expensive, after suppressing wages.

Suddenly, now: "We really care about you," they say. Well, I can tell you that, you know, if that plays in the public, that's a very sad commentary on what they believe about Albertans. It's a sad thing to stand up and to act in this kind of way and expect to be rewarded for it, expect somehow to pull out of this a victory that is really about your own self-interest as a government and not about the well-being of the citizens of this province. It's very discouraging to see a government do this kind of thing and do it repeatedly, over and over again.

8:10

If we have a problem with affordability in this government, it is on the hands of this government that this has happened. The fact that they are trying to rectify that just tells us that even they recognize what they did was wrong, that the problems that they created with their policy are shameful. Apparently they do have a bit of shame. They know they can't go out and face the electorate at this particular time without somehow changing what they actually did, without actually reversing their policies because their policies were, really, repugnant policies.

I'd really like this government to stop using government funds, to stop using \$6.6 million of the money of the citizens of this province, who could use that money for other kinds of things. This follows in line with lots of other ways in which they've used government monies for their own individual purposes. I mean, here we are almost four years later, and none of us still know what the war room does. None of us have ever seen anything positive or useful come out of that. Not only that; they set it up so that we couldn't even ask questions about it. We couldn't be here in the House to say, "What has this war room done?" because whatever it is they have done is something that this government knows they will be ashamed to tell the public. Of course, they should be ashamed. It's a horrible use of public money to shuffle it off quietly to their friends and not tell the public where it's going and not even

allow the people of this province to ask the government where that's going. Why would you act in any kind of behaviour that you had to keep hidden? That's a deceitful kind of approach to governance.

I really find it unacceptable that this government has chosen to go in that direction, that they've chosen to hide the truth from the citizens of this province because they see personal gain in the direction that they're going here and hoping that people just won't be informed enough about this to know that their own monies are being used against them and that the troubles that they're experiencing now with affordability have often been exacerbated by this particular government.

I'm coming close to the end of my time in this House, and I leave this House very discouraged that government has gotten to this place, that we see a government that is not seriously concerned about the well-being of people in this province and is only concerned about maintaining their own position and their own status. You know, for three and a half years I appeared in estimates and asked the Minister of Indigenous Relations about the cutbacks . . .

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have to respond to a number of the, again, assertions the member opposite has made not only around the supplementary estimates but fiscal management, because I have to say that back in 2019 we inherited a fiscal train wreck. We've used that phrase here before in the last few years, but it was true. We were spending \$10 billion more according to Dr. Janice MacKinnon, a previous NDP Finance minister in the great province of Saskatchewan. According to Dr. Janice MacKinnon and her committee we were spending \$10 billion more and not getting better results. We embarked on a three-, really, four-year effort to thoughtfully and carefully, surgically, compassionately bring our spending in line, because you know what's not compassionate? When governments have no fiscal responsibility whatsoever. That means they're spending funds today at the expense of the next generation, and that's unacceptable to Albertans. We knew that. We were elected on that, to bring fiscal responsibility back to this province, and that's what we've done.

I have to say that the member opposite made the assertion that we had cut health care and education. Nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Chair. We made a commitment in 2019 to all Albertans that while we would bring this province back to fiscal responsibility, we would not cut health care and we would not cut education. Promise made, promise kept. We increased health care's budget every year. Every year. This year: nearly \$1 billion. We have maintained health care's funding. We have an Education minister who delivered in an exemplary way. She brought forward a new funding formula that put more resources in the classroom. It resulted in more efficiency in our education system, and now, last year, we increased the Education budget by over 2 per cent. This year it's an increase of over 5 per cent.

Madam Chair, we heard the assertion from the other side of the aisle that now, this year, in an election year, we can increase spending. Well, you know why we can do this? It's because we brought fiscal responsibility to the province. We've done the heavy lifting together, and now we can increase funding to programs, to ministries in keeping with population growth and inflation. Why? Because we brought this province to sustainable spending.

You know, Madam Chair, we hear the members opposite talk about the price of oil. Tell me what the price of oil has to do with bringing expenditures in line. It does not impact, short of a few dollars for the Minister of Energy to cover the cost of selling oil. What we're doing is ensuring our spending is sustainable, because

Alberta can no longer afford to be an outlier. That was the principle that we used. That principle governed our fiscal decisions for three years, and now we as Albertans broadly can benefit from that heavy lifting, and we can ensure that we're building additional schools, twice the number of schools that the NDP built or upgraded during their term. Why? Because we brought this province to fiscal responsibility.

Madam Chair, I have to point out one other piece, and it's important. Again, certainly Albertans in Grande Prairie-Wapiti but Albertans broadly wherever I travel across this great province are concerned about fiscal responsibility because they know this, that in order to ensure that we have sustainable programming into the future, a world-class health care system for our children and our grandchildren, a world-class education system for the next generation, it means that we have to have sustainable spending in our programming. It's vitally important.

I asked our officials in the Department of Treasury Board and Finance about if we had continued on the spending trajectory of the members opposite when they were in government, considering population growth and inflation. The response was this: we would be spending \$6.5 billion more per year, with a \$4 billion deficit instead of a 2 and a half billion dollar surplus. And here's the thing, Madam Chair, the members opposite were spending all that money and not getting any better results.

I have to commend my colleagues on this side of the aisle for reforming program delivery. That's what they've been doing to ensure that we're respecting taxpayer dollars, to ensure that the next generation can have a world-class health care system, that the next generation can have a world-class education system.

Madam Chair, I'm going to look forward to my colleagues rising – the ministers of Health, Energy, Education, Justice – and talking about what they're doing in their ministries as it relates to this supplementary appropriations bill, because we're delivering on behalf of Albertans to ensure that our spending is sustainable.

Madam Chair, we heard the assertion that somehow we have dealt unfairly with our union partners, and that is simply not the case. We have a principle on this side of the House that we cannot afford to be a spending outlier. We worked hard, we worked co-operatively, constructively with our union partners, and we got to a collective bargaining agreement with all of our major union tables. We did that without one day of work stoppage, without one strike. We did that with union members, in most cases, ratifying those agreements with the vast majority of members. While our RN remuneration is broadly in line with other provinces, Alberta still pays the highest. That's where we should be because we're working to attract our health care professionals into this province.

8:20

Madam Chair, I have to also say that, you know, part of the equation here is not only ensuring that we're delivering responsible fiscal management on the bottom half of that income statement, the expenditure side; the other half relates to positioning the province for competitiveness, for investment attraction, for economic growth, diversification, which leads to expanded fiscal capacity and increased government revenues. That's happening in this province today.

Alberta is leading the nation in real GDP economic growth. Our economy is diversifying at rates I've not seen in my lifetime. All of that is leading to a more stable revenue structure for Albertans. All of that is leading to increased revenues, Madam Chair. All of that is ensuring the next generation has a future in this province.

Madam Chair, there were, again, some comments around insurance in this province. I will absolutely concede that insurance premiums are high across the nation, across the western world, but

this government is taking action. The members across the way had one move and one move only, a rate cap. That constitutes all of the innovative, creative . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Order, hon. members.

**Mr. Toews:** . . . thinking that is on the other side of the House, a rate cap.

Madam Chair, a rate cap of any kind, for any length of time, results in a lack of product offerings. [interjections]

**The Chair:** Order.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Chair, we have temporarily requested the rate board to pause increases in insurance premium requests by insurers so that we can work with the industry to find additional solutions, and we're doing that, like we did in Bill 41. We dealt with some of the systemic issues that were adding costs to our automobile insurance system. We clarified the definition of a minor injury. We worked on additional measures that resulted in more care for injured Albertans. All of this has resulted in lower premiums than what they would have otherwise been.

In fact, in the last two years, since Bill 41 was implemented, automobile insurance rates have gone up, on average, 1.4 per cent per year. That's not bad, considering we've been in a time of high inflation, Madam Chair. But we're not done yet. We continue to work with the industry on finding additional solutions.

Madam Chair, our tenure in government around fiscal management is about sustainability. It's about putting this province on a trajectory where we're not robbing from the next generation, and mission accomplished with Budget '23.

**The Chair:** Just a reminder to all members of this House, particularly Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and Edmonton-North West, that there are ample amounts of speaking time for all members to have their opportunity at the floor, just as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is rising to do right now for his 10-minute block.

Would you like to share your time or take it all?

**Mr. Bilous:** No. I'm going to follow in the footsteps of the majority of the ministers on the other side, and I'll take block time.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, Madam Chair, as was clearly just evidenced by my colleague on the opposite side, one can say whatever they want in this House regardless of how close to the truth or far from it it may be. Now, I'll talk about the fact that the whopper in the room is that this UCP government, under my respectable colleague on the other side, introduced the largest deficit budget in their first year, approximately \$12 billion, larger than any NDP deficit budget.

When the minister talks about fiscal responsibility, I'd like to remind my hon. colleague of their first budget. What we're talking about here – I will clarify. [interjections] I will welcome all of the heckles from the other side. The balanced budget was reliant on the global price of oil, which was over \$100 per barrel. A hundred dollars per barrel. Well, between 2015 and 2019 the global price of oil dropped below \$27 per barrel, Madam Chair. My friends on the opposite side can spin as much as they want. The reality is that the reason the government has a balanced budget is because of the global price of oil and the war in Ukraine. It has nothing to do with the management of Alberta's finances.

Now, what's interesting, Madam Chair, is that for years under this government they followed suit from many previous governments,

which was to slash and burn for the first three years, and in the fourth year you throw some money back at a few ministries and claim: “Look how good we are. We’ll just do this. We’ll just pat ourselves on the back because we’ve restored a fraction of the dollars that we’ve cut.” [interjections] You know, I’d appreciate it if the members opposite would allow me the opportunity to speak.

The other irony, Madam Chair, that I hope all conservatives, not only in Alberta but across this country, pay attention to is that this is the largest government that Alberta has seen, with almost 30 cabinet ministers and about 35, in total, parliamentary secretaries. For a government that claims to be in favour of small government, the irony is that this is the largest government that the province has ever seen. [interjections] I appreciate that one of the ministers is chirping. It’s okay, sir. Soon enough you’ll be out of a job.

The point is that for a government that claims to be in favour of small government, they’ve done the complete opposite, because in 2015 there were the fewest cabinet ministers and the smallest government that Alberta has seen, under the NDP. [interjections] Chirp away, my friends. Chirp away.

This budget – and I appreciate that the hon. Finance minister is getting up to respond. Madam Chair, I will say, through you, to the Finance minister that I do respect him, and I do respect the work that he’s done. What I will say is that \$6.6 million has been allocated to advertising. I want to remind Albertans that that’s in addition to, in Budget 2023, so outside of sup supply, another \$3.5 million. So now we’re at \$10 million for advertising. The election laws in this province limit provincial political parties to a \$2 million budget during a 28-day campaign. This government has just given themselves five times that amount to advertise in the next 40 days.

If the shoe was on the other foot, the members on this side of the House would be screaming “hypocrisy.” Screaming. How do I know, Madam Chair? I’ve been in this House longer than any member who’s currently sitting in this House, the third-longest sitting member. I appreciate when members use the argument . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Peace River on a point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Williams:** It’s concerning members opposite highlighting who is and isn’t in the Chamber. As the member knows, it’s inappropriate to be drawing attention to that, and we ask that he withdraw the comment and apologize.

**The Chair:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I didn’t hear the standing order that he raised the point of order under, but what the member said was just a matter of fact, that he’s the longest standing member in this Legislature. If there is anybody who has served more years, sure, they can share that and correct the member. But it’s a fact that the member is the longest serving member in this Legislature at this time. So it’s not a point of order.

**The Chair:** I’m not sure creativity is what we’re aiming for in defending these points of order. The hon. member knows what to do.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, I’ll retract that comment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** I’m the third-longest serving member in this Chamber.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

8:30

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe I only have a couple of minutes left.

The issue that I have with supplementary supply is the dollars that are allocated to advertising on the eve of an election. If I recall correctly, ahead of the 2015 election members of the opposition were screaming at the government for spending dollars and making announcements leading up to the election, calling for a ban on it, yet what I hear from the government currently is crickets, that suddenly because the shoe is on the other foot, it’s okay. I’ll be the first member in this House to say that no government should be able to make spending announcements within a period leading up to the election. Let’s put all parties on equal footing. But what we have here is a sup supply budget that is giving the government an opportunity and the ability to spend five times what a political party, either side, can spend in the 28-day campaign.

I appreciate that government members will stand up and talk about the affordability measures. I will say for the record, Madam Chair, that adults without kids and parents with kids over 18 receive zero dollars, zero support. They’re also experiencing the high prices of inflation, yet they get no supports. I’d love to hear how the government and the Finance minister came up with this threshold and this criterion. How did the government cut out families without kids?

Everyone is suffering from inflation. I don’t care if you earn \$100 million or \$1 million a year – pardon me – or \$10,000 a year. Everybody is feeling the effects of inflation. We recognize that the low-income earners feel it the most, but in this, adults without kids receive no support. Parents with kids over 18: we all know, and I am sure if I asked members on the other side to raise their hands, how many of them have kids who are still living with them who are over 18, the majority would. We know, Madam Chair, that kids are living with their parents for longer and longer than they used to because they simply can’t afford to move out on their own. The supports that this government claims to give to all Albertans: in fact, it doesn’t give to all Albertans.

Honestly, Madam Chair, the issue that I have with this sup supply bill is primarily the fact that this government is spending \$10 million on advertising. The members opposite can chirp all they want. If the shoe was on the other foot, they’d be losing their mind about how this is buying votes, how this is undemocratic. Yet what’s disappointing is that I would expect that members would have a higher level of integrity than what’s currently being presented in this budget, because I’ve been through several terms as an opposition member, listening to the opposition talk about the government abusing its ability to spend taxpayer dollars to buy votes. Members, I appreciate a response from the minister, but that’s exactly what this \$10 million on advertising ahead of a general election looks like.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’ve said it before – and I really believe it – that the members opposite are in unfamiliar territory, and it’s called a surplus. Unfortunately, it makes them desperate and incoherent. On one side the members opposite say that the only reason Alberta is in surplus, the only reason we can pay for health care and education is our world-class energy sector, but on the other side they want to shut it down. I mean, what an

awkward place to be socialists and antienergy. Alberta: what an awkward place to hold those ideologies.

They've also said that the only reason we've balanced the budget is because of revenues, but for three years they've been saying that we've been making adjustments to budgets and bringing things in line, and they've disagreed with those necessary fiscal adjustments. Again, you can't have it both ways.

Now, to the only question that was in that 10 minutes, the \$6.6 million advertising campaign. I forgot to mention that that's resulted in 1.2 million Albertans enrolling in the affordability payment program. Well, that tells me a few things. It tells me that affordability is a real crisis and that Albertans expect their government to act. When we put forward an assistance program, they jumped on it, and the more we advertised it, the more they jumped on it.

Now, let's compare that to the members opposite. In December 2016 they announced they were putting 4 and a half million more towards advertising their deeply unpopular climate strategy, bringing the total to \$9 million, advertising something that nobody wanted. They did get a million Albertans to show up, though. They got a million Albertans to show up to show them the door. So maybe in the grand scheme of things: well, money well spent. I'm not sure. I wish that that was the end of their bad advertising spends, but they also spent hundreds of thousands campaigning on their farm safety legislation and on power purchase agreements. I'm sorry, but why are you highlighting all of the areas where members opposite made significant errors on behalf of Albertans?

I just wanted to highlight that the \$5 million in advertising was to advertise the affordability suite, including the affordability payments. We've had just about 1.2 million Albertans enrol in that program, close to a million in three weeks. I think that's remarkable. I think Technology and Innovation and all the departments and ministries involved: my hat is off to them because they pulled it together very quickly. A great program.

I'll invite my colleagues to take the rest of my time, but I just wanted to highlight what the members opposite spent advertising on: you know, climate carbon tax, farm safety legislation that nobody wanted, and power purchase agreements that cost Albertans billions. Albertans responded to those advertisements by voting them out. This \$5 million is to address a very real cost-of-living and inflationary crisis, and Albertans have responded by onboarding on the programs to get support. I think that's wonderful for our seniors, our most vulnerable, and our families with dependent children.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Unfortunately, it's up to 10 minutes for a member of the government.

It will go to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. You have about four minutes.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you. I'm honoured to rise tonight to talk about the supplementary supply 2023 estimates. I have to tell you that I've been sitting here listening to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities attempt to justify blowing \$10 million on pre-election advertising, including over \$6 million in his ministry, and I have to tell you that he is not selling it, Madam Chair.

On Friday I was at a military-business lunch with military and business leaders from across the province. There were a few things that were being discussed at this luncheon, but one of the things that kept coming up was the advertising spend. You know, Albertans are paying attention to what this government is doing, and this government seems to think that Albertans are just simply unaware that an election is coming up and that this is a last-ditch effort for this government to spend taxpayer dollars to advertise to the public. There were so many upset individuals on Friday talking about how

gross a use of funding this is, 10 million taxpayer dollars to simply promote what this government is saying is advertising for affordability. Albertans aren't buying it, Madam Chair.

8:40

You know, I listened to him talk about their affordability plan, and one of the things that's been brought up on our side of the House is the incredible number of Albertans that are being left out of this affordability plan – students, adults without kids, adults with children over the age of 18 still living at home – and I can tell you that he's not answering those questions. The money that they're spending on advertising pre-election should be spent on things that Albertans are talking about, things that are impacting Albertans. Health care: it seems that this government is saying that the health care crisis is over, yet we're hearing heartbreaking stories from all across the province of Albertans that are in health care crisis. They can't access family physicians. They're waiting incredible amounts of time to receive diagnostic imaging. There are things that this money should have been spent on, not on advertising right before an election.

Listening to the minister attempt to justify it, Albertans don't buy it, Madam Chair. He said: they don't have to. The proof in that will be on May 29, when Albertans get to really decide what is happening. Just listening to the conversations that are happening around kitchen tables all across the province, Albertans are very aware that this money that's being spent on advertising is a last-ditch effort to try and get Albertans to buy the messaging that they're selling. We watched them for four years attack doctors, nurses, teachers, and now they're coming out saying that, you know, they have all of these great ideas right before an election. Unfortunately, the attempt from this minister to justify the spending just isn't landing.

What's very clear is that this government is campaigning on the public dime. They're using taxpayer money to campaign. It's laid out right here in the supplementary supply estimates, \$6.6 million.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we are now on our next round of questions. We will go to the government caucus for the next 20-minute block. We'll start with a private member of the government to ask questions of the government and go from there. Hon. Member for Sherwood Park, would you like to share your 10-minute block with the minister or take it all?

**Mr. Walker:** I think I would like to share time with the minister. It would be a great honour if the minister would oblige.

**The Chair:** The minister is very happy to do that. Please proceed.

**Mr. Walker:** Great. Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise tonight to speak in supplementary supply, the estimates for 2023. It was a great honour as well to be a member of Treasury Board this past cycle.

I would say, too, that I'm really excited now to speak, through you, to the Energy minister on his own estimates here in supplementary supply. Just such a good story we're telling. It's my understanding that we've surpassed 2014 oil production levels. We are producing and exporting more energy, more Alberta oil to the world than ever before. What an amazing turnaround and a contrast just even from 2015 to 2019, when the former government devastated our energy sector. I would also say, as someone who represents the great constituency of Sherwood Park, Madam Chair, where the energy sector is foundational to my local economy and, of course, Alberta's economy, with three refineries and the Industrial Heartland, shared here with some other members – my

community produces 75 per cent of all petrochemicals in Canada, and my community produces two-thirds of all oil refined in western Canada. So this is very important to my community and all Alberta's prosperity.

I think I would begin with my question to the minister, Madam Chair. We all know that this past year has been very interesting for our energy sector given the sudden rise in global energy prices that occurred. Therefore, I am not very shocked to see that your ministry in particular has listed a decent amount of supplementary budget estimates in this document; however, a few do stand out for me.

Line item 3 on page 39 of the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates shows that the cost of selling oil was \$337.6 million higher than the initial \$80.1 million estimate. As I previously stated, our oil sector was booming this past year. We've turned it around. It's just absolutely a great-news story. Investment has come back, and this government has been a big part of that: lowering the tax burden; making a light, predictable, regulatory environment; reducing red tape; et cetera. But I do want some clarity on this, Minister.

Question 1: can you provide a breakdown of the costs borne by this government that are associated with selling oil? Question 2 on this line of questioning: is it relatively common to see such a massive increase in these costs when oil prices are up, or did the suddenness of the price change account for some of these extra costs?

I think I'll start there as we go back and forth, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Wonderful.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Thank you for that, Member. You had mentioned off the top about production, and, yeah, I think right now we're around 4 million barrels a day in production. Our pipeline capacity is probably sitting around 4.5 million with TMX. As we heard, with the recent news coming online, that'll add another 590,000 to our capacity. With some optimization, that I think we're hearing from the industry, there could be another 350,000-plus that could come online, increasing our capacity to maybe somewhere around 5 and a half million barrels. So I think we've got a little bit of runway ahead of us there, maybe looking at, certainly, 10 to 15 years where that's concerned.

Now, as far as the cost of selling oil is concerned, it should be known that we made some changes over the last couple of years in the cost of selling oil. It used to be that we'd take oil in kind on the conventional side. We were only marketing about 10 per cent of that ourselves, and we were hiring out the other 90 per cent. Now, some of the costs that were borne there were going to be similar, but there also was a cost to paying for that service. One of the things that we did, through the use of APMC, was to start to market it in its entirety ourselves. That has provided us with some benefits, but as far as the balance sheet is concerned, it increases the cost of selling oil.

Now, this cost of selling oil reflects the high energy prices that we've seen and the benefits that it provides for Albertans. The cost of selling oil is relatively proportional to oil prices and production, both of which increased substantially since the budget was established. As you know, we've seen huge variability in prices over these last few years, which can make it difficult when trying to establish a firm price for the cost of oil. As prices increase, typically the volumes that are being off-loaded increase, and when those volumes increase, the total cost associated with marketing those barrels also goes up. The variable costs associated with that are pipeline tolls, crude oil and condensate purchases, trucking

expenses, and marketing fees. All Crown barrels move from the wellhead to market by truck or pipeline.

One of the things here that is important to know is that as the cost of selling oil is going up, that also means that we're receiving more revenue. That's a line item that we don't see here. Hence, we've had to have these adjustments. These what look like large adjustments in the cost actually mean that the differential for us on the revenue side is increasing, which is a good thing for us.

Now to your second question. The cost of selling oil reflects the high energy prices that we've been seeing, as mentioned, and the forecast increases in crude oil prices are driving up the forecasted producer royalty volumes. Per the mid-year fiscal update, producer royalty volumes were forecasted to increase at approximately 69,700 barrels per day from budgeted volumes of approximately 14,300. Obviously, along with that, you're going to get a significant increase in the cost of selling oil when you establish a volume increase like that. So the increased royalty volumes just give rise to the increase in crude oil pricing.

8:50

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Walker:** Well, thank you to the Minister of Energy, I would say through you, Madam Chair, for those informative answers.

What I'm hearing and what is so great and my constituents are so happy to hear is that through supporting our energy sector – and we're experiencing great, prosperous times in part because we're also supporting our wonderful energy sector – we were able to put forward and table, as we're seeing here tonight, a fiscally responsible budget that helps Albertans on affordability, on health care and education while also balancing the budget. I'm so proud, and it's so great to learn – I would also say that I'm so happy that we're now producing record levels of energy, including oil, here in Alberta. This is a great story, and in this moment we're in, in the current world order, Alberta needs to continue to be the energy arsenal of democracy across the world, to be the supplier of preference for places such as Europe, Japan, east Asia, especially in light of the unlawful invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin. So I call on every member of this House to support that position.

We need pipeline capacity to British Columbia, through Canada, across the North American grid to supply our allies and partners around the world, east Asia, and Europe, which also, through LNG and hydrogen – I would say through you, Madam Chair, to the minister – lowers carbon emissions. It's a win-win all the way around. Let's support Northern Gateway. Let's support Energy East.

On-site rehabilitation, Minister: this is another interesting topic. Now, this can be found on line 4.1 on page 39 of the same document. The supplementary estimates for this program are \$278.6 million higher than the initial estimate of \$297.2 million. I understand, from looking back now to page 38, that some of these extra expenses were the result of revised federal program time frames. A couple of questions here. Could you expand on these revised time frames and why the federal government felt them to be necessary, and could you also expand on how many of these extra costs were caused by revised time frames and how many were the result of other factors? I'll go from there. Yeah.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Thank you for that. This program was a huge success and actually came in a time when Alberta really needed it. The site rehabilitation program has been a big success, with approximately a billion dollars of federal oil and gas relief funding. We don't usually get too much from the federal government, but we were certainly happy to get this, and this helped to put Albertans

back to work by speeding up well, pipeline, facility, and site closure efforts in the energy sector. We saw this afternoon with I think it was Motion 505, that the opposition had put forward – it was about having no incentives ever in a sector, and that would have included this SRP, which was a big success. We had negative oil pricing at that time. We needed to put Albertans back to work and to try to keep companies afloat, and that's what this program did.

Alberta Energy, though – back to your question – had requested an extension for work to be completed in the program given that there were several issues of delay, the main one being weather and a late winter freeze-up as well as labour availability. It all impacted the amount of closure work that was available to be completed. So their request was granted, and an extension of 45 days from the original timeline for the work to be completed came through in '22 and early '23, including additional abandonment work after that freeze-up. This resulted in additional sites having closure work take place, continued support for oil services companies, and continued work with Indigenous communities and companies participating within the program.

To your second point and the success of this program, you know, we had some federal government extensions that were required over the original work. The completion deadline, I believe, was supposed to be December 31, 2022. We had to extend that out slightly, and while it was not possible to exactly pinpoint the impacts of these actions separately, there was combined impact that led to an increase in the number of applications in the fourth quarter, but in doing so, it did allow us to fill the full \$1 billion allocation. Due to the increase in these applications and approval for grants, the program closure date we ended with was February 14 of this year, where the additional funds are allocated.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you so much, I would say through you, Madam Chair, to the minister for those questions. I have a better understanding of the site rehabilitation topic here as it relates to the questions I asked.

I now want to move to petchem, again, another big Alberta success story in my neck of the woods with the Industrial Heartland. I've been so happy to see the great relationship we've had with the Industrial Heartland Association – a big shout-out to its executive director, Mark Plamondon – and just working with them to really bring about continued, sustained prosperity for the Industrial Heartland. It's one of our many economic gems that drives prosperity right across our province. You're talking roughly around 40 companies with \$40 billion of investment already existing there since it was established in 1997, an amazing story.

I would just say that over the term of our government, through APIP, through the DIZ designation as well as the special municipal property taxes, we have made sure that the Industrial Heartland and our petchem industry in general remains globally competitive as we compete for capital across the world, particularly with the Gulf coast.

Speaking specifically to the petrochemical initiative here, as per the supplementary supply estimates, it's another very interesting program, Minister. We can see it detailed on line 4 on page 39 of the supplementary supply estimates, and I noticed that an additional \$10.8 million was allocated to this program despite there being no initial estimate. So two questions, Minister. Could you expand on this program and what it entails in general . . .

**The Chair:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Walker:** Through the chair, of course.

And, secondly, why was this program not included in the 2022-2023 budget, and why did it become important to fund later on, through the chair?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Thanks. The Alberta petrochemicals incentive program, or APIP, you know, makes us very competitive in bringing in, too, long-term investments and thousands of jobs to the province. APIP stands ready to invest 12 per cent of capital cost for any petrochemical facility that's going to use natural gas as a feedstock.

I can tell you that in travels that I've had recently, going to Norway and Germany and down to the States, and talking about this particular program, it has generated a lot of interest. People sit up and take note when you're looking at a program that's going to be covering 10 to 12 per cent of capital cost.

And then we start talking about carbon capture and the availability of pore space and the great work that we've done here and the fact that we have two functioning carbon capture facilities. One is Shell Quest, that started in 2015, and then the Alberta carbon trunk line in 2019, both of which have, I think, together sequestered over 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, and they're doing about 2 and three-quarter million tonnes a year going forward. When we start talking about all of these things that are going on here in Alberta and how far we are talking about emissions reductions and methane reductions, it really has perked the interest of not only companies wishing to come here but also financial institutions.

9:00

Projects must meet several criteria, to answer your question. The project must be physically located in Alberta, of course. The capital cost must be at least \$50 million. The facility must use natural gas, natural gas liquids, or petrochemical intermediates such as ethylene, propylene, benzene, et cetera, in the manufacturing of its own products. The project must create permanent jobs in Alberta. An eligible project with a capital investment greater than \$150 million must complete construction and declare to be in service within the 10-year time frame from the launch of the program. For these types of programs the full amount of the earned grant will be paid over the expiry of the program in three equal instalments over a 36-month period. So the company that's investing is coming here, they're putting in all of their costs, they are employing all those construction workers, they get the facility up and running, and then Alberta puts in its money a year after the fact and then three equal instalments thereafter. That investment is made. They're not going anywhere. They're right here in Alberta, and they're taxpayers by the time we start putting our money in, so it's well worth it.

Our dedicated production facilities are eligible, so that means, too, that the midstream refining, storage, transportation, and ongoing maintenance costs are not covered under the program. New facilities that are brownfield, debottlenecking, and expansions to existing facilities will be eligible, so costs eligible for reimbursement under APIP are related to manufacturing and processing capital expenditures.

To your second point, through the chair, Madam Chair, APIP is already proving successful. You know, as a result, actually, of the first funding payment, that's what we're seeing here for Dow Chemical's capital project. That's what we're seeing reflected here. In the future we are going to see some others, like Inter Pipeline's heartland complex, Air Products. I think you will recall that announcement. Through the chair, you will recall the \$1.6 billion project that they announced to supply hydrogen to Imperial



and Dow Canada in Fort Saskatchewan. These ones are going to come through . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, that concludes the government caucus time.

We will now move on to the 10-minute blocks combining time or going back and forth between the Official Opposition, independent members, and private government members. Just a reminder to direct your comments through the chair, not directly towards each other, and that we are debating supplementary supply estimates. It's the green book. If anyone needs a copy, I'm happy to get a page to bring you one. I look forward to the debate for the rest of this evening. We'll now look to members of the Official Opposition to kick us off in the next 10-minute block, with speaking time of up to five minutes.

Seeing none, any members of the government caucus?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

### Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2023-24 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** We shall now proceed to the final vote on supplementary supply estimates. Those members in favour of the resolutions for the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates, general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? That is carried.

Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Williams:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report the 2022-2023 supplementary supply estimates, general revenue fund.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2022-23 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, have been approved.

Advanced Education: financial transactions, \$11,626,000.

Affordability and Utilities: expense, \$354,932,000; financial transactions, \$254,236,000.

Agriculture and Irrigation: expense, \$2,750,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$7,200,000.

Culture: expense, \$1,088,000.

Education: expense, \$81,937,000.

Energy: expense, \$636,218,000; capital investment, \$500,000.

Environment and Protected Areas: expense, \$68,399,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$5,938,000.

Health: expense, \$553,221,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$9,688,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$11,230,000.

Justice: expense, \$91,937,000.

Mental Health and Addiction: expense, \$21,130,000.

Public Safety and Emergency Services: expense, \$50,052,000; financial transactions, \$1,000,000.

Seniors, Community and Social Services: expense, \$46,771,000.

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: expense, \$2,000,000.

Technology and Innovation: financial transactions, \$25,000,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$753,000,000.

**9:10**

Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts to be transferred.

Transfer from Technology and Innovation: expense, (\$2,069,000).

Transfer to Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: expense, \$2,069,000.

Transfer from Forestry, Parks and Tourism: expense, (\$2,000,000).

Transfer to Agriculture and Irrigation: expense, \$2,000,000.

Transfer from Technology and Innovation: capital investment, (\$20,111,000).

Transfer to Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: capital investment, \$20,111,000.

And everything to Sherwood Park. No, I'm joking.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

#### Bill 12

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Bill 12 will provide authority for government to pay from the general revenue fund for additional costs that are not already covered or otherwise provided for during the current fiscal year. I ask all my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly to support the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

**Mr. Williams:** Happily, Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 on Tuesday, March 21.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:13 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 21, 2023

Day 22

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
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Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
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Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
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Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
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Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
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Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

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Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
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Stephan  
Walker

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
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Rowswell  
Sabir  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Irwin  
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Nixon, Jason  
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Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
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Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and to his government, to Members of this Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Members may be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm pleased to rise to introduce two good friends of the Speaker that are joining us in the Speaker's gallery today, Christie Bergman and her son Nate Bergman. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner has a school group.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the junior high class of Sun Country Christian School from my riding. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 14 students from the U of A's English language school, who are accompanied today by Ms Vicky Chang from the Student Engagement Centre. They're here to learn more about our Legislature and democracy here in Alberta. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you 105 students seated in both the public and members' galleries from Monsignor Fee Otterson school, which is located in the constituency of Edmonton-South. They're joined today by their teacher, Ms Susan André. I ask that we please give them the warm welcome of the House.

**Mr. Walker:** I am pleased to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, three Stollery families. The Smashnuk family from Grande Prairie: hello to Stollery kid Arabella, her parents, Alicia and Greg, and her sister Ava. From Red Deer the Adolphe family: hello to Stollery kid Amélie and her parents, Leslie and Astrel. And from Edmonton the Hlewka family: a warm welcome to Stollery kid Samantha and her mom, Kim. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly Sara Wood, Martina Frost, and Maria Vicente from the KARA Family Resource Centre. Each day these amazing people provide supports that help create positive outcomes for children and families in this province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you my constituent from the beautiful community of Edmonton-South West, Debbie Filipchuk. Debbie is a recipient of the Queen's platinum jubilee medal. She is also a Canadian air force officer. With her also is her nephew Leo Christensen, also a Canadian air force mechanic. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please join me in welcoming Laura Penner. Laura is an advocate for the trans community, the disability community, and for those living in poverty. She's an active community volunteer, and she's passionate about improving systems through listening to those with lived experiences. Welcome, Laura.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so happy to rise to introduce several incredible human beings today. Tamara Jones and her mother, Pat Monilaws, are with us, both Alberta-appointed marriage commissioners and advocates for human rights. Thank you so much to the minister of red tape reduction for taking a meeting with them.

I'd also like to welcome Lanre Ajayi and his marketing manager, Tim Meduna. Lanre is the founder and director of Ethnik Festivals, an association that was recently recognized for the top 25 Canadian immigrants award.

Finally, we have Mina Jama and Candice Janzen with the Jama Foundation.

Thank you so much to all of you for your incredible work. If you could please rise and accept the warm applause from this group.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you, from the International Union of Operating Engineers local 955, president Declan Regan, business manager Chris Flett, and executive director Tyler Bedford. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### International Union of Operating Engineers Local 955

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, as labour critic and as previous labour minister, over the last eight years much of my time has been spent talking to, listening to, and advocating for the workers of this province, including hard-working members of local unions like the International Union of Operating Engineers local 955, for whom 2023 is a very important year. Seventy-five years ago right here in Edmonton local 955 signed their constitution. Earlier I introduced members that have joined us in the gallery.

Today local 955 proudly represents a growing membership of 12,000 hard-working Albertans that leave their mark on almost every facet of our lives. Chances are that at some point today you or a member of your family will either interact with a member of local 955 or go by a project a member worked on. These workers are in everything, from construction, pipelines, and crane operating to fabrication, health care, school divisions, municipalities, and much more.

Not only are the members of local 955 marking their 75th anniversary; they are also celebrating 50 years with their pension

plan. Mr. Speaker, that is half a century of ensuring working Albertans have retirement security and dignity, that they deserve after so many years of hard work.

Local 955 and their members are celebrating their 75th anniversary with a golf tournament, family events in Edmonton, Calgary, and Fort McMurray, and a gala this fall. I hope that all members of this Assembly are able to get out and join in the celebrations taking place throughout the year and across the province, and I ask all members to join me in congratulating the International Union of Operating Engineers local 955 on achieving these milestones and thank them for the contributions that their members have made to Alberta over the last 75 years.

### Support for Ukrainian Newcomers

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary for Ukrainian settlement and a descendant of one of the first Ukrainian settlers in Alberta I'm incredibly proud of the many measures our government has taken to help Ukrainian newcomers to Alberta.

Recently I've had the privilege of attending a number of announcements that I know will be of great help to displaced Ukrainians. Our government has committed \$7 million over three years for settlement and language supports, \$9.9 million for social housing and rent supplement programs, and \$3.6 million to support emergency and ongoing income support. We are providing a further \$1.5 million through a new Ukrainian student benefit to assist displaced postsecondary students, \$12,000 in funding for the Red Deer public library to provide EAL classes, and \$12 million in additional funding to school boards for supporting newly enrolled students from Ukraine. Today the Premier, Minister Sawhney, and I announced the establishment of a Ukrainian helpline to assist Ukrainian evacuees with settlement.

What makes me even more proud is that all of these come as a direct result of the work and recommendations of the Premier's task force on Ukraine, which I'm honoured to have chaired. I want to thank Albertans for welcoming evacuees with open arms and making their adjustments to life in Alberta easier despite tragic circumstances. I continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of Albertans daily.

Mr. Speaker, the national flower of Ukraine is a sunflower. The sunflower grows fast, it stands tall in all weather conditions, it sways with the wind, but it does not break. It's happily sharing its soil with others, allowing other flowers and even weeds to co-exist with it. It's bright, strong, and positive. The strength, perseverance, and brightness of the sunflower is matched by the glorious spirit of the Ukrainian people, so in the face of Putin's genocidal invasion, Ukrainians will continue to fight and triumph, and while they fight, Albertans will stand with them. [Remarks in Ukrainian]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Stollery Children's Hospital

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health of our province begins with the health of its children. Therefore, we are proud to host Stollery day today. As the second-largest children's hospital in Canada the Stollery sees more than 300,000 patients each year, with nearly half of those kids coming from outside the Edmonton region. The Stollery is one of the busiest hospitals in Canada and offers the highest degree of acute care in western Canada. The foundation is the primary funder of pediatric research, \$40 million over 10 years, through the Women and Children's Health Research Institute at the University of Alberta. The foundation is giving kids the best chance anywhere in the world to live a long and healthy life.

1:40

But the Stollery is squeezed into an adult hospital and desperately needs a space of its own. Sick kids need a space that is built for them and modern health care. We are proud to have funded \$3 million in planning funds towards a new Stollery children's hospital, and I am personally hopeful that they will soon become building dollars because our kids can't wait for another second for this to happen. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation is proud to partner with the Alberta government in support of a new hospital. When the commitment from government comes, the foundation will raise up to \$250 million towards the cost of building it, the largest charitable campaign in Alberta's history, Mr. Speaker.

Stollery day is a chance to reflect on the tremendous impact this hospital has on the quality of health care in our province. I encourage my fellow members to think about the vital importance children's health plays in the future of our province and consider innovative opportunities to invest in and improve pediatric care for kids in communities across Alberta, including a new Stollery children's hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day was proclaimed in 1966 following the Sharpeville massacre, where people peacefully protesting against racist laws in apartheid South Africa were fired upon, leaving hundreds killed and injured.

While much progress has been made, for many Black, Indigenous, and racialized people in Alberta racism and discrimination is far too often a daily reality and a maze of deeply ingrained systemic barriers. Additionally, in recent years Alberta, along with the rest of Canada, has seen a rise in hate crimes along with a rising tide of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism. Today serves as a call to action for individuals, organizations, and all levels of government to actively work to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, injustice, systemic racism, and hate.

For years the current government has failed to take concrete, ongoing action to address the concerns of racialized Albertans. We must recommit our efforts to ensure all people are respected and have equal access and opportunity to be safe and to succeed. Albertans deserve a government that will take proactive steps not only to address the instances of racist violence but to actively combat the root causes of racial intolerance in Alberta and eliminate them once and for all.

Albertans can count on the Alberta NDP to do just that. We will start by implementing the recommendations brought forward by the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, and we will pass the Anti-Racism Act, that the UCP voted down. I'm proud to say that when elected, we will establish an antiracism office to ensure that we will live in a province that works tirelessly towards being free from all forms of racism, discrimination, and intolerance. Albertans deserve a government that takes concerns of racialized Albertans seriously, and we are ready.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a member's statement.

### Federal Impact Assessment Act

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are aware of the many ways that Ottawa has trampled our provincial rights and

constitutional authority. Our government will stand up to Ottawa every day, all day long, every day of the week to ensure that Albertans have a prosperous future, with certainty that they can keep the lights on and food on the table for their families. Our province has been leading the way in fighting the federal intrusion into our constitutional authority, and other provinces have taken notice.

Tomorrow is another step in defending Alberta's rights to develop our own resources and get them to market. The Supreme Court of Canada is currently hearing arguments about the federal Impact Assessment Act, better known as the no-more-pipelines law. On March 22 Alberta will present its arguments to the Supreme Court of Canada on the many ways that this federal legislation has impeded our provincial rights.

This matter has been brought to the Supreme Court following the May 2022 ruling in the Alberta Court of Appeal which struck down the no-more-pipelines act and declared it unconstitutional. This act will not only hurt Albertans; it harms our partners in the Confederation. The economic interests of our country as a whole are at stake. Eight provinces are intervenors before the Supreme Court in this matter, underscoring the unprecedented constitutional threat the Trudeau Liberals have so callously forced upon the provinces through this law. As we have said many times, this act doesn't just harm the economy, and it isn't just Alberta's fight. It's a battle for the integrity of our role in the Confederation and our provincial partners. It's a violation of the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces and territories to control and develop their natural resources.

Over the past 25 years Alberta has contributed \$400 billion to the federal government's revenues, more than it's ever received back from the feds. Harming the Alberta economy with the no-more-pipelines act: that'll be felt right across the country. We need to get our country working as it was intended. Striking down the no-more-pipelines act will go a long way to making our country whole again and to making our reputation to become Can-adians again, where things can get done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Ganley:** Every time Albertans think this UCP government has hit bottom, the members opposite manage to sink a little lower. Yesterday the UCP MLAs voted against the polluter-pay principle, the long-standing principle that if you make a mess, you clean it up. It's basic fairness. It's what we teach our kids. It's what we've expected of industry for generations, with their support. It's an important signal to global investors that Alberta is a mature and responsible energy producer. Yesterday the UCP threw that away.

According to the UCP, if you make a mess on someone else's property, not only can you refuse to clean it up, but you can stick your hand out for taxpayer money. The members opposite are now on the record in support of the Premier's scheme to give away \$20 billion to a small group of bad companies who don't clean up after themselves. This scheme is not only an unforgivable abuse of Alberta taxpayers, but it's going to make the problem of inactive wells worse. Why would anyone pay to clean up their liabilities when they could refuse and get a handout?

The UCP wants to reward bad behaviour. Guess what. All that does is lead to more bad behaviour. R-star is not about cleaning up wells, and it never has been. It's about funnelling Alberta taxpayer money to a small number of bad actors at the behest of the Premier's friends. Albertans will remember this when it comes to casting their vote in May. They will remember that the UCP refused to build a school in their growing neighbourhood, to get construction started

on a badly needed hospital, to revitalize their downtown, to create good-paying jobs, but the UCP did find \$20 billion to reward bad behaviour from the Premier's friends.

Luckily, Albertans have a choice. They can elect a government that will end the gravy train, one that will be focused on them and their priorities. They can elect an NDP government.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Alberta

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a message from Albertans to Trudeau and his NDP puppets. Alberta is a land of freedom and prosperity. Woke, socialist ways do not belong here. Go away and leave us alone. Albertans did not want the secret NDP carbon tax. Albertans do not like surprise NDP taxes. Albertans fired the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans do not like Trudeau's carbon tax either, supported by his puppets. Next month they are jacking up the carbon tax by 30 per cent. Their actions speak louder than their words. They do not care about affordability, yet the NDP says nothing, sitting in a thoughtless stupor, comprehending nothing. Yet in spite of them, Alberta succeeds and prospers.

There is something extraordinary occurring in Alberta. We are seeing record numbers of families coming to Alberta from across Canada and all over the world. Mr. Speaker, is this because Alberta is a woke, socialist paradise? No. Alberta has the highest incomes and lowest taxes. It is the most competitive jurisdiction to start and grow a business, leading Canada in economic growth. Parents want a better future for their children, and they are coming to Alberta, this land of freedom and prosperity.

While the NDP and the CBC may wish it otherwise, Albertans do not want a freedom-sucking, woke, socialist government. Alberta is a land of opportunity, of freedom and prosperity. We must be vigilant to keep it that way.

### Oral Question Period

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition for her first set of questions.

### Chartered Surgical Facility Contracts

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today more Albertans are waiting in pain for their surgery, but instead of reinvesting in our hospitals, the UCP plan to shovel taxpayers' dollars at private surgical centres that are doing much lower risk procedures. But the staff to perform those surgeries still have to come from somewhere. So did the government of Alberta or AHS sign contracts with private surgical providers that guaranteed them access to a minimum number of public surgical staff, including anaesthesiologists? Yes or no?

1:50

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that chartered surgical centres are integrated into our system. They are a single system, and it's just a matter of scheduling to get one in a public hospital or one in a chartered surgical centre. There is no queue-jumping; no one pays out of pocket. The personnel work seamlessly across the two different systems to make sure that we get the maximum number of surgeries performed.

And I'll just correct the record. We don't have more people waiting; we have fewer people waiting. We've reduced the number of people who are on the waiting list down to 35,000, and we're going to continue.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of scheduling, there's only so many staff which means that if they're at the private clinics, they're not at the hospital.

Now, we are told that last week medical staff were presented with a revised assignment priority list directing that limited anaesthesiologist resources would be assigned to chartered surgical facilities ahead of high-risk patients in the hospitals. Behind the scenes surgeons and anaesthesiologists are calling these priorities unethical. Why is the Premier allowing her ideology to undermine care for high-risk patients in Alberta's hospitals?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it's simply not true. We have a system that prioritizes the most urgent cases. I know the member opposite has a socialist theory of how everything should operate, meaning everything should be done in government-owned facilities. We have a different view. We believe we can partner with the private sector so that we can get more surgeries provided, and the system is working. When we began, we had 39,000 people on the waiting list, waiting longer than was medically recommended. It's down to 35,000 people on that list. We're reducing it by 3,000 patients per month, and by this time next year that list is going to be completely eliminated. That is a system that works.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not answer my question. Not only are they jeopardizing the health of some of Alberta's sickest patients; they are pursuing a model where taxpayers ultimately pay more and wait longer. Recent CIHI data shows that knee replacements in B.C.'s private system cost \$18,000 more than in the public setting. In Ontario 73 per cent of patients receive public knee surgery within six months while in Alberta's private centres, only 53 per cent. Why is the Premier insisting on hiding the contracts? Why won't she release those contracts so Albertans can decide for themselves if they want to pay more and wait longer under the UCP?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we can't argue with success. This was a number one priority that Dr. John Cowell had when he came into the system, looking at the surgical backlog and making sure that we were prioritizing patients and ensuring that no one was going to end up waiting longer than medically recommended. Under the NDP nine different surgeries ended up having wait-lists that increased. We've got them all going down in the right direction, and it's because of the partnership we have with the chartered surgical centres. They want to shut them down. That's the socialist ideology, and that would cut 60,000 surgeries a year out of our system, and we won't do that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** We want surgeries on the basis of medical need, not on the basis of private-sector contracts, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Advertising

**Ms Notley:** Now, on May 29 Albertans will have the opportunity to choose a better government, an NDP government. Clearly, the Premier is very scared of this outcome because last night while Albertans were watching the hockey game, this group approved \$9.4 million in pre-election taxpayer-funded advertising. With all the services currently underfunded, the Premier, who is one of the most unpopular in Canada, is racing to put her own electioneering first. To the Premier: why should Alberta taxpayers be funding the UCP's re-election campaign advertising?

**Ms Smith:** Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, I'm not fortunate enough to have my husband work for CUPE and do all of my election advertising on my behalf, like the member opposite.

I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the affordability advertising that we are doing is one hundred per cent necessary, because I can tell you it is working. We have 1.2 million Albertans that have signed up for affordability payments. We're directing them to those with children, we're directing them to those who have seniors in the household, and we're directing them as well to those who are the most vulnerable. We know that certainly the members opposite wouldn't get this message out for us, and that's why we're doing it.

**Ms Notley:** The reason they're doing it, Mr. Speaker, is because this Premier is shameless when it comes to using public money for her own partisan gain.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP approved \$9 million to buy UCP ads that continue all throughout April. That's a big chunk of change. In fact, it's about four times what political parties are allowed to spend during the writ period, and it's double her final offer to women's shelters. Why doesn't the Premier just get it over with and register the government of Alberta as her political action committee?

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 1:55.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, our affordability plan is such good news. We have 1.2 million people who are now enrolled, and they're getting \$600 in benefits. We have affordability payments. We also have electricity rebates. We have natural gas rebates, and we have fuel tax relief. In fact, maybe I should take this opportunity to let people know if they haven't heard about it. Go to [alberta.ca/affordability](http://alberta.ca/affordability). There's still an opportunity to sign up, and we're hoping that every person who is eligible for it takes the opportunity.

**Ms Notley:** Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, how time changes a person. Back in 2012 when the then PC Premier, Alison Redford, approved a comparatively modest \$1.3 million in advertising, the then Wildrose leader wouldn't stand for the blatant electioneering. The current Premier said, and I quote: you should not be able to use taxpayer dollars for blatant partisan advertising in advance of an election. We are now at nine times the level she previously criticized. If the Premier is willing to sell out her beliefs in just five months of holding office, why should anyone trust her with four more years?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when we got elected, the members opposite said: what are you going to do about affordability? They kept asking about affordability. They said that affordability was the number one issue. We addressed it. We addressed it through the means that I had mentioned, and it's working. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** It's working. Trevor Tombe posted today, looking at an analysis of inflation across the country. We are the lowest in the country because of the affordability payments we have put in place, because we have reduced the cost of energy, and we want to tell people about it. That's why we're advertising.

### Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

**Member Irwin:** I am inundated with messages from Albertans in support of our Alberta NDP commitment to provide universal

coverage for prescription contraception and from Albertans outraged at this Premier's dismissive comments. Darby wrote to me to say how much her prescription birth control costs, something that she will likely have to take for the next 25 years, following radiation treatment for cervical cancer. She says: I'm 31 years old, and this Premier is telling me that I should have to pay for private insurance rather than having this basic human right. Is this really the Premier's message for Darby?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the reason why we are proposing and looking at the issue of health spending accounts. We know that there is a whole range of services that are not covered by public insurance. The members opposite all have \$950 in health spending accounts to pay for all of their needs, and everybody's need is different. That's why we are looking at a program that would allow for us to support all Albertans in being able to get the same kind of accounts so that they can make the decisions and have the priorities themselves. We also know that we've got a number of programs that are available through our Alberta Blue Cross to be able to support those who don't have private insurance.

**Member Irwin:** Health spending accounts aren't the answer. They're not the answer for people like Nikki, who wrote to me saying that she's paying \$189 a month for her private health insurance plan, and she still has to come up with another \$1,000 a month for prescriptions that aren't covered. For this Premier, who thinks Albertans should pay out of pocket for their basic health care, should rely on health spending accounts, pay for a trip to their family doctor, I guess this is a system working just how she wants. Can the Premier again please try to explain, to Nikki this time, why she shouldn't have universal coverage for prescription contraception?

**The Acting Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Comprehensiveness is one of the foundational principles of the Canada Health Act, and that's part of the reason why we are looking at establishing health spending accounts, to be able to make the system more comprehensive. The reason that I know about health spending accounts is because politicians have them. I find it remarkable that the folks across the aisle won't give up their own health spending account. Maybe they should if they object to them so much. I have a different view. I believe that if taxpayers are paying for this kind of approach for us, we should make the same kind of program available for everyone.

2:00

**Member Irwin:** This Premier is not listening. She's not listening to Albertans like Jenny, who writes: as a self-employed, single mother who pays for private coverage, I can tell you it's not cheap, and it's certainly not fair. Darlene says: does the Premier not know that Blue Cross isn't free; it's just not affordable when you're barely scraping by; this is clearly a person who's never struggled to make ends meet. I need the Premier to tell Darby, Nikki, Jenny, Darlene, countless other Albertans, why she thinks they should be forced to pay out of pocket for prescription contraception.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell every single Albertan that we know that they have unique health needs, which is why we are trying to find a way to give comprehensive coverage to what they identify as their highest need. Health spending accounts allow for us to be able to cover all the things that are not currently covered by public insurance. That, to me, is the approach that we need to take. Rather than identifying one thing versus another, let's

make sure that we're providing comprehensiveness so that every single Albertan is able to be supported.

### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Ganley:** The polluter-pay principle: if you make a mess, you clean it up. It's basic fairness. We teach it to our kids. Albertans support it; Albertans, that is, except this UCP government. Yesterday every single UCP member in this Chamber voted against our motion to endorse the polluter-pay principle, including the Energy minister. Can the Premier please explain to Albertans why she thinks companies shouldn't be responsible for cleaning up their own messes? [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Just a reminder, hon. members, that it is my first day on the job, so I'd like to be able to hear both the questions and the answers.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely believe in the principle of polluter pay, which is the reason why we put in a program that requires our companies to spend 3 per cent of their liability each year. It's \$740 million, and it's going to increase year after year. I find it interesting that the members opposite supported the federal government when they gave a billion-dollar grant to help accelerate some of these changes. There is still \$200 million, as I understand it, that we need to allocate on that. We're going to make sure that we support them.

**Ms Ganley:** The Premier just loves to point to the loan we gave to the Orphan Well Association as justification for her \$20 billion handout, but there's a critical difference. Orphan wells don't have an owner. There is no one but the association to clean them up. What the Premier is proposing is to have a massive giveaway of Albertans' money to companies who are still operating and are responsible for cleaning up those wells, making it just a handout. That's what our motion opposed. Why does the Premier think that Albertans should be on the hook for cleaning up someone else's mess?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we've got two problems. We've got a problem of inactive wells, and we've got a problem of orphan wells. If we don't address the problem of inactive wells, if a company goes under, what it means is that those end up in the Orphan Well Association. We've got to accelerate the cleanup of all of these wells. Last time I looked, it had a \$30 billion liability, and it's part of the reason why we have a menu of options and a menu of supports, including one of the requirements that they have to clean up, \$740 million per year of their own money and their own liability. I'm not sure why the members keep . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Ganley:** The problem we have, Mr. Speaker, is a lobbyist Premier who lobbied for this \$20 billion giveaway before getting elected. She hired another lobbyist for the handout into her office to orchestrate its execution. Another lobbyist runs a pro-UCP attack machine that's funded by the people who stand to benefit from the \$20 billion handout. She even replaced the former UCP Energy minister over it. Why is the Premier so focused on rewarding a few bad actors while Albertans struggle to find a doctor and put food on the table?

**Ms Smith:** You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was in estimates, I know that the Leader of the Opposition had the correct number. She

asked me about the hundred million dollars that the Energy minister was advocating on and consulting on to see what kind of feedback we would get. Yet every time we're in this Chamber, they keep throwing a number out of \$20 billion. They know that they're being untruthful. They know that they're giving misinformation. They know that we have put forward a program that requires companies to spend a certain percentage of their own money to clean up year after year, and what we're looking at are the hardest wells to clean up, the ones that have been there the longest, the ones that they weren't able to clean up when they were in government. That's what we're looking at.

### Support for Ukrainian Newcomers

**Mr. Turton:** Mr. Speaker, Putin continues to commit genocidal tactics on the people of Ukraine. He's attacking their schools, hospitals, and key infrastructure. Accompanying this senseless violence, Putin is committing egregious war crimes against the proud people of Ukraine. In turn, Ukrainians are being forced out of their homeland and are coming to Canada. To date more than 25,000 Ukrainians have come in and settled in Alberta, and we need to continue to support these evacuees. To the Premier: can you tell Albertans what this government has done to support these evacuees and set them up for success in our province?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's over 25,000. It is 26,572 Ukrainian evacuees that have come to our province. We have supported them with \$28 million worth of supports: \$7 million over three years for settlement and language supports to help agencies and immigrant-serving organizations meet the need from increased demand; \$9.9 million in social and rent supplement programs. That's on top of \$6.8 million made available in 2022-2023.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for her answer. Given that many of these Ukrainians are coming to Alberta and do not know the language and given that many of these evacuees have little in supports to help them navigate the many services the Alberta government is providing and given that many of these evacuees do not have family or friends in Alberta when they arrive here, to the Premier: can you please tell the members of this Chamber and Ukrainians who have arrived in Alberta if there will be prearrival services for evacuees to assist in their arrival and settlement in Alberta?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we made an announcement, with the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism as well as our parliamentary secretary for Ukrainian refugee settlement, about a helpline that will allow for new arrivals in Alberta to very easily access the services that they need. We have a great network of private individual agencies, but sometimes, when you're newly arriving, it's not easy to find them. We're going to make it easy to find them, in the language that they're familiar with, and we're going to make sure that we support everyone who arrives.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for her answer. Given that there are multiple ministries working on helping Ukrainian evacuees come and settle in Alberta after leaving

a literal war zone and given that the Premier's office has set up a specialized task force with the assistance of the parliamentary secretary for Ukrainian refugee settlement and given that many of the recommendations from this task force turned into budget funding in Budget 2023, to the Premier once again: can you tell Albertans what else the task force will be doing to assist these evacuees settle in our beautiful province?

**Ms Smith:** We're going to have to do a lot more. As I mentioned, we have over 25,000 evacuees who have arrived here. When you think about that and put that into context, in all of Canada 40,000 evacuees arrived from Syria, 35,000 arrived from Afghanistan. That's 25,000 alone that have come here. Almost a quarter of the evacuees decide to make Alberta their home. We know that this tragedy is going to continue for much longer. There could potentially be hundreds of thousands of more Ukrainians who seek refuge in Canada. We've got to be prepared that at least a quarter of them are going to come here.

### Government Advertising and Affordability Plan

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP is going to spend more than 9 million taxpayer dollars trying to convince voters that their pre-election budget isn't that bad. This includes a massive ad campaign that runs until the day before the election is called. But this budget has zero dollars for university students or a couple making minimum wage without children because the UCP chose to cut half of Albertans from their affordability payment schemes. Can the current minister who's supposed to be making life more affordable for Albertans tell this House why he thinks it's more important to spend taxpayer dollars to save his own job than to help minimum wage people pay their rent?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January our government launched a dynamic and highly successful advertising campaign to inform seniors, parents, and other Albertans about the billions of dollars in relief available to them through our affordability action plan. That includes electricity rebates, fuel tax relief, affordability payments, and more. The campaign runs until April. Without an advertising campaign seniors or others who are most in need may miss the opportunity to access benefits during this period of high inflation. The campaign also informs vulnerable Albertans on core support programs – no application is necessary – to help protect them from scams and misinformation.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the government said that they would spend over \$900 million in affordability payments to Albertans but given that in estimates the minister revealed that only \$96 million had actually been spent and given that the UCP is spending 9 million taxpayer dollars trying to save their own jobs when Albertans are struggling to pay their own bills and only a quarter of Albertans have actually received any money from this government, is the minister surprised that so few Albertans support this budget? Is that why he's spending taxpayer dollars for blatant partisan advertising in advance of an election, quoting his own Premier?

2:10

**Mr. Jones:** Mr. Speaker, the affordability advertising campaign has been remarkably effective, with nearly 1.2 million Albertans now enrolled to receive up to \$600 over six months. That's about as many people as came out to vote last time to remove the previous socialist government. The advertising campaign is helping to



reduce fraud and protecting consumers through social, digital, and video materials educating the public on ways to avoid scams and safely access affordability supports. Translated information is also available on ethnocultural channels to ensure newcomers benefit from the programs. Our affordability action plan is working.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that we know the application process isn't easy for some Albertans – and that's why the government actually asked registry agents to support applications in-house – and given that there isn't an edit button for people who have applied, made a mistake, and need to be able to have that corrected by registry agents, there are thousands of people waiting on payments that this government has been holding up. Will they admit that they've messed it up, and will they fix it before the end of the month so that people can actually pay their rent? An edit button for registry agents, Minister.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that in three weeks about a million Albertans were enrolled on our affordability payment portal, and in February we did launch edit functionality for the small number, about 1 per cent or less, that entered incorrect banking information. That patch went live in February. We have another patch upcoming to ensure that registry agents can also assist the small number of Albertans who have incorrect information in their application. Again, 99 per cent of the 1.2 million Albertans have been successfully enrolled and are receiving up to \$600 over six months. It's working to keep Alberta affordable.

#### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Mr. Schmidt:** Under the UCP the amount of unpaid municipal taxes from delinquent oil and gas companies grew every year. At first they did nothing. Then they brought in legislation everyone knew would fail, and it did. Now, on the eve of an election, they say that they're taking action by withholding licences from companies that don't pay their taxes, something that rural municipalities have been calling for for years. To the minister: why did it take you this long, and why did you ignore rural Albertans for four years?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, our government understands why municipalities and landowners are frustrated by overdue and unpaid property taxes. Yesterday I signed an order to allow the Alberta Energy Regulator tools to prevent the transfer of or issuance of a well licence if a company has outstanding taxes. If it involves the sale of assets, the payment of debts must be made a condition of sale. We believe these initiatives will provide municipalities with the necessary leverage required to collect on those bad debts.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that everyone knows that withholding licences is a necessary step to get these companies to pay their taxes – municipal leaders have been calling for it, as has our caucus – and given that despite yesterday's announcement there are still very few details about how this directive will actually work, with the minister saying that there will be a threshold for unpaid taxes but not saying what the threshold is, is this another fake program from the UCP that does nothing for Albertans, just like their fake electricity cap, their fake natural gas rebate, and their fake auto insurance freeze? What's the threshold?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear: the vast majority of companies in Alberta are good operators and do not fit this narrative.

This order to the AER, with updates to section 67 of the Responsible Energy Development Act, along with legislation regarding liens, the encouraging letters that we are also sending out, and the previous liability management framework updates significantly strengthen a municipality's ability to collect on delinquent debt. We look forward to settling these tax obligations.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that if the threshold was meaningful, the minister would have just told us what it was right now and given that rural municipal leaders are also calling for licences to be withheld from oil and gas companies that don't clean up their wells and given that rather than listening to Albertans, the UCP is pushing ahead with a program that rewards these companies' bad behaviour with a \$20 billion handout, will the minister withhold licences for unpaid taxes but not unreclaimed wells because of this Premier's close connections to the lobbyists pushing for this \$20 billion giveaway?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, our government strengthened the liability management framework, empowered the AER's ability to intervene, and passed legislation to help support municipalities in the collection of unpaid taxes from companies that are not living up to their obligations. Additionally, in order to persuade compliance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I sent out joint letters to every functioning company in Alberta that is under default. We can't do anything about companies that are no longer solvent, but for those healthy companies doing business in Alberta, we want to send a clear message that debts must be paid.

#### Federal Carbon Pricing

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, inflation and high taxes are hitting families across Canada, and the federal government is moving forward with an increase to their job-killing carbon tax on April 1. My question to the Premier: what is the government's reaction to the federal government kicking families while they're down, placing a higher burden on the kitchen budgets across the province by increasing the federal carbon tax on Albertans?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I was amused when the Red Deer-South MLA talked about the secret NDP carbon tax, and it was brought in in secret. Now the federal government won't let us get rid of it, and now the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa is voting to increase it by 300 per cent. We keep fighting a battle here on the issue of affordability and against inflation, and we're winning it, but it's no help to the folks in Ottawa. I wish that the members opposite would stand with us and say: do not increase these taxes on April 1.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, through you, thank you to the Premier for that answer. Given that the increase in carbon tax will mean a direct negative impact to Albertans at the pump, which means costs permeating all aspects of everyday life for Albertans, again to the Premier: what is the government expecting as a result of this harmful increase to the cost of living for Alberta families?

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to give you an idea of how successful our measures have been – and this comes from Trevor Tombe. The key reason is because of the tax reductions we focused on utilities and gas. This is essential to reducing the cost of

everything. The rest of the country is seeing a 5.2 per cent inflation rate; in Alberta it's 3.6 per cent. Yet we're going to have to fight the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa because they are increasing the carbon tax. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation says that it's a whopping 14 cents per litre of gas just for the carbon tax. Fourteen cents per litre: that's the amount of our carbon tax relief here. It's almost going to be completely off-set by what's happening in Ottawa.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the Premier for that. Given that the federal government is forcing these carbon tax increases despite Alberta having a world-leading, ethical, environmentally responsible approach to energy development and given that in the meantime the federal government is soft on regimes that destroy our environment and interfere with our elections, to the Premier: what is the government doing to take a stand against these cruel increases in the cost of living and protect Albertans in the face of these tax increases?

**The Acting Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You would think with the Liberal-NDP coalition in Ottawa that the members opposite would have some influence, that they'd actually stand up for Albertans and they'd stand with us on saying: do not increase these taxes. Three hundred per cent by 2030, and we're going to see a 14-cent-per-litre increase as we get to April 1. We are working to reduce emissions a different way, a better way through technology and innovation. We're talking about carbon capture, utilization, and storage. We're supporting our innovation through our TIER funding, and we're going to continue to take leadership on hydrogen and other clean technology. We won't be taxing hockey moms and soccer dads.

#### Primary Health Care in Medicine Hat

**Member Loyola:** There's a lack of medicine in Medicine Hat. Many Hatters have been without a family doctor for years as doctors chose to retire early or move away because of the UCP's war on doctors. This puts additional stress on the ER and walk-in clinics as Hatters now have to rely on these for routine health care, prescription refills, and minor medical issues. It also puts stress on the residents, like Kinsey, whose family has been without a doctor for over three years. She regularly checks the Internet and phones clinics in a fruitless search for a doctor. Why has the UCP failed to help Hatters like Kinsey find a family doctor?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As we've chatted about many times in this House, there are challenges in regard to the ongoing recruitment and retention of health care workers not only in Alberta but across the entire country, but I'm very pleased that we are making progress. If we compare last year, the end of Q4 last calendar year, to 2021: 254 more doctors in Alberta than previously. I'm looking forward to talking more about what we're doing to ensure that we not only train more doctors but attract more doctors here in Alberta.

2:20

**Member Loyola:** Given that our health care system continues to be deep in crisis despite the Premier's claims and given that for Hatters, like Vera, a breast cancer survivor, having a family doctor is vitally necessary and given that this Premier muses about Albertans paying

out of pocket for visits to the doctor while residents of her riding are unable to even find a doctor, does the Minister of Health support the Premier's misguided scheme to force Hatters like Vera to pay out of pocket just to monitor their health after surviving cancer?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to set the record straight and make the comment that the Premier has already made. No one will have to pay out of pocket to go and visit their family doctor.

To be clear, we know that we need more family doctors, and that's why I was very pleased to make an announcement with the Minister of Advanced Education to expand the medical programs at both the U of C and U of A. Mr. Speaker, not only are we expanding the seats there; we are also ensuring that we can actually train more doctors in areas outside of the big cities – clerkships, residencies outside of the big cities – by working with organizations like the University of Lethbridge to make that happen.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the Alberta NDP caucus has a plan to connect a million more Albertans with a family doctor and a family health team and given that our family health team plans will directly meet the needs of Kinsey and Vera and thousands more people in Medicine Hat and given that we are ready to start the work to build family health teams on day one, does the Health minister regret his legacy of failure to provide basic primary care to Albertans in Medicine Hat and across this province?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the members opposite endorse our approach for team-based family care. This is something we already started in our agreement that we reached with the AMA, to move to a different model of care, a team-based model of care, and we have the support structures in place from a funding standpoint to be able to make that happen. We are making progress.

I'm also very pleased that we are also making progress in bringing in more doctors, internationally trained doctors. We are streamlining the processes for certification to be able to make this happen. Mr. Speaker, for example, in Lethbridge: 17 more doctors over the last nine months, and they'll all be working very soon. We're going to continue until everyone has access to a family doctor.

#### Misericordia Community Hospital CT Scanner

**Mr. Dach:** Yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the Premier a single question: would she fix the malfunctioning CT scanner at the Misericordia hospital, that has forced hundreds of patients to be shipped to other facilities? The Premier chose instead to pass the buck to John Cowell and refused to answer. That's not good enough when you're dealing with a broken piece of essential equipment that doctors rely upon to save lives every day at a major Alberta hospital. Since the Premier is so indifferent to the health of Albertans, will the Health minister commit to getting this scanner replaced now?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the scanner actually is fixed and has been fixed since March 17. It was unfortunate that it was having some issues, but, you know, Covenant Health worked to actually get that fixed. In the interim diagnostic imaging had to be done at other locations, but, again, I'm pleased that it's fixed.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to invest in our health care system, including at the Misericordia, and I'm looking forward to when Infrastructure is going to pass the new \$85 million emergency department over to Covenant Health so they can actually start to get it up and running by next September.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister will know, of course, that this CT scanner has a history of breaking down and being out of service for weeks and weeks at a time, and who knows how long it's going to last this time. Thank goodness it's fixed right now, but will the minister agree that it needs to be replaced rather than being fixed? I had just this morning an individual who told me that she would not go to the Misericordia to see if she had kidney stones for fear of that CT scanner not being in commission. Will the minister commit to actually getting that replaced so we have one there?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committing to make sure that Alberta Health and all of the hospitals, including Covenant and AHS, have the equipment that they need to actually deliver the service. We are actually, you know, putting money where our mouth is, with over \$4 billion this year in capital alone. Now, as the hon. member knows, if there's a need for increased capital, that gets put into the plan. I look forward to working with Covenant and AHS on the needs that the Misericordia has.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CT scanner that regularly goes out of service at the Misericordia is a long historical situation that needs to be addressed by having that CT scanner replaced by a brand new piece of equipment not only for the existing emergency ward but for the new emergency ward that's being built with the \$65 million that we got going when we were in government. Now, there is no CT scanner dedicated to that emergency department, and the hospital relies upon a CT scanner to serve the regional area, not just the hospital patients for the Misericordia. We need two scanners; a new one for both sides of the hospital.

**The Acting Speaker:** Perhaps I'll invite the hon. member to read *Hansard* from yesterday for another example of a question with a preamble. I encourage you to read the *Hansard* from yesterday, because, yes, you said the example.

The minister.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've stated before, our government is making significant investments in health care, an additional \$1 billion on the expense side, over \$4 billion on the capital side. I can tell the hon. member and all Albertans here in the Edmonton area and those who use the Misericordia hospital that we will continue to invest. We're investing \$85 million in a new emergency department. Should a new CT scanner be needed, we will continue to work with Covenant and AHS to make sure that they have the tools they need to deliver services to Albertans when and where they need them.

### Federal Impact Assessment Act

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the appeal of the federal Impact Assessment Act, C-69, better known as the no-more-pipelines law, is under way at the Supreme Court. Given that this act has made it impossible for companies to build pipelines and given the current opportunity for Alberta to be a solution to help the world transition away from dictator oil and, more specifically, Russian oil and gas, can the Premier remind this House and Albertans what this law does and how it puts jobs and investment at risk here in Alberta?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found it interesting that the NDP-Liberal coalition in Ottawa, rather than make it a condition of their continued coalition to repeal this bill, made a condition of their

coalition the just transition, which would have phased out oil and natural gas workers. This bill is one that is going to pose an existential threat to our ability to continue developing our energy sector. It not only puts in jeopardy billions of dollars that are generated for Albertans and all Canadians, but it's also a violation of the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of our provinces to control the ability to develop our own resources. We need to win this in the court.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier, thank you for that answer. Given that the Alberta Court of Appeal has rendered its decision regarding C-69 and given the nature of the findings in this court of law, can the Premier provide this House and Albertans what the Alberta Court of Appeal determined regarding C-69, the no-more-pipelines law?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have read the decision; maybe the members opposite should, too, because they'll see how much worse it is than just no more interprovincial pipelines. They want to stop all of the development in this province. They want to put every single project under the scope of the federal environmental regulation. Here is the quote from the decision, which was a 4-1 decision in our favour. The Alberta Court of Appeal says this:

[It] constitutes a profound invasion into provincial legislative jurisdiction and provincial proprietary rights. Parliament's claimed power to regulate all environmental and other effects of intraprovincial designated projects improperly intrudes into [our] activity.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, given the immediate need for energy security in North America and world-wide and given that Alberta has an abundance of environmentally and ethically produced energy and further given that Alberta's ability to be a solution hinges on the ability to build more pipelines, can the Premier tell this House when we can expect a decision from the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of C-69?

**The Acting Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a shame that we weren't able to see the members opposite lobby their federal leader to end this legislation at the federal level. They could have done that so we didn't have to go through the process of the courts. We are going to see a two-day hearing over the next couple of days. We'll get a decision within the next six to 12 months. We're also backed by 10 other organizations, including the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Indian Resource Council, the Business Council of Alberta, and many others, and together, with Alberta leading the way, we are going to argue that this bill risks disrupting the constitutional balance of our federation and undermines the right for us to govern our affairs.

### Child Protective Services and Transition to Adulthood Program

**Ms Pancholi:** One hundred and sixty-four: that's the number of children and youth receiving child intervention services who have died in the past four years, 98 in the last two years alone. Since last Thursday another three deaths were reported. This is the UCP's record: children and struggling parents abandoned; young people treated like pawns; supports cut, then paused, cut again, then renamed. Why? To save a buck. All these young people needed were adults they could trust, and the UCP broke that, too. Spare us

the line that every death is a tragedy; the tragedy is the UCP's indifference. Will the Premier admit that the UCP has failed children in care?

2:30

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I will continue to reiterate, each and every time that member asks a question about children's deaths, that our hearts do go out to the families and those impacted. The work that we continue to do in this area is difficult and challenging, but we will continue to address every single one of these deaths by investigating it thoroughly, by assessing, by reassessing, and by implementing all the recommendations of the advocates.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that the outcomes for children and families who survive the system are also heartbreaking and that in the past two years the number of families that have stayed together without a child being apprehended has dropped 56 per cent, the number of children that were reunited with their parents dropped 34 per cent, and the number of children who were adopted dropped 39 per cent and given that that means that under the UCP more children are permanently separated from their parents and spend their whole lives in care and an unbelievable 74 per cent of those children are Indigenous, how is this a record of anything other than total failure?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, the reduction in the statistics that the hon. member mentioned is evidence that the system is working, and it's working well. We have an absolute commitment to ensuring that the cultural components of every single one of our interventions is paramount in all the decisions that the caseworkers make, and that's what we'll continue to do, especially as it relates to Indigenous families as well.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that the UCP should listen to the voices of young people like Shay, who is 22 and described losing her caseworker and being moved to the TAP program as "revisiting abandonment . . . financial loss . . . the risk of being homeless again, pressure, instability and stress," or Christian, aged 22, who says that "When you decide to become our parents . . . then you should be in it for life like good parents are – not . . . turning your back on us whenever you decide we have 'aged out,'" and given the deaths, the trauma, the broken trust, my question to all UCP MLAs but especially the three who served as Children's Services ministers is: was it worth it?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of announcing just last week a monumental investment in our transition to adulthood program, which dedicated an additional \$25.6 million to supporting exactly what that member just mentioned. The youth in this program will continue to receive financial supports, but in addition to that, they'll receive counselling, they'll receive mentoring, they'll receive workplace-related training, and they'll receive careers in the trades funding as well.

### Industrial Development in St. Albert

**Ms Renaud:** During her speech to the St. Albert and District Chamber of Commerce the Leader of the Opposition committed to investing in the Lakeview business district if elected. This project will support local business development, create 7,000 new jobs, and support advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, clean tech, the health sciences sector, and more. Yet the UCP have been vehemently opposed to this project. I don't really understand why. Question: why is the UCP so opposed to investment and job creation in St. Albert?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. members continue to peddle in fear and personal destruction because, quite frankly, they're not encumbered by the truth.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Nally:** Now, Mr. Speaker, back in the final days of that administration's government in 2018 they made a campaign promise to expand Ray Gibbon Drive, because this was important and strategic for the growth of St. Albert. They had four years to fund it, and the best that they could do was come up with a campaign commitment in 2019. They're doing the same thing with the Lakeview business district. They promised it. We're going to deliver it.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:34.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the mayor of St. Albert said that the Lakeview business district is the city's number one priority and they get calls all the time from businesses that want to set up in St. Albert but there's no more land and given that if funding was to come through soon, shovels could be in the ground as early as next year, why is this government refusing to listen to the people of St. Albert and their priorities that they've clearly identified and standing in the way of economic development? They'd rather stand up and fling insults at people instead of working with the city to get things done, create jobs.

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, do you know what the members of St. Albert really want? An MLA that lives in their riding. In addition, since they know that they're not going to get that for a few more weeks . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Nally:** Now, Mr. Speaker, the Lakeview business district is strategically . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. You've been doing so well up until now.

**Mr. Nally:** Honestly, Mr. Speaker, it's like high school without the teachers.

Now, Lakeview business district is strategically important to the growth of St. Albert. Quite frankly, we're out of land for the city to grow the business investment and tax base in that city. We're committed to delivering on the Lakeview . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This is what desperation looks like.

Given that the mayor also said that investment in the Lakeview business district will maintain momentum of economic growth along Ray Gibbon Drive . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd like to hear the question, please.

**Ms Renaud:** . . . and given that the Lakeview business district has been described as the city's main pillar of the city's future and given that on this side of the House we believe in building Alberta's future and we will get the Lakeview business district built, why is this government so opposed to progress, creating economic opportunities, and good-paying jobs for Albertans? They'd rather stand up and heckle and fling insults than actually get to work and create projects, build jobs.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. Unlike the members opposite when they governed, our government has been laser focused on creating a very competitive business environment. Alberta is leading the nation in economic growth. We're diversifying our economy at record rates. There are 100,000 unfilled jobs in Alberta, and we have a balanced budget. [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. [interjections]

**Mr. Stephan:** They can't handle the truth.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

### **Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment** (continued)

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, in Alberta we are extremely fortunate to be the economic engine for Canada through our natural resources like oil and gas. However, there are a few delinquent companies that have yet to pay their municipally owed taxes. To quote our Minister of Municipal Affairs, "In Alberta, we pay what we owe, and it's time to pay up." To the Premier: what were the key findings from the unpaid oil and gas property tax survey in 2022?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. When we did the survey, \$220 million in unpaid taxes had been reported by municipalities, with \$130 million in tax arrears, including penalties and interest, and the remaining \$90 million in cancellations. I want to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Energy working together to find a solution to this. Some of the taxes are going to be unrecoverable because they've been previously written off, but already because of the work that the two ministers did – they reached out to the companies. There's \$48 million in unpaid taxes that are already under repayment plans. There's about \$76 million that is still potentially recoverable, and we'll make sure that those get recovered.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the Premier. Given that I have heard from my constituent landowners and local municipalities about the challenge of unpaid municipal taxes and given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been focused on finding a solution to help support municipalities across the province and further given that this does not seem to be a new issue, to the Premier: what are you doing to ensure the unpaid taxes from noncompliant oil and gas companies are paid?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The measure that the Minister of Energy took in the last couple of days was a ministerial order under the Responsible Energy Development Act to the Alberta Energy Regulator. What we will do is provide a new condition where companies will not be able to transfer well licences or get new well licences unless they have satisfied the regulator that the taxes have been paid. We think that this is going to provide just enough stick so that they'll be able to pay their taxes and make sure that the municipalities are made whole, and we can get on with continuing to operate.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of my constituents tell me how grateful they are that this government is taking action to address these challenges and listen to our municipal partners, unlike the NDP during their disastrous term, and given that this government is serious about addressing the problem of unpaid municipal taxes, to the Premier: what else has our government done to support municipalities trying to collect what they are legally owed?

2:40

**The Acting Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our liability management framework is designed to make sure that licences do not get transferred to companies that are not going to be able to meet their liability needs. It's part of the reason why we have a new program in place, where companies are going to also have to clear up previous years' liability in order to improve their balance sheets. Municipal Affairs restored a special lien in legislation to give municipalities priority over creditors, and Municipal Affairs as well continues to deliver our provincial education requisition credit, which gives municipalities a break on their education property taxes by giving them credit for uncollectable taxes.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the daily Routine. Please leave quietly.

We are at points of order. At 1:55 the Government House Leader called a point of order.

### **Point of Order** **Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it is your first day in the chair ruling on points of order, I wish you the best of luck, and may the force be with you and the table.

I rise on a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically at the time noted by yourself that the Leader of the Opposition said, when asking a question to the Premier – I don't have the benefit of the Blues; I'm trying to find a delicate way to describe my handwriting: less than legible – that the Premier is shameless using public dollars for campaigning. Now, I understand that this may be something that the opposition likes to call out often, saying that we're shameless or other kinds of insults, but I think that kind of language certainly would cause disorder in this Chamber. Suggesting that the government is using public funds to campaign for an election would also be, I think, making a false accusation against a member in particular, and in this instance the Premier. So, Mr. Speaker, I do contend this is a point of order, but I leave it in your more than capable hands.

**The Acting Speaker:** The opposition deputy House leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also don't have the benefit of the Blues, but in the context the question was about government spending of \$9.6 million on government advertising just before an election. In that context, it's a question well put to the Premier about that spending, and as head of the government it was directed to the Premier. I think they are talking about disorder in the House. I also note that the Premier, in her answer prior to this one, also said: I'm not lucky enough to have Lou Arab as my husband, who works for CUPE and runs ads. Like, she also directed an attack personally to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. So if they want to keep

order in the House, I think they should watch their language as well. It's not a point of order; it's just a matter of debate. Whether they're spending money wisely or not, we disagree with that spin, so that's what it was about.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anyone else wishing to add anything additional?

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and at 1:55 the statement was made: "The reason they're doing it, Mr. Speaker, is because this Premier is shameless when it comes to using public money for her own partisan gain." I appreciate the arguments from both sides of the House regarding whether it is a point of order or simply a matter of debate. I do want to strongly caution all members of this House to act with decorum and respect for one another. I believe probably my mother is watching today, and I would love for her to see how well you all behave. While this is getting to be uncomfortable language, I do not find it a point of order, but I do strongly caution all the members to choose your words wisely. I consider this matter concluded and dealt with.

At 2:34 the Deputy Opposition House Leader called a point of order.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 2:34, in response to a question from my colleague from St. Albert, the minister rose to answer and said something to the effect that the hon. member is peddling fearmongering and that they are not encumbered by the truth. I know that the minister used "they" when he said "not encumbered by the truth," but all allegations were directed personally at the member and, prior to that, also where the member lives and those kinds of things. I think that kind of language is personally directed at the member, and it's also not helpful to the decorum in the House, and that should be ruled out of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we've travelled down this road not that long ago, where a comment was made by a member on this side of the House about members, plural, on the opposite side. Had the comment been made about a specific member – and in this case, without the benefit of the Blues I do recall the member who was speaking saying "unencumbered by the truth," which would be an indirect way of saying something unparliamentary in the event it was about a specific member. In this instance that member – and quoting the Deputy Opposition House Leader – said "members." So this is not a point of order. This has been ruled on as recently as last week, and it was a point of order called by that specific member. I'd hope that lessons are learned, that we're not wasting the Chamber's time calling points of order that are in fact not points of order, and he knows it. So I would contend it is not a point of order, but again I leave it in your capable hands.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anyone else have anything additional?

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. At 2:34 a statement was made: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. members continue to peddle in fear and personal destruction because, quite frankly, they're not encumbered by the truth." So to the Government House Leader's point, the comment was made about members in general and not a specific member. However, I do once again want to strongly caution members that you cannot do indirectly what you can't do directly. With that, I rule that this is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

## Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 11 Appropriation Act, 2023

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move second reading of Bill 11, the Appropriation Act, 2023.

This act will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and the government of Alberta for the 2023-24 fiscal year. This includes the following amounts from the general revenue fund: \$180 million for the Legislative Assembly; \$50 billion for the public service, including the government's various ministries and departments; \$3.9 billion for capital investments; \$1.5 billion for financial transactions; and \$1.5 billion in contingency funding, which will ensure the government is well equipped to respond to disasters and emergencies as well as any future pandemic-related cost pressures. This funding will ensure the government has the resources it needs to continue providing the programs and services Albertans will rely on in the coming fiscal year, as laid out in Budget 2023.

2:50

Budget '23 secures Alberta's future by growing and diversifying the economy, strengthening health care and education, improving the safety of our communities across the province, and establishing a new fiscal framework. It continues our positive fiscal trajectory with another balanced budget and forecasted surplus of \$2.4 billion in '23-24 and projected surpluses of \$2 billion the next year and \$1.4 billion in the out-year.

Over the last four years our relentless focus on investment attraction, job creation, and diversification has secured our position once again as the economic engine of the nation. Building on the \$600 million committed over three years to the Alberta at work initiative, Budget '23 includes an additional \$370 million to help Albertans build their skills and fill thousands of new jobs as businesses grow and more corporations and businesses move to our province.

Budget '23 also includes a new health workforce strategy that provides \$158 million to support multiple initiatives to recruit and retain health care workers, including the targeted recruitment of internationally trained workers. We're providing funding to increase the number of seats available in health care professions, including 1,800 new seats for health care aides, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses over the next three years and an additional 120 seats to train more physicians at our schools of medicine, Mr. Speaker, a 40 per cent increase in physician training capacity. Another \$35 million over three years will expand enrolment in our nontrade construction programs and training in the energy, technology, business, and aviation sectors.

Now, while economic growth is strong, times remain tough for many families and households. New relief measures are helping postsecondary students. We're providing more grants and bursaries to low-income Albertans who are looking to upgrade their skills to fill jobs in high-demand sectors. These measures will keep \$178 million more in the pockets of our students each year. This adds to our comprehensive affordability measures, including the suspension of the fuel tax, providing electricity rebates, the indexation of personal income taxes, and targeted supports to our seniors, families, and most vulnerable.

We're also making record investments in kindergarten through grade 12 education to secure the future for our youth. In total, Budget '23 provides an additional \$1.8 billion over three years to fund enrolment growth, reduce class size, meet the specialized learning needs of students, and improve transportation. The '23 capital plan supports 58 school projects – yes, Mr. Speaker, 58 school projects – including new schools that will provide more spaces for students, create jobs, and revitalize Alberta's communities.

Public safety and a fair and efficient justice system are key deliverables for government, Mr. Speaker. Budget '23 increases funding by 12 per cent to the ministries of Justice and public safety: \$655 million for Justice will increase the number of Crown prosecutors and add support staff to address backlogs, increase capacity, and modernize our courts; \$1.2 billion for public safety and emergency means more boots on the ground to better fight crime in our communities.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Alberta's strong balance sheet wouldn't have been possible without our commitment to responsible fiscal management. We're securing Alberta's future with a new fiscal framework that will require balanced budgets, control operating spending, and provide a framework for surplus cash. A balanced budget requirement and limiting spending increases to population growth and inflation would ensure appropriate and sustainable spending. The spending ceiling would challenge government to focus on how we can transform the way we do things, to improve the way we deliver programs and services while making sure Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars are respected and used efficiently. The fiscal framework would ensure that the government continues to prioritize saving for the future and paying down debt. Balanced budgets would become the norm instead of the exception, Mr. Speaker, and that's good news for Albertans today and Albertans tomorrow.

Budget '23 is a budget that secures Alberta's future. We're driving economic growth and Alberta's prosperity with fiscal responsibility, investment attraction, and diversification. This is how we fund programs and services that support Albertans. We're securing the health and education of Albertans by increasing access to family doctors, surgeries, and emergency services and making sure our children and grandchildren have the education system they need to reach their full potential. We're securing our future with a new fiscal framework, a framework that will require appropriate and sustainable spending, prioritize debt repayment and savings, and ensure the next generation is not encumbered with a debt they did not incur.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this House to support this bill today and help us as a government deliver on Albertans' priorities.

I move to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill 11, the Appropriation Act, 2023.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 12 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023**

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's again my pleasure to rise and move second reading of Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023.

The funding in Bill 12 will cover costs reflecting the government's commitment to save for the future, strengthen our health care system,

and adapt to the changing global economy. It would also provide for a number of actions we've taken to help Albertans struggling with high costs due to inflation. If passed, Bill 12 will authorize an approximate increase of \$2.7 billion in voted expense funding, \$500,000 in voted capital investment, and \$292 million in financial transactions.

The largest supplementary amount belongs to Treasury Board and Finance, where we see \$753 million provided for investment in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Mr. Speaker, financial strength is critical to any government here in Alberta, and it's critical that we prioritize savings and debt repayment. This additional \$753 million investment in the heritage savings trust fund will add to the \$1.257 billion already there from the previous fiscal year, which will make \$2 billion in a net transfer to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also supports other priorities and pressures that we as a government have faced in the current fiscal year: \$636 million is earmarked for the Department of Energy – that includes \$338 million for the cost of selling oil, and this is primarily due to higher energy prices and increased activity in the sector – \$279 million is earmarked for the site rehabilitation program as a result of revised federal program timelines; and \$10.8 million will be earmarked for the Alberta petrochemical incentive program for an additional project approval, which is again good news for the Alberta economy.

Five hundred and fifty-three million dollars, Mr. Speaker, is requested for the Department of Health. Included in that amount is \$332 million for physician payments, \$184 million for the new Alberta Medical Association agreement. I would like to thank our Minister of Health for successfully concluding that agreement on behalf of all Albertans. Thirty-seven million dollars is earmarked for payments to allied health professionals. On the matter of health it must be noted that Budget '23 will provide funding, beyond that which we see in this bill, to continue to support a stronger health care system for Albertans. In fact, we're setting a new record again for spending in health care this year by committing an additional \$965 million in operating expense for '23-24 for the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a hard year for many families meeting the end of the month as bills have piled up due to inflation pressure that Canadians are experiencing right across the country, that, in fact, citizens are experiencing, really, right across the developed world. Six hundred and nine million dollars is requested under the Affordability and Utilities ministry; \$349 million for utility rebates and grant programs, primarily for electricity rebates, as part of the affordability action plan; \$6.6 million for developing the affordability action plan communications effort. It's important Albertans know where they can find relief, and we're committed to ensuring that they have the information required to participate in this programming.

**3:00**

Mr. Speaker, other funding is requested across departments to provide for various services and initiatives. This includes \$32 million for public security, \$31 million for court and justice services, \$28 million for homeless and outreach support services, \$20 million for learning support funding, and \$1.5 million for rural economic development, among other programs, services, and initiatives detailed before us today.

Mr. Speaker, Budget '23 keeps our net debt to GDP ratio well below our targeted maximum of 30 per cent. In fact, at the end of this fiscal year our net debt to GDP ratio will be 10.2 per cent, giving Alberta the strongest balance sheet of any province in the

country by far. Simply put, our commitment to fiscal anchors is paying off and paving the way for a more prosperous future.

Going forward, new fiscal rules will make sure that governments continue to make responsible spending decisions, and our new fiscal rules will require a balanced budget. Balanced budgets will become the norm instead of the exception.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, actions by this government have secured Alberta's future. This bill reflects that future, and I respectfully urge my colleagues, on both sides of the House, today to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 9

#### Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 9 continues to build on the significant progress this government has made in reducing red tape for Albertans and Alberta businesses. Now I would like to quote the greatest Finance minister in our province's history, when he said that we inherited a fiscal train wreck when we got elected. In fact, we didn't just inherit a fiscal train wreck, Madam Speaker; we inherited a province overrun with socialist rot, and nowhere was that rot more evident than the 97 tax increases that Albertans were subject to. Of those 97 tax increases imposed on Albertans in the previous four years, one of them was the greatest tax in our province's history, the 4 and a half billion dollar, investment-crushing, job-killing carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to say that we campaigned on a platform of fiscal restraint, and we did what we said we were going to do, which is that we cut taxes, and we reduced red tape. We have the lowest corporate taxes in Canada. We are cheaper than 44 U.S. states. Our taxes put us in line with Louisiana and Texas.

But, in addition to that, we've made ourselves into a business-friendly environment. We cut red tape. Let me give you one example. If you're building a billion-dollar project, you can come to the Industrial Heartland, which has a pilot right now for a designated industrial zone where they have things like preapproved water licences so that if you're coming to the province for the first time, you don't need to spend 18 months getting a water licence, Madam Speaker, because we've already done that. Those are the kinds of things that we're doing to attract investment.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you that the world is noticing. They're watching, and our plan is working. Business is embracing what we're doing. A couple of examples, of course, are that Alberta has 12 per cent of Canada's population, yet we've created a quarter of the jobs in the last 12 months. We have the Alberta petrochemical incentive program, which was referenced by the Finance minister. We have received \$40 billion in applications: not \$40 million, \$40 billion worth of applications.

We are putting ourselves on the map as the global leader in clean hydrogen. Six facilities have been announced for Alberta, four of them coming to the Industrial Heartland, 30 minutes from where we stand right now, and they will be employing many people in the area. Many of those are my constituents, Madam Speaker. The first

one, Air Products, broke ground about two months ago. These are exciting projects. That's in addition to the Dow Chemical project, the world's first net-zero ethane cracker.

A couple more examples of how business is responding to our cutting taxes and reducing red tape are film and television. We have grown the film and television industry from \$100 million to a billion dollars. In addition to that, De Havilland airplane manufacturing – Madam Speaker, if I said to you three years ago that Alberta was going to be a destination for building airplanes, most people would have laughed, yet that's what's happening. We're building airplanes in Alberta because the investment community is taking notice and they're responding. They're responding with further investments, and the good news is that they're creating jobs for Albertans.

Now, our approach to red tape has been so successful that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave us the highest score in the country last year, and they also gave us the only A, an A-minus, for red tape reduction. This makes us a leader in Canada. We have reduced 36 per cent of the red tape that we inherited from the NDP. We also brought in some new programs as well, so we have a net red tape reduction of 30 per cent, and we will be at one-third by the end of 2023, Madam Speaker. We've also saved Albertans and job creators \$2.1 billion on unnecessary regulatory burden. Now, Bill 9 moves forward under that same premise, that we're going to make life better, we're going to make life easier for Albertans. If passed, this amendment and this bill and the previous six bills alone will have led to the elimination of at least 4,000 unnecessary requirements since the beginning of our mandate.

Let me now provide an overview of the key amendments included in this bill. Madam Speaker, Bill 9 helps agricultural workers in a number of ways. With our proposed amendments to the Irrigation Districts Act we would cut red tape for the irrigation industry, a crucial part of Alberta's agricultural sector and our economy. Several of the amendments would modernize the legislation, giving irrigation districts more options for public notification while updating accounting standards. We would also expand the ability of irrigation districts to stop water delivery to those using water in harmful or unauthorized ways while allowing them to remove unused land from their districts. Meanwhile an expanded Irrigation Council would respond to the needs of districts and water users while adding more diverse representation and expertise. These amendments are well overdue and address a number of recommendations that stakeholders have been asking for.

Bill 9 also helps another important agricultural sector in Alberta, namely the beekeeping industry. Proposed amendments would modernize the Bee Act and its regulation to help protect Alberta's bee industry. This includes adding emerging pests and diseases to the legislation to allow industry and government to respond more quickly in the event of an outbreak, saving producers time, money, and stress. Alberta has the largest beekeeping industry in Canada, and these changes will help support its continued growth and safety.

Speaking of safety, Bill 9 also recognizes the great risks that firefighters take to protect Albertans, their lives, and their property. That's why we're proposing to amend the Workers' Compensation Act to grant presumptive cancer coverage to all firefighters who served during the 2016 Fort McMurray fires. With this change, affected firefighters and their families would receive the benefits and supports they need with fewer delays as they would no longer need to provide evidence that the disease is work related. Madam Speaker, we are proud to include this amendment as part of this bill, and we thank firefighters for their continued service and sacrifice. I know my colleague the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development shares this view.



As I said earlier, we seek to help all Albertans with this bill wherever they live. We're watching out for Albertans who live in the cities, our towns as well as our rural areas. That's why we're proposing important amendments to the Public Transit and Green Infrastructure Project Act. These changes would remove the province's ability to terminate LRT funding agreements with Calgary or Edmonton without cause, reducing the risk to the cities and their contractors that the projects may not be able to proceed due to withdrawal of provincial support. Both cities have expressed concerns about this risk, Madam Speaker.

This change would also encourage more businesses to bid on the LRT contracts and potentially reduce project costs by removing the need for contractors to build in a premium to protect themselves in case provincial funding is terminated without cause. To be clear, the grant agreements will continue to provide the province with appropriate recourse should the cities not satisfy the terms of the agreement. We are happy to bring these amendments forward to eliminate oversight that is no longer needed, helping both cities to expand their respective LRT services.

Madam Speaker, last year my predecessor the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park brought forward important changes to ensure prompt payment of contractors in the construction industry. Changes we're proposing for the Public Works Act would allow the government to support the planned extension of prompt payment rules to public work projects as well.

3:10

Madam Speaker, Albertans are proud Canadians, and we want to ensure that Albertans' voice remains strong in our province's priorities, interests, and concerns. This includes ensuring that the property rights of all Albertans are protected and respected by the federal government. In support of that, Bill 9 would amend two pieces of legislation that cover trespassing on private land, namely the Petty Trespass Act and the Trespass to Premises Act. With the changes we're proposing, we're ensuring legislative clarity around the fact that federal government officials are bound by the same rules in Alberta's trespass legislation that apply to Albertans, including potential penalties for unlawful entry onto an Albertan's property. I should also note that in any trespassing situations property owners can still be held responsible for their actions, should call law enforcement to deal with any trespassers. However, this change aligns with similar legislation brought forward in Saskatchewan last fall and would send a strong signal to the federal government that we are committed to protecting Albertans' property rights.

Madam Speaker, Bill 9 also promotes and protects public safety in all areas of the province. The changes we're proposing to the Income and Employment Supports Act would suspend government income support benefits to people with outstanding warrants until the warrant is executed or cancelled. With this, we would ensure that taxpayers' funds are not being used to potentially enable a violent offender to avoid arrest and therefore pose a safety risk to the general public. This will also save Alberta police the time and resources in executing arrest warrants as many offenders who rely on support could be more willing to turn themselves in for arrest. To be clear, we would maintain the flexibility to continue to provide these supports to the families or dependants of these offenders. These amendments would also align Alberta's legislation with British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, all of which have introduced similar amendments to address benefit suspension due to outstanding warrants.

Last but not least, Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't also make note of some important changes we're proposing for legislation that belongs to my ministry. Our land titles office has

experienced pressure due to significant real estate market activity across Alberta. Since April 2021 there has been an 86 per cent increase in registration documents coming into the land titles office. To address the increase in volume and the resulting backlog, the land titles office has hired more staff to increase our document processing capacity, but the changes we're proposing in Bill 9 would also help relieve the pressure.

Our proposed amendment to the Land Titles Act would allow Albertans to sign and submit certain documents electronically to the land titles office; in other words, no more wet-ink signatures for certain documents. This change would be an important first step towards the future digitization of the entire land title registration process in Alberta, contributing to the modernization of government service delivery. I should also mention, Madam Speaker, that this change would also align nicely with recent changes we have made. That means Albertans are no longer required to provide wet-ink signatures for vehicle registration.

Madam Speaker, we remain committed to these and other solutions that continue to reduce red tape and modernize our approval process for Albertans and Alberta businesses. The amendments we are proposing will continue to make life easier for Albertans. In this spirit, I invite the support of the House to give second reading to Bill 9.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, just to clarify – I may have not heard it – did you move second reading at the beginning of your speech? Okay. Thank you very much.

I'm looking for those that wish to join debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to join discussion here on Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I appreciate the little history lesson, I guess, from the minister of red tape, talking about, to begin with, the fiscal train wreck that he made mention of. Of course, he left out such details as things like a bet placed at the cost of \$1.3 billion on a U.S. election, might have left out the \$30 million a year being spent to chase a cartoon bigfoot and a couple of different attempts to get a logo right, and then as of recently, you know, kind of forgot to mention about the \$9 million ad slush fund the government has just given itself.

But I digress. Let's get back to Bill 9 and some of the things that are going on here. When we're talking about Bill 9 – obviously, a ministry that's now on its third minister has proposed over the course of this 30th Legislature to bill taxpayers somewhere in the neighbourhood of between \$10 million and \$15 million and possibly even more, as I was not able to get a clear answer in estimates around investigations and audits. There's almost an additional \$8 million there. It would have been helpful, especially, you know, as the minister was talking about these different percentages of red tape that's been reduced throughout 36 per cent and 30 per cent, yet in the estimates documents it was above 29 per cent. I'm not really sure exactly what that was, whether it's 29.1, 29.5, 29.9. We seem to be getting all kinds of different numbers here.

I guess the good news is that at least we're not looking at things like reducing the fee to go cut Christmas trees, but people still have to fill out the paperwork. I'm glad we don't have to discuss that in Bill 9 or something to that effect or at least not give out plaques to his colleagues. I'm appreciative of that.

The minister also made reference to some significant dollars that have been saved due to the efforts of red tape reduction. I would of course submit to the House that a very large portion of that dollar

amount would come from the TIER program, so I think the number is a little bit inflated there. I just thought I'd point that out.

Some of the things that I do want to focus on in Bill 9 – and when I got the technical briefing, I didn't really get some clear answers with regard to this. The first one I'll start off with is some of the changes on the Income and Employment Supports Act. I didn't seem to get a clear answer around: was there any kind of consultation with the Privacy Commissioner? Were there any kind of red flags brought up or any questions brought up to that effect? I'd like to know – obviously, you know, when we get, probably, into Committee of the Whole, we'll get a chance to be able to hear about some of those answers, of course. Is it in line completely with the privacy legislation?

I'm also wondering if there's been any research that's been done on the impact of withdrawing the benefits and how that will decrease crime rates. You know, certainly, I think that if we can show that this kind of a change does have an impact, I do agree that that is something that we can talk about and be able to bring to the forefront and show Albertans that that is indeed happening.

Just on the consultation I know we could hear about, you know, what we heard during those consultations, and perhaps maybe the government will have the ability to table those documents so we can see what was said during some of the consultations around changes there.

Now, I do have to bring this up, because I'd be remiss by not doing that. I know it's possible for individuals to get multiple parking tickets, not address those, and actually have a warrant brought out for their arrest. What kind of, you know, protections do we have for that? The legislation isn't absolutely clear on that. I know that during briefing I got the usual: well, it'll be in the regulations. It'd be nice just to hear some of the protections around that. Obviously, some of the protections will be for families that, unfortunately, do not know that perhaps a family member is engaged in criminal activity, but they do rely on that individual for support. Again, I just want to make sure that that's covered and addressed here.

3:20

Now, I also want to focus in a little bit here on changes to the Petty Trespass Act. There have been a couple of situations that have been brought forward to my attention which I'm very concerned that this legislation will have an impact on. Now, the first one is census workers, federal census workers. Sometimes they have to go back to a property multiple times in order to try to get the information that they're requesting via the census. I do know of situations where people really don't like census workers coming onto their property. What kind of impact is that going to have on those workers? You know, are we going to get a situation where police are called simply because of a census worker? Hopefully, we can get some clarity around that.

The other situation that's come to my attention here just a couple of weeks ago: there was a case where many postal workers had been suspended. They were trying to address some safety issues within the workplace and what entails with their job. Long story short, they were essentially told they were being suspended because they were interfering with the delivery of mail. Now, I'm wondering, just a natural question – again, I'm just hoping for some clarity on this – if federal mail workers are unable to deliver their mail for whatever reason, will they be protected from getting suspended from their job? Hopefully, there has been some consultation by the minister of red tape, through Bill 9, in terms of how that will be addressed.

Now, the other one I want to quickly jump on is, of course, the changes to the Public Transit and Green Infrastructure Project Act. Let's be honest here. This is not red tape reduction; this is simply

correcting a really big mistake that this government made. By putting in this kind of uncertain language, it has been difficult to get people to bid on projects. This seems a little bit like, you know, hand-me-down legislation like I've seen in previous iterations of red tape reduction acts, where it tried to fix a situation that was made. Perhaps maybe the Minister of Health could have brought forward some changes around ripping up doctors' contracts and could've let the red tape reduction minister handle it in that sense.

You know, this is good. I'm not saying it's a bad thing. I think the change is a good thing. It's just: why did it take so long for something like this? I'm sure that there must've been consultations with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary on this. Why has it taken literally until just about the end of this Legislature to address that? That was just simply not a very good policy that was brought forward. I am curious, though, if the cities did share with the minister how much business was potentially lost because of this. Hopefully, maybe through some of those consultations we could hear a little bit about that.

Now I want to touch on the changes to the Workers' Compensation Act. There have been a lot of very heated statements around this, and I will continue to take the position that I'm very, very disappointed. I appreciate the changes being proposed here. What I don't appreciate, Madam Speaker, is that it doesn't go far enough. Now, what I'm going to do here is that I'm going to hopefully touch the hearts of members opposite who have said they have roots in labour, just as I do. When you have a situation where language is going to fail a member, you need to do something about it to change it. In this case the failure with the proposed language here in Bill 9 around the changes to WCB is that it's only going to be on a go-forward basis.

I know that the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development has said that it's only one, but that's all we needed: one example, one failure where this family is going to have to continue to try to fight to get coverage for the loved one that they lost. It would just be simple enough to retroactively change this language.

Now, unfortunately, we have heard the red tape minister say in a news conference that that was impossible right up until Ontario dated changes to WCB to make these retroactive changes. They did it all the way back to 1960, Madam Speaker. I'd like to say that I don't even think I was a twinkle in my dad's eye at that time yet. So for us to simply make a change back to the beginning of the Fort McMurray fire: it's doable. We can change it.

I know that my good friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods and critic for labour has an amendment ready for that, so here's where I will ask: for those that have roots in labour, you know that this change is the right thing to do. We're not asking for the moon. We're not trying to create any kind of uncertainty. We're simply saying: date it back to the start. This will cover that one individual. They won't have to fight anymore. It's just the right thing to do. Hopefully, my pleas haven't fallen on deaf ears, Madam Speaker, with regard to a potential amendment that we can bring forward, probably likely during Committee of the Whole, to make some slight changes to good language. I'm not saying that what's proposed in here under WCB changes is bad. It's good language. Please don't trip at the finish line. It's that important.

Now, some other things we could look at. It's just simply housekeeping; the minister himself said that. You know, we could be bringing these things forward in a statutes amendment act just like we've seen in other red tape reduction bills. It kind of feels like we're just trying to fill up the list here, fill up the roster, look like something's being done on a legislative level to justify, as I've mentioned earlier in my comments, a ministry that's spending \$10 million to \$15 million, maybe even significantly more, on red tape

besides, like I said, going and cutting red tape ribbons and giving out plaques, like we've seen in the past. Hopefully, there are no plans by the current red tape minister to do these sorts of similar things.

I think at this point in time it's not necessarily a bad piece of legislation, touting, I think, all the significant accomplishments. I appreciate that everybody is very, very proud of the A-minus rating, but I have to ask, then: why is it, which I discovered during the estimates of red tape, scanning through every single ministry, that only a handful barely mentioned red tape? It used to be prolific throughout all of it. There used to be measurements included. There were none. Even in the ones that, like I said, just barely mentioned the words "red tape," there was nothing. If it's still such a focus, why was there nothing mentioned by all the ministries about their efforts? Is it simply a case that every ministry has been able to accomplish their own red tape reduction targets and, again, here we have just hand-me-down legislation to keep the red tape minister busy?

3:30

I will make a comment around some of the changes to land titles. I'm glad to see these. You know, I don't want to be completely critical of that. I think these changes will hopefully speed up the process, will make things a little bit easier for Albertans to get that kind of documentation done. I certainly don't have any concerns with that.

Again, hopefully, as we get further into debate, we'll get some answers to some of the questions that I've posed, you know, find out some clarifying facts. I think it'll make it a little bit easier to be able to go to Albertans and tell them that some of their concerns are not a problem. As I said, changes to the trespass act have raised some red flags here. Rather than just simply going with the narrative, "Well, it'll all be taken care of in regulations," I think Albertans want to see, you know, some clarity on this so that when the regulations do come out, they'll be able to read what they're expecting with those changes.

Again, I'm looking forward to my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods bringing forward that amendment. Again – and I'm sorry to come back to this – please, please don't trip at the finish line here, literally at the finish line. Our firefighters are our heroes of this province. The work that they did was unimaginable in Fort McMurray. The stories that I've heard – I can't even begin to try to fathom and relate to it, but they have said clearly that they want their sisters and brothers covered, including the ones that we've already lost. This is fundamentally important. Again, this is not about trying to make the government look bad; it's just a simple change to cover it all the way from the start.

I will be listening to the rest of debate. I will be making notes along the way. I will likely be back up in other sections of the debate to provide further comment, but hopefully I can get some answers later on down the road here.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak today to Bill 9. This is another in a series of acts that have come forward from this government. You know, I think we all have an interest in ensuring that our regulations work better, that they protect the things they need to protect while being improved.

I'm not saying that none of these bills have ever done it at all but to a very, very limited degree. The vast majority of this is just lip service. My personal favourite was the time that the UCP literally

repealed and transcribed an entire act into another one so that they could claim to have removed a regulation. I mean, the degree to which – just, like, literally deleting an entire act and rewriting it in another act so that now you have one act instead of two acts isn't actually changing anything in the real world that affects the people out there. It's kind of bananas. I really have to say that it shocks me. Yes.

This series of bills has been problematic, I would say, to say the least. In this particular bill one of the things that the government actually gets right – and I say that a little tongue in cheek because they broke it in the first place. One of the things they actually get right is that they remove the ability, like a sort of legislative revision, in contracts that would give the government the ability to withdraw on 90 days' notice. This is from big projects. In Calgary it's the green line; that's the project in question. This was – I don't know – political grandstanding on the part of the UCP. They put in this ability to revoke a contract on 90 days. Now, anyone who's ever operated in any kind of a business environment, really, anywhere for any length of time can tell you that putting in a clause like that for a huge project, that allows one party to just walk away from the contract in 90 days for no reason, drives up the price massively.

This is public infrastructure. It's necessary public infrastructure. It's infrastructure that is incredibly important to the people of Calgary, and this clause, which the UCP put in in the first place, in order to show how antitransit they are, I guess – I don't really know what the point of that was. I mean, who's against transit? Like, that just seems crazy. But the UCP managed to put this in so that they could please their antitransit folks, I guess, and it had a huge impact.

I'm glad it's coming out, but once again this is this government asking for people to congratulate them for fixing things they broke. They did it with deindexing tax brackets, something that the former UCP Premier used to rail against and then did as soon as he was in government. I mean, this is fairly typical of the UCP. You know, they deindexed that. They cost Albertans money. They raised their taxes. And then they turned around and fixed the thing that they had broken and asked to be congratulated for it.

It's the same way with benefits. This government voted for it. These members, UCP members, voted for it when we were in government, for the indexing of benefits to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are not losing to inflation, and then they turned around and deindexed them as soon as they got in, and then they reindexed them, and now they run around the province, saying, "Look at us; aren't we glorious? We've indexed benefits," as though, again, they weren't fixing something that they just broke.

Yes, it is a good thing that this provision has been removed. It's a very good thing, but it should never have been in there. It was really transparently obvious to anyone who's ever operated in any sort of a business environment that it should never have been in there. I guess thank you for repealing your own bad decision.

The next part of this that I want to talk about is the portion dealing with WCB. This is a good change. It is a change that will cover something that needs covering. I think the challenge is that – and we have raised this multiple times in this House, and the government has responded multiple times – it doesn't cover people who were diagnosed in the interim period with these cancers. You know, the government is saying, "This isn't a problem; it doesn't exist," and the firefighters are saying: "This is a problem. It does exist, and it needs to be addressed."

In my opinion, when you have a dispute as to the facts, the best thing you can do is to look to what the most credible source is. Madam Speaker, when I examine it, the UCP government versus firefighters, I think it's pretty clear who the most credible source is. I think it's extremely clear that the firefighters are a more credible

source of information in this case, that their story is probably the correct story because this government has a long history of being deeply mistaken – I’m trying to avoid unparliamentary language here – as to the facts, with no imputation of what the intention of spreading those deeply mistaken facts was.

You know, this conversation has occurred in the House. We have seen the minister stand up over and over again and claim that it’s absolutely impossible to have this legislation operate retroactively. It might actually be retrospectively because it just changes the current outcome of – anyway, it doesn’t really matter. The point is that Ontario has done it, and in fact it can be done.

3:40

Courts tend to not read things as having retroactive or retrospective operations unless the Legislature is really clear. I mean, that is true; courts will not assume that a Legislature intended to operate retroactively, but you can do it with really clear language. This rule has been around for a while. It’s not a new thing. I guarantee you the legislative drafters have informed the government of the existence of this rule. So it’s not impossible. Ontario has done it.

I think this government should do it. We will obviously be introducing an amendment to that effect, and I think all members of this House are going to have the opportunity to vote on that. This is, I mean, just a really easy question: should we cover the cancers of all firefighters who fought to protect Albertans and then became ill as a result of their bravery? I think the answer is clearly yes. I don’t understand why the government would obfuscate or deny that or attempt to argue against it. Like, what could be a clearer answer to a question than: should we presumptively cover illnesses that firefighters got protecting Albertans? Yes. Yes, we clearly should. I really hope that the government members change their mind with respect to this.

Honestly, I have to say, Madam Speaker, I have very rarely – I mean, I find this government disappointing in every possible way – been so disappointed as to see, you know, the minister who represents the area in question stand up and say: “The WCB is working just fine. There’s nothing wrong with it. WCB is only there for employees; it’s not there for the employees.” Like, the degree to which that just represents a complete misunderstanding of WCB and the rights of employees and just everything is incredibly intense.

Yeah. That conversation has been very problematic. I sincerely hope that the government takes what may be its last opportunity to correct one of its own very egregious errors and allows that to apply to everyone.

Okay. Another section of the bill that I wanted to talk about has to do with income supports. One of the changes that is being made in here is that – and this is mostly because it’s worth discussing what these words mean because sometimes words we use in legislation aren’t super obvious to the public. Okay. This is section 15.1 in section 5:

The Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support . . .

The use of the word “must” here is important.

. . . and benefits to an applicant or recipient under Part 2, Division 1 when notified that

- (a) a warrant for the arrest of the applicant or recipient has been issued in respect of a prescribed offence, and
- (b) the warrant has not been executed.

Warrant sounds serious, but I think it’s worth discussing because when we were in government, I had a bill that made changes to warrants because at the time – if you get a ticket for riding the C-Train without paying your fare, for your dog pooping in the wrong

place, for having your dog off a leash in the wrong area, and you don’t pay that ticket, a warrant issues. Those are things that are included in warrant when the government uses the word “warrant” here.

Now, the changes we made in government – so it used to be the case that if you had such a warrant and you came to the attention of police – I mean, they don’t generally go out looking for you on these sorts of warrants, but it was essentially what’s called a pay-or-stay ticket. Either you had to come up with the money for the fine immediately or you were jailed, basically like a debtors’ prison. You owed because you didn’t pay your C-Train, and you were then put in jail. They had sort of like – there’s a table that cross-references how many days in default you get based on the size of the fine.

This was obviously problematic. It bogged up the system significantly. It put people in jail who didn’t need to be there. There was an incredibly tragic case of someone going to jail and dying as a result of the actions of their cellmate, not of the state, who really ought not to have been there in the first place. This was incredibly serious. In fact, law enforcement was in favour of this. They stood with me, the Edmonton Police Service, when this bill was introduced. This wasn’t, like, letting people get away with things; it was just not putting people in jail because they didn’t pay for their C-Train ticket. That was the change we made.

The change this government is making is that warrants – and I know what they’re going to say. They’re going to say: a prescribed offence; don’t worry; we’ll prescribe only certain things. But, I mean, this is the problem with a government that has lost the trust of the public this fundamentally. Why would we trust them? Why would we trust them to do that? That is incredibly problematic.

I think it’s just worth highlighting what a warrant in this instance actually is, because what they’re saying is essentially that if you have a warrant, you know, you’ll be denied benefits. And those benefits, like, they don’t just – sure, they go to the individual, but that individual may use them to pay for shelter or buy food for their children. Those are important things. These are people that have not been convicted and are potentially dealing with an extremely low-level offence, again, because that’s what “warrant” means in this instance. So I think it’s incredibly problematic.

I would love to hear an explanation from the government as to why this is necessary, because I would be surprised to discover that this will have an overall effect on public safety. Like, I would be really surprised to discover that the government has solid evidence that this is going to have an impact on public safety, because it seems pretty counterintuitive.

Okay. So those are the amendments to the employment benefits, public transit. Oh, yes. The Trespass to Premises Act. That’s also potentially problematic. I would love to hear from the government. Essentially, they’re adding that the act binds the government of Canada, so government of Canada employees in the execution of their official duty. The minister has admitted that this has never actually happened here in the province of Alberta, and this has the real potential to impair, like, a census taker or something like that. So I think that that is incredibly problematic, and I would love to hear what the government has considered, what consultation they’ve done, what research they’ve done.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and speak at second reading to Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I’d like to echo some of the points that my colleague just made, and she made some excellent points around

the last topic that she was talking about. One of the last ones was around income support, and I'll sort of circle to those.

You know, it's not surprising that this government, this UCP government, sort of started in 2019 with a huge piece of legislation that amended a number of other pieces of legislation, and in it they hid, I think, a lot of changes or cuts, that, well, they would describe as not cuts but changes, that actually went on to make life extremely difficult for Albertans over the next few years.

Sadly, just like their other red tape reduction – I mean, there are some things that have been changed, whether it's languages, updating, some really small changes to make things read better. You know, fixing some things is fine, but what they also put in are some damaging or some potentially damaging pieces, that my colleagues have talked about.

As you'll recall, Madam Speaker, in 2019 an omnibus bill, again, did all kinds of damage to income supports, so those will be the income support products. There are two different streams of income support. The first one is barriers for employment, and the second one is expected to work. What the UCP government did in 2019 was deindex both of those benefits. That caused over the next three and a half, almost four years those benefits to be worth less because they were not tied or coupled to inflation, so instead of getting that extra money every year, people were getting less.

3:50

Now, as if that wasn't bad enough, Madam Speaker, this government did not stop there when it comes to income support. They took it a little bit further. What they decided to do – there's a base, a core for income support. It doesn't really talk about it in this piece of legislation, but there's a core benefit for income support. There are also supplemental pieces. There are supplemental pieces to address things like medical transportation, unique child care, things like nutrition, people with special diets. There's also a benefit – it's actually one of the larger ones – for people that have, I would say, pretty severe disabilities but are in the process of applying for AISH. As you know, Madam Speaker, that is not an easy process, and it's not a quick process. There's actually that supplemental benefit for people sitting on income support.

But those have been systematically removed over this government's tenure. They started by deindexing the benefits. They continued by removing supplementals and making it – not only that; if there was a decision to remove something or claw something back, then, you know, an Albertan had the ability to appeal that decision. Then this UCP government went a little bit further and changed the rules around appeal. There are some things that appellants are not able to share with the panels anymore that they used to, that used to actually help and move things a little bit in their favour.

Just to give you a taste of some of the changes that have happened over the last almost four years, you know, when we saw this first change – and I just want to remind this Chamber that we're almost four years into this. We saw the cuts in 2019, and the song that we heard from the other side was: this isn't a cut; this isn't a cut; this isn't a cut. Well, we know it was a cut. I mean, that was just the line they were all using. It was a cut, and we saw their earning power or the amount they got from income support steadily decline, steadily go down. What we heard from this government was: it's not that onerous, not a big deal. But what we did see in the years between that decision and now are symptoms of what that decision caused.

Now, I admit we also had a pandemic in there, and there was certainly some impact because of the pandemic. But what we saw was just an explosion of food bank usage right across the province – just an explosion – so much so that for the first time a government really had to step in and provide some cash. Now, we can talk about

how that was distributed another day, but there was a requirement for government to do that because they just could not keep up with demand. Demand on food banks exploded right across the province.

We also know that the number of people without homes also exploded. I think I heard that in Edmonton that population just about doubled. Small communities that don't typically have large issues or big problems with people without homes, like St. Albert, are experiencing more problems. Right across the province this has happened. This is not a coincidence. We knew this would happen. When you cut people's income, poverty gets worse, gets deeper.

The reason I'm talking about all of these things is because I want to talk about the one piece in this legislation today that the red tape minister has thrown into this, you know, everything-but-the-kitchen-sink sort of bill, and this piece is to make some changes to the Income and Employment Supports Act. Now, what this does is add some requirements or the ability of the director to actually stop those benefits or just say no right off the bat. Now, the minister also stood up a little while ago and said: well, other jurisdictions have done it. Three, I think he said: Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and another one. What he failed to mention: there are far more that chose not to do that or have not done that yet.

Now, the minister could have stood up and said: we're doing this along with these other provinces because it's based in research; what we found is that we did the research, we did the consultation, we did the collaboration with people that support others on income support or work in poverty reduction, and this is a great idea, and this is going to help Alberta, and this is going to make life better for Albertans. But that is not the case. I do believe that if this decision to include this in this piece of legislation was actually based on fact and data, that this would make life better for Albertans, we would have heard that, but we have not heard that. When we ask questions – “Well, what about this? What about if it's just for, say, a parking or a speeding ticket or whatever?” – what we hear is: well, it won't be; it'll be for serious charges. Well, it doesn't say that, does it? All we hear from this government is: oh, it'll be in regulations; trust us.

There is no trust for this government. We have seen year after year after year that this government has made changes behind closed doors, that we find out about later, particularly as it relates to community and social services and income support and AISH specifically. What's today? The 21st of March. Just today there was another change to the regulations that came out. It's like almost every day there are changes to regulations that make life more difficult for people that are on income support.

You know, it's pretty clear what the goal is here, to reduce the numbers, reduce the spending, when, in fact, as a government we should be looking at: yes, the goal should be getting people off income support, but you do it properly, and you do it safely. You do it through job creation. You do it through retraining. You do it through really good child care for people that need it. You do it by supporting people. For people that have issues with the justice system, you do that by supporting – you make sure that your legal aid system is well funded. You make sure that people have access to information and technology that they need to navigate a justice system. You don't just throw in a line and say: “The director may say no” or “The director may do this” and “Trust us; it won't be a problem because we'll fix it in regulations.” Again, Albertans have zero trust for this government. Zero.

Again, I know that some of my colleagues have asked these questions. I, too, am going to ask these very simple, straight-up questions. It is my sincere hope that there is somebody over there that has some information that can provide some clarity. This particular change, I think, if it's not done properly and if there isn't correct oversight, has the potential to actually do damage in

people's lives, but it also has the potential to cost the system enormous amounts of money. These are unintended consequences.

My first question is: who has been consulted? Specifically, has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted? We know that there will be some sharing of information based on what this piece of legislation proposes to do, so has that happened? Is it possible for the red tape minister, who proudly stands and supports this bill – then back it up with some proof. Back it up with some data. Table something from the Privacy Commissioner that gives an opinion: “You know what? This will be fine. This will support Albertans. Nothing to worry about here.” It's not a hard thing to do, so I would expect that's a bare minimum.

What research as well does the UCP have on the impact that withdrawing benefits will have on crime rates? I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I would hope that when a government proposes changes, significant changes – if you are withdrawing benefits or saying no to benefits for someone that's applying for income support, you need to know that you are impacting their lives. If they don't get access to that pitiful amount of money and it is – under \$900 is the core benefit. Nobody can live on that. Let's just be honest about that. If you say no to someone that is that desperate and perhaps has a child that they're trying to support because they have an outstanding warrant, because of this change made in this piece of legislation, you need to know that you are harming people. How is that positively going to impact crime rates? I mean, really? You are going to make desperate people even more desperate. How on earth is that a positive step forward? I just don't know. I have no idea how this government thinks this is a step in the right direction. Maybe they think they're going to come up with some magical regulations. I don't know what the answer is, but this isn't looking good.

An individual with a warrant that has not been convicted of a crime. Okay. Let's be clear about that. It's a warrant, not a conviction. Does this government understand that their proposed change will be penalizing individuals who may not actually be guilty? Let's say that there's a decision by the director or the designate of the director that decides, “You know what? No, we are not going to continue this person's income support benefits because there's a warrant out for this,” and then it turns out that that person is innocent down the road and, unfortunately, still needs income support and gets it. In the interim look at the harm that you've done.

I would think that a government focused on Albertans, like Alberta's NDP will be, would do a risk assessment, the bare minimum, to determine that the legislation that they want to enact will not harm people. To the best of their ability they should determine that this change will not harm people, and I don't believe that bare minimum has been done by this government.

4:00

I want to talk a little bit, actually, about what income support is, because I don't get the sense that all members in this place actually understand the group of people that we're dealing with here or that we're talking about. Let's be clear about what income support is. Income support is something available to people who are some of the most desperate people in this province. They have exhausted all other areas of income, they're not eligible for employment insurance, and they're not eligible for any other benefits. They are not working, so they have to go and apply for income support.

Now, there are two streams. There's barriers for employment, and there's expected to work. Now, barriers for employment, Madam Speaker, is a stream where you will find many, many people. The vast majority of the people that are sitting on there are people that have disabilities, that have chronic illnesses, that are chronically unemployed or underemployed. A lot of these folks

actually end up eventually going onto AISH because they just have that severe a disability or that severe a chronic illness. Now, that is a group. They live on the core benefit of under \$900 a month. I don't know how anybody survives on that.

The other stream is expected to work, which is a little bit different. This is a group that people do expect will work again except, for whatever reasons, there are big gaps and they're no longer eligible for employment insurance. There is this short-term assistance for people. Now, without this support, can you imagine the additional troubles that you start to introduce into people's lives? This bare minimum – small, tiny, little, minuscule – amount that people try to live on: it actually does help. Sometimes it helps people stay away from a food bank one time. Sometimes it helps them, you know, stay away from having to sleep rough for that night or stay in their car or couch surf. It's that little bit that keeps them away from that chronic edge.

If this government wants to introduce change that will say, “If there is a warrant, this person is no longer eligible” – well, again, to put all of that decision-making power into the hands of a director, I don't know, leaves me a little bit chilled, Madam Speaker, that behind closed doors there are going to be people making decisions based on we don't know what. We don't know what the warrants are for or what the criteria are that will be used about who gets kicked off and who doesn't. We don't know; nobody knows. Is it for, like, a traffic violation of some kind? We don't know, but we've just been told that it'll all be sorted out in the regulations. You know what? That is not good enough.

To be eligible for income support: again let me describe to you the people that are on this kind of benefit, because these are the things, right on the government's website, these are the eligibility pieces that must be met. You have to be unable to pay for your basic needs. That's pretty self-explanatory.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to join in debate on Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. As I rise, I'd like to thank my colleagues who have already started talking on so many important parts of this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, for my remarks I'd really like to focus in on a piece of Bill 9 that I have had the opportunity to raise in this Legislature multiple times, and that is the inadequate implementation of supports for firefighters who fought in the Fort McMurray wildfire of 2016, also known as the Horse River wildfire. I'd like to explain why this type of coverage is so critically necessary as well as where I see Bill 9 failing to provide adequate supports to all who were on the ground firefighting across the incident of the Horse River wildfire.

I would like to say in second reading that I look forward to the Official Opposition putting forward an amendment to improve Bill 9 specifically in this area, as we have talked about in this Assembly, and it is my hope that the government will support this amendment and will work with the Official Opposition to make the necessary changes as we go forward.

Now, this is an issue that I want to give credit – there are a number of people who have advocated for improved coverage for the firefighters who were on the ground in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, in the city of Fort McMurray during the fire that started in May 2016, and I specially want to give credit to the Fort McMurray Firefighters Association, IAFF local 2494. There are members of the Edmonton Fire Fighters' Union who have made this a priority issue and have been lobbying to have this fixed and, of course, the APFFPA, the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters &

Paramedics Association, which represents many, many firefighters in our province who have been advocating for the recognition that when it comes to a catastrophic, traumatic event, which this wildfire was, we need to take into consideration the conditions on the ground and what those firefighters have experienced when we are looking at workers' compensation coverage.

Workers' compensation coverage needs to be there when someone is injured on the job or incurs sickness or occupational disease as a result of their work as an employee. And in this case, for firefighters, we know that cancer is the number one cause of firefighter line-of-duty deaths. It can happen where there's a specific traumatic injury at a site – someone falls from something or is crushed, that type of injury – but firefighters most often, because of the occupational exposures they have, develop cancer later in life.

Now, it's excellent to know that the health and safety procedures and decontamination procedures for firefighters have grown exponentially. There were times, decades ago, when having the dirtiest equipment was a point of pride for firefighters and a way to show, you know, the types of fires they had been to. But as science has evolved and as health and safety has evolved, obviously that is quite different today, where now there are protocols. When firefighters have been on the site of a fire, they will immediately go and decontaminate themselves and their equipment because we have a better understanding of the carcinogens and the toxins that will stick to firefighters' equipment. That, that need to decontaminate, that need to be aware of the health and safety risks and manage those risks, is incredibly important in this situation. Because of the catastrophic nature, firefighters were not able to do that.

I'd like to talk just a little bit about this wildfire, which is unique in Canada's history because, of course, we know that it forced the evacuation of 88,000 residents and was the largest single evacuation of residents in the history of Canada, leaving a trail of physical and emotional damage.

When this wildfire began, the members of the Fort McMurray Firefighters Association were the first to engage and the last to leave, and that meant being in a toxic environment in the area of Fort McMurray. Certainly, throughout the 60-plus days until the fire was deemed to be under control, the firefighters fought tirelessly, and they did so for a number of different reasons, including trying to save as many structures as possible, trying to preserve infrastructure, and then, of course, trying to protect the citizens from any injury. These firefighters were fighting against an inferno that began with the local firefighters in Fort McMurray, in many ways, and then they brought in assistance from many other locals and from all across Alberta and other areas. Departments from Red Deer and Calgary arrived within 24 hours to provide assistance because of the size of this. All of these firefighters were working together to try and fight the fires and stop the advancement through our urban areas.

Something that many people may not realize is that it wasn't until after the first six days that crews were able to be rotated off shift for the first time. We're talking about firefighters who were working almost to exhaustion, very little rest, and they had limited to no ability to decontaminate or manage personal hygiene. At times there was no access to breathing filters or to wear self-contained breathing apparatuses, SCBA. It just wasn't feasible. The facilities that are normally used to refill SCBAs were within the contaminated areas of toxic air, so it made their breathing apparatus ineffective or refilling them impossible.

#### 4:10

What do we know about that toxic air full of cancer-causing agents? We know that 2,500 structures were completely incinerated

or partially destroyed; 80 per cent of the structures in the city were spared, fortunately, but so much was thrown up into the air, creating toxins and creating an opportunity for those firefighters on the ground to be exposed. That air contaminated members' skin, clothing, and lungs and without the ability to clean themselves for almost a week. This is completely against the normal practice for a firefighter, that would visit the scene of a regular fire and be able to then do the decontamination that they would need to do.

In Bill 9 there is a recognition of the catastrophic, traumatic event that occurred and the need to support the firefighters who were on the ground because, as the current president of the APFFPA has said, they were exposed to a career's worth of toxins within a single week in many cases. Making sure that the occupational disease, the cancers that potentially result from that exposure, is seamlessly covered through the WCB should be a priority, and I think it's one that all members of this House, supporting our firefighters – we should be able to agree on this. So I'm pleased to see the government bring this forward in Bill 9. I would note that they took four years to do that, but I will say that it is a good thing, and I am glad it is there.

Unfortunately, Bill 9 and the portions that come into effect when it comes to the WCB: that only turns on when the bill is proclaimed, when the bill is passed. What that leaves out is that there are firefighters we know about – and there may be more that we do not know about – who have been diagnosed with occupational disease relating to the Fort McMurray wildfire in the prior seven years. There is already one known case, that we've talked about in this House, of a firefighter who has passed, whose family has been fighting with the WCB for coverage. There's another firefighter story that I have heard where they've had to go through an appeals process, and I find it completely inadequate that the minister responsible for this area, responsible for occupational health and safety and for WCB, is suggesting that a fairness review process is the right answer. I think that a change to make clear that anyone, any of those firefighters, who has been diagnosed with occupational disease or these cancers should receive the coverage for their illness automatically – it can be resolved with a simple amendment.

Now, Madam Speaker, I've already sent that amendment through to the government and through to the minister in the hopes of gaining a common understanding of how we can work together to amend this and to make it very, very clear that in the case of this one catastrophic event, retroactive WCB coverage just makes sense. I do understand that it is not Alberta's workers' compensation system's normal practice to do retroactive coverage, but to be very clear, that is a choice, and in this case we are talking about a very specific incident with specific health impacts on a narrow group of individuals. We've seen in Ontario that other worker compensation systems do provide retroactive coverage, in some cases for 60 years, and in that case they're not talking about firefighters who were at a particular event; they were talking about all firefighters in their entirety. Here we are asking for retroactive coverage for the firefighters who were on the ground during this very specific event, when they were not able to properly decontaminate, when we know they are at elevated risk of occupational disease, specifically cancers.

I think the amendment we've put forward does make sense, and the government's arguments – that if somebody doesn't fall within the correct window, they will go through a fairness process and the right thing will eventually happen, and if it doesn't, someone can call the minister's office – I find completely unacceptable and inadequate. There may be others who are out there who have not even submitted a WCB claim because they know they don't meet the latency periods that are required. We cannot say that this is only one person. It's wishful thinking. I hope – I hope – that there are

not others out there, but it's possible they are, and why not have this be entirely clear?

Now, let me talk about a second way that this Bill 9 portion speaking to firefighters is inadequate, but I won't be able to do an amendment, Madam Speaker, because of the way the bill is drafted. When we talk about the toxins and what was in the air and damage to lungs, the other challenge that we have is that respiratory illness is not being considered; only cancers at this point. We already have studies done at the University of Alberta, studying I believe 1,200 first responders who were on the ground, showing significant lung damage, asthma, and other respiratory illness as a result of being on the ground in Fort McMurray. So I would urge this government, either through amendments to Bill 9 that they may be able to do or through future action, to include not just cancers, not just that occupational disease, but to consider the impact of respiratory illness when it comes to supporting those who were on the ground.

Now, this is not a unique idea. After 9/11 the Zadroga act was passed to recognize that with the amount of debris and toxins that were thrown into the air in that catastrophic event, there was a health impact for people who were on the ground, for first responders. So there's certainly precedent in other jurisdictions that we can look to when considering making that change.

The final way that Bill 9 is inadequate but one in which I think that the government has signalled that they are planning action – and I hope that they do – is the fact that the firefighters' primary site cancer regulation has not been updated since 2018, when I as minister of labour last updated it. Now I will tell you . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Best minister of labour so far.

**Ms Gray:** I appreciate the kind words from colleagues.

Updating that primary site cancer regulation in 2018, we were able to make Alberta the absolute best place in Canada for supporting our firefighters. We covered the most up-to-date science, the highest number of cancers, and we updated our latency periods based on the latest science.

Now, what's happened since 2018, because we are now at 2023: a number of other provinces have now updated their regulations based on new scientific information, and Alberta is no longer providing the most comprehensive list. The impact of that in relation to Bill 9 is, of course, that Bill 9 is providing presumptive coverage for the cancers that are listed in the firefighter primary site cancer regulation, but our primary site cancer regulation does not include a number of types of cancers that the firefighters have been lobbying should be included.

I would ask and urge the government to update that regulation. That is not something that needs to come through the Legislature, which is quite fortunate. That's something that can be done through regulation without coming into this House, but we need to do that as well, because of the interaction between Bill 9 and the coverage for Fort McMurray, and then making sure that firefighters are covered for all different types.

As an example, Manitoba has added pancreatic, thyroid, and penile cancers. Yukon has added thyroid and pancreatic . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt. There's something wrong with the buzzer. Your time is up.

Are there other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, in second, and I have to say that I want to continue on a little bit of the thread from the best labour minister in Alberta

history talking about the expansion of presumptive coverage for a number of different types of cancer for firefighters.

One that we worked on together, in preparing a bit of a business case, is that there were many hormone-based cancers that were seen as having a linkage to the workplace for men, that there were lots of studies that showed that men who worked as firefighters were at an increased likelihood of getting different types of hormone-based cancers because of workplace conditions.

But there wasn't this deep, long history of similar studies based on women. The biggest reason, when firefighters came to meet with us, was because there aren't many women who work as firefighters, but if we use the same logic to project that the male hormone-based cancers have workplace conditions that lead to their outcomes, we should be able to draw those similar types of conclusions for women. Saying, "Well, we need to wait until we have all of the scientific evidence to be able to back up that there's a definitive link." They said, "You will not get it, because we aren't attracting enough women to the profession right now." One of the ways we could help attract more women to the profession is if we said that the same presumptive coverage for those hormone-based cancers applied for women as they do for men, and I'm really honoured that I got to support the minister of labour in that work and that she carried that through to fruition.

4:20

I hear the same arguments being made by the minister of – I don't know the title; the guy who's supposed to be in charge of labour protections for the people of Alberta. There isn't a current minister of labour. Northern development, I think, is the minister who is standing in in that role when it comes to this file.

**Mr. Hanson:** Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks. Jobs, Economy and Northern Development, formerly known as the labour ministry, at least in part. Thank you very much, hon. member.

The same argument is being given around why they aren't going to backdate presumptive coverage for firefighters who had forms of cancer and have suffered the worst fate that anyone can imagine when it comes to workplace-related deaths, getting an illness that's caused by your workplace. Having the current minister stand in this place day after day after day saying that they need to go through a fairness process to ensure that they're eligible I think is a real disservice and disrespect to everyone who works as a firefighter but all of us who stood back and watched in admiration as well when people were putting their lives on the line to help evacuate the city of Fort McMurray and the surrounding region to make sure that people got out safely, that as many homes and essential services were protected as possible.

I have to say that being the Minister of Health at that time and getting the daily briefings about the risk management and where we were at, when I heard that there were fire trucks surrounding the hospital, I was deeply concerned. It was chief fire officials who said: knowing that there are fire trucks in front of the hospital is a very good sign because it means we think we can save it; it means that we're fighting to save it. So even though it was getting that close, they put their resources, their lives on the line to fight and protect the hospital, the major regional hospital for the northeast part of the north zone, in such a difficult time.

And now they're at the point where many of them have required health care services because of the outcomes that they faced, being exposed to so many chemicals over such a condensed period of time, trying to combat that fire. I think we owe it to them to bring forward legislation that would actually improve it. As the former



minister, hopefully once again future minister, has said, because of the way that the government chose to draft this and provide changes, the ability to amend that section isn't available to us in this version. I think that's an incredible disservice to firefighters and to Albertans who would like to be able to show our support generally to people who put their lives on the line every day.

I know that all of us are thinking about first responders, I think more over the last week than maybe we did a few months ago or years ago, given other very close tragedies that first responders have faced over the last several days in the province of Alberta.

I'm going to pivot for a few moments to – because this is titled, you know, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, and there's been a whole ministry created to oversee red tape. The ministry actually, for those – since we're in the process of debating the budget as a separate piece to this legislation but relevant to this. This is the ministry, red tape reduction is the ministry, that's going to see the third-most increases to staffing levels in the government of Alberta should the government's proposed budget pass in this House. It surprised me that we would see such an increase to the bureaucracy and such an increase to the number of people working in a department when the whole ministry was created to try to streamline and reduce government, essentially. So that's an interesting piece.

I have tremendous respect for people who do serve in the public service and hope that some of that will be used to address the significant delays that we're seeing in the land titles offices, but I was a bit surprised by the significant staffing increase given that this ministry typically tries to tout that it's about streamlining and creating more efficiencies.

Another area where we've seen, actually, a significant increase in red tape – and I imagine some of us will be meeting Catholic school trustees later this evening – is the tremendous increased accountability and reporting tied to many grant items from the province of Alberta. There's always been regular accounting of how many students come to school, what your class sizes are. Those are things that we were used to reporting and did for years. The government has changed the – they no longer publish class size data, and they don't even have updated numbers on how many students are going to school this current school year on their website. The last year numbers are there, and it still says "projections." We're more than halfway through this school year, but that isn't important information for the current government to share as it relates to education. But they, I will say, have added a tremendous amount of red tape, especially at the beginning of the year, to be able to get the smallest of grants to be able to support students, particularly when they're behind in their learning.

Let me talk a little bit about the early-year assessments that happen, particularly in division 1, kindergarten to grade 3. Kindergarten I think is assessed in January, but in September we start with early-year pullouts. And much of September teachers in grades 1, 2, and 3 spend pulling kids out of the class and doing early assessments with them as opposed to having that time to be able to build relationships and foster trust and excitement as a large school community. In most of those schools they do that without any additional funding to cover substitute teachers. Often, you know, in the single site administrator school somebody will be floating in and out of the classroom, or maybe there will be an educational assistant who's covering for a few minutes while people are being pulled out to do these assessments.

I can also say, having trained as a teacher, having parents who taught, and having worked with teachers most of my professional life, that teachers know who's behind after a couple of months in the classroom. They know, from working with students and building

those relationships and finding ways to do authentic assessment, where everyone's at and how they can support them.

There's been a tremendous amount of red tape added by Alberta Education under the UCP when it comes to education funding, and that might be one of the reasons why the Education budget was underspent by a billion dollars when you just look at the last two fiscal years. Again, here we are considering an Education budget. Just looking at the last two fiscal years, Alberta Education underspent, the UCP underspent, on Alberta classrooms by a billion dollars of what we in this Assembly had approved them to spend.

Money that we said should be focused and spent on education in this current year wasn't spent, whether it was through the department or whether through local school authorities. Many have said that part of that is the frustration as it relates to the red tape to actually be able to spend grants that the government has applied, that sometimes it isn't even worth the many, many hours you have to put in filling out paperwork and applying for grants to be able to access these resources. A lot of money got left on the table because so much red tape was added by the UCP when it comes to supporting schools with education dollars.

It's interesting, I think a lot of the time we'll hear talking points from folks around, you know, the best decisions being made closest to the child and the money should follow the children, but there have been so many layers of red tape and so many gates put in the way between good ideas, us making decisions in this place around supporting education funding and the barriers to that funding actually being passed on to the child, what would appear very intentionally by the minister in terms of the billion dollars that hasn't been spent over the last two years, when we in this Assembly have made the decision to allocate that money.

So it is very frustrating, and I imagine many of us will hear more about that tonight as we meet with ACSTA trustees, when we talk to them about what their biggest frustrations are and what their biggest hopes are. Red tape is definitely something that has come up many times in many meetings with trustees from a variety of school authorities.

It is of concern, and I think that we would have had an opportunity in this place to consider ways that we can streamline efficiency rather than having pieces be backlogged and held up for an attempt to have, you know, more press releases talking about surpluses when those surpluses certainly should have been spent on supporting education in classrooms for children in the year that we approved them.

Generally I've touched on the firefighter piece. I've touched on what I would have liked to have seen in terms of reducing red tape and streamlining services for children. I will say that generally I think some of the areas within this bill are just fine. The piece around agriculture as it relates to tying the origins of bees to where they are, and where they are in Alberta to the country of origin: beekeepers tell us that this isn't problematic. I'll trust them and say that these types of changes, that are very surface or superfluous for somebody who isn't an expert in the area, seem like worthwhile initiatives.

#### 4:30

I think that this bill, again, could have been used to address the most pressing issues that most Alberta families are raising with me and, I'm sure, many of us. When we're travelling the province and connecting with folks in preparation for the next election, they want to talk about affordability. It doesn't appear that there is anything that's being done in this bill to make life more affordable for Albertans, who are facing some of the biggest increases to regular things like utilities and the cost of living as it relates to being able to put food on their family's table.

There is nothing in this bill that's addressed affordability, nothing in this bill that's going to make health care services better or more accessible for the people of the province, and nothing in this bill that's actually going to address the urgent need to have a resilient economy for all Albertans.

With that, I guess I will reluctantly support this bill. I wish that it was focused on things that are more aligned with the priorities of everyday families, but I don't think that pieces in it that are problematic are going to move us backwards, so I guess that in this place some days that's a win.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul on behalf of the minister – or the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and move second reading of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I appreciate members in this House, colleagues, that are always prepared to rise and pinch-hit where required.

Madam Speaker, this bill contains a number of legislative amendments which, if passed, would implement key policies included in Budget 2023. Bill 10 would implement a new fiscal framework for our province. Of all the initiatives in Budget '23 – and there were many – certainly this new fiscal framework, I believe, will be very important to fiscal and financial stability in this province, hopefully for years, even decades, to come. I believe everybody in this House would recognize that fiscal sustainability is necessary if we're going to continue to deliver a world-class education system, a world-class health care system, and the other deliverables that Albertans expect.

This framework would require annual balanced budgets with limitations on in-year and year-over-year increases in expenses. Now, Madam Speaker, there are going to be exceptions, necessary exceptions, to these fiscal rules. We have an economy that's diversifying at significant rates, but it's still an economy that's in a significant way dependent on our resource-based sectors. Our fiscal rules have to accommodate the income fluctuation that we see from time to time in this economy.

Madam Speaker, this fiscal framework would also set policies for the allocation of surplus cash, with at least half of any surplus going towards debt repayment. I believe that right now a focus for a surplus should be debt repayment as well as additional deposits into our heritage savings trust fund. This fiscal framework does create what we will call an Alberta fund, which is really a holding account for surplus funds, funds not used for the repayment of debt in a year where a surplus is achieved.

Funds held in this account can only be used for three things. They can be held for future debt repayment, they can be held for future contributions into the heritage savings trust fund, or they can be held to fund one-time initiatives but initiatives subject to an appropriations bill, initiatives subject to the budget process, and, Madam Speaker, initiatives subject to the other fiscal rules. This Alberta fund will in fact provide significant additional structure for the use of funds.

Madam Speaker, another initiative in Bill 10 will be legislation that will in fact allow the heritage savings trust fund to retain all of its income. I think that, as most members in this House know, right now any income from the heritage savings trust fund not required

to inflation-proof the fund automatically gets transferred to the general revenue fund. Well, we're changing that in Bill 10. If the members of this House in sufficient numbers support Bill 10 and it passes, then the earnings from the heritage savings trust fund will categorically stay in the heritage savings trust fund. Again, that's good news for Albertans today but especially good news for Albertans in the future.

Madam Speaker, I've made this point before, but it bears repeating. If we as a province, if we as Albertans from day one had retained all of the earnings in the heritage savings trust fund without any additional deposits other than those that were made, we would not have an \$18 billion fund today. We would have a fund approaching \$300 billion. It shows the significant value of earnings compounding on themselves and how quickly we could grow a fund. As a lifelong Albertan I regret that we did not start this earlier, but I'm so pleased to join my colleagues on this side of the House to begin this savings practice today. A \$300 billion fund would generate close to \$20 billion in income per year. That would be absolutely incredible for the future of the province.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of other important pieces in Bill 10, including ensuring that the tax changes regarding the tax credit with respect to charitable giving are made retroactive to January 1, 2023. I want to once again thank my colleague the MLA for Peace River for introducing this change as a private member's bill, effectively increasing the value of a charitable tax credit from 15 per cent to 60 per cent in terms of the Alberta portion. When you combine it with the federal portion, it's a full 75 per cent tax credit on donations up to the first \$200 for every Albertan. Albertans are generous. Albertans support charities and nonprofit organizations in their communities. They give back. This will encourage that generosity, and I'm excited to include this piece in the bill.

Madam Speaker, another important initiative in Bill 10 is to ensure that postsecondary students in this province have predictable tuition fees in the future. In Bill 10 we are limiting tuition fee increases to 2 per cent at most public postsecondary institutions, starting in '24-25.

Madam Speaker, to further improve our competitiveness in this province, included in this bill is the new agriprocessing tax credit. This tax credit will provide a 12 per cent nonrefundable corporate tax credit to corporations who take on a project with a cap ex of a million dollars or greater and a project that effectively uses as its feedstock agriculturally produced goods. We've gone to great lengths to ensure that Alberta has the most competitive business environment possible. That's an ongoing effort. Introducing this additional nonrefundable corporate tax credit is part of that effort in ensuring that our world-class agriculture industry in this province remains competitive globally, remains a force as we not only generate economic opportunity for Alberta farmers and ranchers and every Albertan across the province but, in fact, make good on what is both our opportunity and deep responsibility to provide food to a growing and needy world.

**4:40**

Madam Speaker, this bill also includes changes that will provide dental, drug, vision, and other supplemental health benefits for children adopted in the province. Alberta will be the only province in Canada to do so. It also includes amendments which will increase the adoption expenses tax credit and off-set a portion of the cost of adoptions to help Albertans who want to start or grow their families through adoption.

Madam Speaker, Bill 10 also includes proposed amendments to the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act that will tie future municipal funding levels to changes in provincial revenues, and Bill 10 will also update that revenue index factor. Starting in budget '25-

26, percentage changes in municipal funding levels would be equal to percentage changes in provincial revenues from three years prior, again allowing municipalities to plan more effectively for the future. Of everything I hear from municipalities, they want certainty and predictability in their funding.

Madam Speaker, Bill 10 provides important legislative changes to implement Budget 2023, a budget that focuses on strengthening our health care system, a budget that ensures adequate funding for enrolment growth in our education system but, more than that, ensures additional funding to deal with complexity in classrooms.

Madam Speaker, Bill 10 will support Budget '23, which is a budget that improves public safety, with an increase in our public safety ministry budget of 13 per cent. This budget also further supports our justice system by increasing our funding to the Justice ministry by 10 per cent.

Madam Speaker, we together as Albertans have made great progress in the last four years. We've made great progress in this economy, taking an economy that was stagnant and positioning it for competitiveness, investment attraction, growth, diversification, to the point where this province now is leading the nation in economic growth. That is Alberta's rightful place.

We've also taken a province that was really stuck in a structural deficit, spending far more than comparator provinces on a per capita basis but not getting better results, and over four years we've worked thoughtfully, carefully, surgically, compassionately to bring our spending in line with comparator provinces, Madam Speaker. This puts Alberta on a sustainable fiscal trajectory, which is good news for future generations.

Madam Speaker, with that, I would call on all members of this House to support Bill 10.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and – well, “pleased” is maybe not the right word. I'm something to rise and speak to Bill 10.

**Ms Hoffman:** Respond.

**Ms Ganley:** Respond. I'm pleased to be able to respond to what we've just heard.

I think that there are a lot of potentially problematic things in this bill, but I think that by far the most problematic – I mean, it's up there in terms of problematic things we've seen come before this House at all – is the creation of a \$1.4 billion slush fund in the two months immediately prior to an election. I feel like it's difficult to state the revulsion that I feel and that I think most of the people of Alberta . . . [interjections]

**Mr. Toews:** It's a structured fund.

**Ms Ganley:** A structured slush fund. Well, you can call it whatever you like. A rose by any other name.

I think the challenge here is that it's something that generates, I think, revulsion, the idea of spending government funds to achieve political ends, which is exactly what this creates. It creates a fund.

Now, admittedly, it's not strictly untrue to say that it can be spent on three things. It's just that one of those things is a one-time initiative, which could pretty much mean anything. If you say that this can be spent on three things – they are debt repayment, savings, and anything else – it's technically not untrue, but it's not really true either. So I think the problem here is that the government is giving itself the power to, essentially, purchase votes in advance of an election, and I think it's problematic. I do, however, think,

Madam Speaker, that fortunately for us, the Alberta public will see through it. I think that people will see this for exactly what it is. It's a slush fund. It's trying to buy people off with their own money.

I want to respond as well, because I happen to be the first speaker, to a couple of things that the minister had to say. Now, one of them was this talk of how the deficit went away because of fiscal responsibility. Just let me start by saying that that is just wildly incorrect on the facts before us. The deficit went away because the price of oil went up and revenues into government coffers went up. That's what happened. [interjection]

Honestly, this government has wasted massive amounts of money. Let us start with the \$1.3 billion they gambled on Trump's re-election after, Madam Speaker, it was clear in the polls that he wasn't going to win. It was literally like: “Oh, there's less than 50 per cent success. There's less than a 50 per cent, significantly less than a 50 per cent, chance of success, so let's put up \$1.3 billion that we're most likely going to lose.” I think that's extremely problematic behaviour.

You know, from a government that calls spending to ensure that AISH recipients can afford food fiscal management and waste – apparently food for people who are disabled, for children, is a waste of money, but gambling \$1.3 billion: well, that's just wise fiscal management according to these people. I think when you see fiscal management that wise, in quotes, you should really start to wonder every time those folks use those terms, because they clearly aren't reflective of reality. So I think that's the first big point there, that the price of oil coming up and balancing the budget for you is not hard work and fiscal responsibility. It's luck, and that's what this government had, and they certainly have not, in my view, used it wisely.

I think it's also worth talking about some of the spending projects that this government has under consideration. There is the hundreds of millions of dollars to repaint police cars for the RCMP. Well, I guess they wouldn't be the RCMP anymore; they would be the provincial police force. And quite apart from the ridiculous cost – and there are hundreds of millions in one-time costs; there are hundreds of millions in ongoing costs – even by the government's own report, by their own admission, quite apart from this sort of massive waste of money, is the fact that they could spend all this money and it might still not work.

We saw this attempt to transition away from the RCMP happen just recently, not for the whole province of B.C. but for one area, and they had to abandon it. The project had to be abandoned because they literally could not get the officers to fill the positions. They were offering people, you know, \$20,000 bonuses to move over and sign on, and they couldn't get it to work. Alberta is a much bigger area, so it's going to be the problem magnified, and it's been the case for quite a while that it is difficult to hire and retain qualified police officers, because you can't just get anyone. They have to be able to operate in certain conditions. The skills required are high. They need to be able to sort of psychologically deal with a number of things, and you can't just get anybody in to those positions.

**4:50**

We've kind of seen over time that it's become more and more difficult to hire to those positions. It's not entirely clear why that is. I mean, it could be the complexity of what modern police officers have to deal with. It's challenging. People may be looking at that and just making a different choice. But the point is that it is. We know it's difficult sometimes to fill positions like that, so the idea that the government could just sort of – in fact, when we were in government, we had challenges getting enough even RCMP officers into the province to, like, fill the number of positions that

we had because, you know, of the difficulty retaining and attracting. Yeah. It's a massive waste of money. It's a terrible idea.

The other one would be the move away from the Canada pension plan and the move to create our own revenue collection agency. In fact, we had been estimating that this would be costly and ridiculous and require the hiring of a whole bunch of civil servants. In budget estimates, believe it or not, it turns out that it was an underestimate, according to the minister, so that's highly problematic. Again we're talking about millions of dollars.

CPP: you know, we're talking about a fund that'll be smaller, that won't be able to necessarily generate the same kind of income and that's uncertain. This government, who has a history of not spending other people's money well – see the earlier gambling of \$1.3 billion – takes that CPP, and then people don't know if it's going to be there for them. That's not government money. That's not – it's people's money. People have paid into the CPP. It is their retirement savings. They are entitled to some sort of say over how it is spent, and I think that they certainly don't want the folks over there, the UCP, to get a hold of that, with good reason, because they have a long history of making bad decisions with other people's money. Those are a few of the reasons that I would challenge those statements.

Another big one I want to challenge is that, you know, the minister has mentioned several times, including in the remarks he just made, about this increase in public safety. Now, leaving aside for a moment the problem with switching away from the RCMP and potentially having insufficient police officers in the province, yeah, they are investing in the budget for public safety. You know, anyone who's studied this issue – and pretty much every police service in the province, at least at the time when I was still in, were all onboard with one principle, that the best dollar you can spend on public safety is a dollar which is invested in affordable housing. Affordable housing increases public safety in a way that nothing else does. This is quite consistent. In fact, we were – at meetings of chiefs of police this was stated almost universally. I suspect that if you were to go and ask – if a reporter were to ask right now: what's the best investment? Affordable housing. They see it every day.

This government, I mean, quite apart from the bill they had which changed the definition of affordable housing so they could deem anything to be affordable housing, putting aside that little obfuscation there in an attempt to just, like, point at things and call them affordable housing and be like, "Look, we increased affordable housing," is just ridiculous. This government has consistently cut affordable housing. They have consistently underinvested in affordable housing. They have in large part not, well, created, contributed. It's hard to say. They have contributed. They have contributed significantly to the safety problems we see in our downtowns today, and they have made those contributions by withdrawing funding for affordable housing just as, you know, we moved into several crises: affordability crisis, COVID, a number of things that made life just that much more challenging for everyone, especially people who were marginally housed or barely able to afford things.

This government chose at that moment to stop, basically, entirely investing in affordable housing. They did, however, pass an act to allow them to deem things to be affordable housing, which is, of course, of no actual, practical help to anyone, but I guess it did allow them to sort of do a dance and pretend they had done something.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was the not getting better results. The talk of: we invest too much in the people of Alberta. You know, we have seen in health care the result of this particular UCP talking point. Now, first off, I think it's clear – and it's clear in the literature, it's clear from a number of people who study how we study things – that this statement is entirely dependent on which

results you look at, and the UCP and their sort of folks around them just love to cherry-pick statistics. They love to cherry-pick the one statistic and then be able to say: well, we spend more, and we don't get better.

And then they attacked doctors, they cut health care, they cut education, and lo and behold, the health care system got much, much worse. And now they stand up and say: well, you know, it's not really that much worse than other places in Canada. Well, it used to be much better than other places in Canada. We used to have the best health care here in Alberta. These folks with their rhetoric about it not being better have brought us down.

Okay; yeah, maybe it is the case that tens of thousands of people in other provinces can't get access to a family doctor, maybe it is the case that people are terrified because they can't get an ambulance and because they're lined up with their sick children outside the ER. Maybe that is the case in other jurisdictions, but – you know what? – it didn't have to be the case here.

And it is only the case here because those folks, the UCP, engaged in a relentless campaign, a relentless campaign of attacking doctors, of threatening to fire nurses when the pandemic ended, of attempting to decrease the pay of respiratory therapists and adjunct health professionals across the system, and engaged in a war of misinformation against those doctors, when they attempted to defend themselves, until they drove them out of the province.

That's not responsibility. That's not a responsible way to bring down the – responsibility would be not giving \$20 billion away to profitable oil corporations to clean up the messes they already have the legal responsibility for. That would not be responsibility. Driving doctors out of the province, relentlessly attacking health care until it was far worse, until you create problems: that's not responsibility. That's making Albertans pay the cost of their poor decisions.

When we talk about this \$20 billion that they plan to give away to companies to clean up liabilities that they already have taken responsibility for, that's almost the entire health care budget. That's almost the entire health care budget. So to turn around and say, "Look, we strangled health care until your child can't get into the hospital, but we're going to spend the same amount again to achieve absolutely nothing" and call that fiscally responsible is absolutely absurd.

And now this government, who has made irresponsible choices, who has driven our health care system into the ground, who will cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars in correctional centres because of what they did with the Education budget, because they have starved it, because they refused to invest in children with learning needs when they were five years old, where they could've invested \$20,000 to save us millions in justice costs in the future – they have refused to do any of that.

That will continue to be a problem for generations into the future. The actions of this government will resonate. They will resonate throughout time, and those cuts, the cuts to children with special needs, that cut them off from their right to an education, will cost 20, 30, maybe more times into the future in justice system costs, in health care costs, in costs to support these people.

**5:00**

So, no, it is not wise fiscal management to punish those with disabilities. It is not wise fiscal management to destroy a functioning health care system. It is not wise fiscal management to gamble away money on a foreign election. None of this is wise fiscal management, and it continues to this day.

They want \$1.4 billion as a slush fund to try to obfuscate, to try to buy back the people that they have lost by offering \$20 billion to profitable corporations to clean up their own messes while they let the people of this province suffer. Honestly, at this point, having sat

here and watched this government for nearly four years, I think I can say, Madam Speaker, that the point is the suffering. It isn't the fiscal responsibility, it isn't the savings in the budget; it is the pain that they cause.

Madam Speaker, I really think that this evidence can lead us only to one conclusion, that this UCP government is a government that thinks that poverty is a moral failing, and it is incredibly problematic. It shows in every action. It shows in everything they do. To hear the minister comment on how these punishing decisions, that have hurt the people of this province, that have let them down in a time of crisis while this government hands out and gambles with billions of people's dollars – it's flabbergasting. It really, really is.

I think, with that, I will say that, you know, I think – I believe in the democratic process, and I believe that people will see through this \$1.4 billion slush fund. I believe that people will see through the UCP. I believe that the attempts to push off wildly unpopular programs like the \$20 billion handout, like the creation of their own police force, like withdrawing from CPP, like creating a bureaucracy of tax collectors so everyone can file their taxes twice here in Alberta – I think that pushing those things off till after the election: people see through it. I think that people deserve better, and I think that very, very soon, Madam Speaker, people are going to be able to choose better, and I believe that they will.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to provide my support for Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. First of all, I express my appreciation to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance for this significant bill, which will implement measures from Budget 2023 to help build fiscal stability, attract investment, support children and families, cut red tape, improve provincial funding mechanisms, and make life more affordable for students. Bill 10 helps secure Alberta's future by addressing some of the most urgent needs the government heard from families, students, and municipalities throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, fiscal responsibility matters. Bill 10 includes amendments that would legislate a fiscal framework to secure Alberta's future. This fiscal framework would require all future Alberta governments to balance their annual budgets with certain expectations and use any surpluses to, first, pay down the debt and save for the future before investing in one-time initiatives.

What is the importance of balancing the budget? This question, Madam Speaker, never crossed the thoughts of the previous government. Balancing the budget would mean a lot to Albertans as it would give us the ability to reduce the debt-servicing charge and eventually pay the debt. It would remove the burden on future generations to pay a debt that they did not incur.

Bill 10 aims to do that, Madam Speaker. It will require the government to use 50 per cent of surplus cash to pay down the debt maturing in that fiscal year. The rest will be deposited into the federal fund to give the government time to determine how to responsibly use it. It also includes provisions to provide transparency to Albertans by ensuring the government will provide detailed reports on the use of funds from the Alberta fund. Money from the Alberta fund can only be used for three purposes: to pay down debt, to invest in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, or for one-time initiatives that do not permanently increase government spending.

Bill 10, as well, carries amendments to streamline the transfer of money from the general revenue fund to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Currently legislation requires a portion of the Alberta heritage fund's net income to be kept in the fund to protect

against inflation. Any investment income not used for the inflation-proofing of the heritage fund must be transferred to the general revenue fund. Bill 10 will allow the heritage fund to retain all of its net income. Should all the income have been kept with the fund, we would be seeing close to \$300 billion in the trust fund, Madam Speaker.

This bill will also amend the personal income tax act amendment act to enable changes to the charitable tax credit rate starting this year. Last year the hon. Member for Peace River tabled a private member's bill, which this Assembly passed, to change the provincial tax credit rate for the first \$200 of donations from 10 per cent to 60 per cent. I applaud the member for taking the initiative to increase the tax credit to generous Albertans. It would also encourage Albertans to donate more. Bill 10 would enable the new charitable tax credit rate to come into effect retroactively on January 1, 2023.

Another highlight of this bill, Madam Speaker, is that it reduces the red tape to businesses, saving them around \$7 million a year in mailing costs by giving businesses the ability to provide financial statements and other reporting documents with their shareholders electronically instead of by mail.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This bill also amends the Securities Act by reducing the ability of guilty companies to use the appeal process. Sometimes this process has been used to delay enforcement. These changes would free up both time and money so the Securities Commission can continue to do what they do the best, administrating the province's security loans, foster a fair and efficient capital market in Alberta, and protect investors through investigation and prosecutions of violations to the securities laws, rules, and regulations.

Credit unions are an important part of Alberta's financial services sector. Credit unions are an integral part of our communities. They're co-operative organizations that provide similar products and services as other financial institutions. These are owned and operated by its members. When it makes a profit, it shares it back with its members in the form of annual returns. In 2021, Mr. Speaker, about \$84 million went back to credit union members. Bill 10 will provide them new opportunities to generate revenue and take advantage of more flexible regulations to support their operations. These changes will allow Alberta credit unions to provide financial services to residents of border communities and other new customers they cannot currently serve.

**5:10**

This bill also seeks to change the Horse Racing Alberta Act. We all know that horse racing plays an important role in Alberta's economy, as it brings significant economic benefit to Alberta's rural communities mostly. Thousands of Albertans and visitors attend horse racing events each year. In order to ensure this vibrant part of Alberta's economy thrives, Bill 10 will strengthen the leadership of Horse Racing Alberta by allowing more public and industry representation to manage daily operations. More representation means more ideas and opinions, which will have more robust and successful decisions and outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government is committed to creating accessible and affordable postsecondary education, and Bill 10 will implement a 2 per cent cap on tuition increases for domestic students at the institutional level of public postsecondary institutions for 2024 and 2025 and future academic years. This will save students about \$18 million annually. Albertans repaying student loans will see their payments drop by an average of \$15 per month.

In addition to this, Budget 2023 provides more help to students receiving financial assistance as they repay their loans with an

extension of the student loan grace period from six months to one year and an increase to the threshold for eligibility for the loan repayment assistance plan up to \$40,000.

As we strive to create the right conditions for the agrifood sector to do business in Alberta, Bill 10 introduces changes to the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act and the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, that promote investment and increase our competitiveness globally. This includes the Alberta agriprocessing investment tax credit, which will provide a 12 per cent nonrefundable tax credit to eligible corporations that make a minimum capital investment of \$10 million in value-added agriprocessing in Alberta. This new initiative, program will build on our current advantages and maximizes opportunities that help create more jobs for Albertans. This will ensure we have the most effective tool kit to land large-scale investments that will help grow our agrifood industry and diversify our economy.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 makes adoptions more affordable by investing \$12 million more over three years in providing supplementary health benefits for children adopted from government care or through licensed adoption agencies. There's also \$6,000 in grant funding for prospective adoptive parents making less than \$180,000 a year and an increase of the provincial adoption expense tax credit to \$18,210 to match the federal threshold in 2023. Building forever families shouldn't be a financial burden for Albertans yearning to adopt. New subsidies, higher tax credits, and other supports would make adoptions more feasible for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2023, as implemented by Bill 10, balances the priorities of Albertans in health care and education while ensuring the government lives within its means. This budget builds on Alberta's strong foundations and continues to position the province for further diversification and growth. Through this government's fiscal responsibility during the past four years supports and reliefs to Albertans during this time of high inflation are readily available without incurring debt.

Speaking of debt, Mr. Speaker, through this government's proper management of provincial finances we are now able to reduce and pay down the provincial debt, which was never done by the members opposite during their time in the government. The members opposite did the other way around. They accumulated more debt. Even during the past budgets of this government the members opposite asserted to spend more without regard to the debt that they have piled up. Their hike on the corporate tax to 12 per cent drove away job creators and billions of investment and did not result in more tax collections.

On the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, we have planned to balance the budget from day one of assumption of the office, and it is a wise and thoughtful plan to eliminate the largest deficit in Alberta's history. When the previous government began the administration of the province, debt servicing was under \$800 million a year. When they were expelled from the government, it was about \$2.3 billion a year. As this government pays down the debt, we're able to use this debt-servicing amount on more valuable services that Albertans rely on, including health care, infrastructure, social programs, daycare, and education. This government has always aimed to have financial stability to ensure a greater and successful future for Alberta by growing the economy, creating good-paying jobs, strengthening health care and education, and keeping Alberta communities safe.

Alberta is continuously moving forward, Mr. Speaker, through the government's focused, responsible fiscal management, relentless pursuit of economic growth. It has put the province on a more sustainable fiscal trajectory, creating expanded financial capacity resulting in additional government revenues. The job-creating corporate tax cut implemented by this government is proving to be a

more reasonable approach than the increasing of taxes imposed by the previous government. Through this approach it is estimated for the fiscal year 2023-2024 that there is about . . . [Mr. Singh's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** This concludes the time allotted for that member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre on Bill 10, second reading, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 10, offer some thoughts, and I'd like to begin, if you'll indulge me, with a bit of an analogy. You know, we've all been there at some point. We sign a new contract. Maybe it's with a new cellphone company. Maybe it's an Internet provider, maybe cable TV. A little less of that these days; most folks are streaming. But you sign that new contract. Maybe you were unhappy with your previous provider. You're excited. You got a new opportunity. So you sign up, new contract, and, hey, things are going pretty well. You're pretty happy with the service you're getting. Looks pretty good off the top. You might not be happy with everything about it, but, hey, you're willing to give them a chance.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Well, time progresses, and as time progresses, you start to see your service degrade. Suddenly your download speed isn't what it used to be, or you're getting a lot of dropped calls, coming up with issues that are starting to get concerns. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, your fees start going up. Suddenly you're being asked to pay more while you're getting less. You're certainly not getting what you were promised when they sold you that contract, when they were looking to get you to sign up. And maybe this is something you can work out, so you want to get a hold of them to raise your concerns, but it's harder and harder to get a response. Your e-mails, when you send them in to your customer service representative, go unanswered, or they come back with boilerplate, just telling you: actually, we're doing a fine job; you just don't realize it. You know, you try to get through on the phone, and you spend hours and hours on hold, but you're not getting any response.

5:20

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, as your frustration is mounting, suddenly you're getting all of this advertising from your service provider. They're sending you cards in the mail. They're calling you on the phone to ask if you want to upgrade your service package and telling you what a wonderful job they're doing. You're getting spammed on the Internet. They're all about telling you what a wonderful job they're doing for you even while, at the same time, you're trying to get through and let them know about your frustrations. But they're not interested in listening. Indeed, the kicker, the punch in the gut, is that they're using your money – the extra fees they charge you, the extra service bits, all of that – to tell you that what you're seeing in front of your eyes is, in fact, not actually real.

You know, every contract eventually comes to an end. Finally, you get that opportunity. You're a couple of months away, so you call in. You try to get hold of them to end that service contract. Maybe you spend a few hours on hold, get cut off a few times, have to call back in. You finally get through to that customer service representative to tell them that you are ready to end that contract, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? Suddenly out of the blue there are all kinds of incredible offers on the table. A few weeks out from when you're ready to end that contract, suddenly they're offering you discounts. They're offering you a special deal, better service. Maybe they're offering you a bit of a refund. They offer to lower

your rates. Of course, it's just for the next few months. They'll go back up eventually, but they're offering you a few months' discount, anything they can do to get you to keep from cancelling that contract because suddenly, with that on the horizon, they want you to know how much they value you as a customer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what we have with this government's Budget 2023. That is what we have in Bill 10, a government that has spent the last three years undermining every single service that Albertans depend on. The Minister of Finance, the Member for Calgary-East were just standing and bragging about their investments in education, their investments in health care after years of cuts, after laying off key people in the classroom, after driving doctors out of the province, making it harder for students to get the help they need, driving up numbers in the classroom, making it harder for Albertans to access care.

But now, when there's suddenly an election on the horizon, well, all of a sudden this government cares so deeply about ensuring that Albertans have access to these same services that they've spent years making it more difficult for them to get while driving up costs, having deindexed AISH and income supports and all these things, making it more difficult for people to actually afford the cost of living, for the most vulnerable in the province, and at the same time deindexing personal tax rates so every single Albertan paid more while getting less from this government. Now they want to stand and pat themselves on the back for suddenly riding to the rescue with a few extra dollars, thanks to the soaring price of oil, when they see there's an election on the horizon. They want to try to get Albertans to forget all of the damage this government has done over the last few years and, hey, sign on for another four.

Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans are smarter than that, certainly the ones I've spoken with, whether it's on the doors or at my office, through e-mail, on social media. They see through this government's charade.

What we have here is a government that is bent on using every tool in the box, scraping up every public dollar they can to try to sell themselves back to Albertans. Indeed, what we have here in Bill 10 is one fine example of that, section 9, which creates the Alberta fund: \$1.4 billion of Albertans' tax dollars, \$1.4 billion that was scraped out of the pockets of AISH recipients and folks on income support, folks receiving the Alberta seniors' benefit, \$1.4 billion that was taken in additional income tax from Albertans in the midst of a pandemic and an affordability crisis, Mr. Speaker, \$1.4 billion in services that families were denied when the kids needed support in school or when folks needed the access or that was scraped away from doctors, who were struggling to keep their clinics open in the midst of a pandemic, when this government refused to provide proper funding for virtual care.

[The Speaker in the chair]

That \$1.4 billion that they squeezed out of Albertans they are awarding themselves now to use as a slush fund for the upcoming election. Shameless, Mr. Speaker. But, of course, this government has shown us so many times over the last few months that they really don't care about public dollars when it comes to their political interests. The fact that we have two-thirds of this government's caucus as either a minister or a parliamentary secretary, buying caucus loyalty with public dollars: the government is happy to do that. They're happy to take another \$9 million in advertising to tell Albertans how wonderful they are for the affordability program that they scraped together at the last minute, that they have made incredibly difficult for most Albertans to actually access, and which will end shortly after the election. They are happy to take \$1.4 billion to spend in the month of April, announcing who knows what

but initiatives that they feel will perhaps maybe help them get re-elected, much as they like to stand up cardboard cut-outs of schools and point to them and say: "Hey, look at us. Wonderful. We're going to build something."

We went through that with the previous PC governments, empty fields with signs talking about how wonderful the government was. You know, that was entitlement and arrogance that this Premier spoke against, and rightfully so at that time, but that's forgotten now in the rush for power, the desperation ahead of an election, and the deep, deep desire to try to erase Albertans' memories of what they have suffered under this government for the last four years. Here in Bill 10 we have this \$1.4 billion slush fund. We can only imagine what projects this government will suddenly decide are so incredibly important that it couldn't have been bothered to actually look at over the last three and a half years, how those projects will just happen to coincidentally be in seats where they are concerned that they might potentially lose.

**Ms Hoffman:** Almost certainly will lose.

**Mr. Shepherd:** We're certainly going to work as hard as we can to ensure they do, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that it shows, I guess, how afraid and desperate this government is, knowing what their record is in front of Albertans, knowing what it is that Albertans have seen. Indeed, I'm sure that they are hearing about it when they're out on the doors, Mr. Speaker, or when they're reading the inbox at their constituency office or in the minister's office or certainly that we continue in our role as the Official Opposition to bring into this House and share with them every day. What we have here, again, is a government that is going to use Albertans' own tax dollars to try to buy support.

We have seen clearly what the realities have been under this government. They talk about fiscal responsibility, the Member for Calgary-East, a fiscal framework to secure Albertans' future, removing the burdens for future generations to pay a debt they did not incur. Albertans now and in future generations are going to pay for the damage this government has done to our health care system, I say more damage than any previous government has ever done to our public health care system before, driving doctors out of practice and out of province, leaving entire communities in this province right now where there is not a single family doctor accepting new patients, leaving Albertans in a position where health care workers – Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. They are still in a state of crisis. They are exhausted. They are demoralized.

Under this government, because of their financial decisions, which they are doubling down on in Bill 10, which they are bragging about in this House today, health care workers are still being mandated, forced to take on extra hours despite their exhaustion, despite the toll on their mental health, their physical health, their families and relationships.

5:30

On the eve of an election, much as this government in Bill 10 is awarding themselves this \$1.4 billion slush fund to try to cover over their mistakes, they are also, within the health care system, mandating health care workers to try to cover over their damage, to try to juice the numbers so they can brag about their fixer, Dr. Cowell, having fixed the health care system in a mere three months. But the fact is that nurses on the front lines are being burned out. They are choosing to quit, Mr. Speaker. They are leaving their jobs because they have a government that is tone deaf and refusing to listen and is putting their political priorities and their desperation ahead of an election ahead of the actual good of those health care workers and the Albertans that are in desperate need of care.

We see that, Mr. Speaker, as the Health minister stood in this House and admitted that they are mandating anaesthesiologists from public hospitals in Calgary to go and work in chartered surgical facilities, because this government is interested in juicing the numbers on hips and knees to have a bragging point and a talking point ahead of the next election rather than actually looking at the proper functioning and good of the health care system as a whole. And that is what this Minister of Finance, the Member for Calgary-East stands and brags about as being fiscal responsibility. The fact is that they are creating a debt that will be borne by the next generation.

That's just in health care. Let's talk about schools, Mr. Speaker. How many students were not able to access the support for special needs because of this government's cuts and changes to PUF funding? How many families are further behind? How many of those students are going to struggle? What is the debt that they are going to bear because of this government's cuts and decisions? The fact is that debt is not just measured in dollars and cents; it is measured on the social impacts. And, on that, this government's record is unconscionable.

But, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't seem to matter, not to this Premier, not to this government, as long as they are able to provide the rewards that are needed to their friends, as long as they are able to cherry-pick those particular statistics, as my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View spoke about earlier, to try to make things look good as they try to sell themselves back and get Albertans to sign on for another four years. In their desperation they can throw everything they've got against the wall. They can blow millions, \$1.4 billion of taxpayers' dollars.

**Mr. Schow:** Sounds like your campaign.

**Mr. Shepherd:** But Albertans are smarter. They're smarter than this government and the Member for Cardston-Siksika, as he heckles. They see through it, and they know the truth. And we'll see who signs a new contract on May 29.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, second reading of Bill 10. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to add comments to Bill 10, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, on behalf of my constituents. When I say "on behalf of my constituents," I really mean it. A lot of feedback around these issues on a daily basis is from my constituents, from my communities, and communities from around the ridings. There's much evidence, like what people wanted, what people suffered through. There's not really a lot of room for debate. It's sad to see that instead of, you know, looking at that feedback of Albertans going through the crisis and facing challenges, coming up with solutions – and eventually we're discussing this Bill 10 in the House.

The government wants – I don't know if I can call it unprecedented but unethical, I would say – the amount of money that in two months before the election they can use these funds, the public money, to make their image better so they can buy the votes from those many Albertans that they have upset in the last four years.

Every single day I get calls, people who walk into my office, and, of course, people on their doorsteps. Why are they worried? They're asking me, like: what are you going to do with the insurance premiums? This government has jacked them up about maybe 30 to 38 per cent, on average, but in some instances the premiums went up 40 to 45 per cent. The worst part of this is that the government, I heard, approved another increase in the premiums after their fake premium cap. People in my riding are very concerned.

People are asking about, in my riding and my neighbour ridings – they wanted to say what this government could have done to relieve the growing pressure on the Grey Nuns hospital. There was a project already going ahead, that was approved, for another hospital in the southwest. That was halted under this government. Not only this; in the last few years the whole world went through the very unprecedented, challenging time of the COVID pandemic. It's senseless to see, and it's very painful to describe, and that was the time when this UCP government failed to spend or account for where they – I don't know. What did they do with the \$4 billion? They initiated the fight with doctors and nurses.

I met with a very brilliant young registered nurse. I just wanted to share the story. She was changing her career selection. What the heck? Like, why? She said: "It's not bearable what we're going through. Overtime, the N95 equipment and this, and at end of the day the treatment we get. I can't bear it. I'm quitting it." And the feedback from doctors.

I had a constituent come into my office loaded with information that she is not happy with. Her children are going to school and, you know – I try to keep my office as much as possible nonpolitical, being their representative, being very polite and nice. She was saying, "Oh, you don't have to" – like, I got a reply before I said anything. "Oh, no, no, no; you don't have to explain anything. I already know what's going on. My child lost PUF funding already. I know it's not your fault. What I want is for you to be aware of what we are going through. I want you to take these voices to the House. We want to be represented."

The affordability crisis: a mere help, a mere and disappearing help, I would say. The Alberta fuel tax: a little help that will disappear right after the election. People are concerned. It's not only me. It's not only the constituents and the people from the communities that come forward and tell me their stories, their struggles with price gouging in the stores. Interestingly, I would tell the House that you can easily go to the UCP candidates in these ridings on their social media platforms, and these are exactly the questions they are facing.

5:40

They're feeling kind of, you know, helpless to answer those questions. It's very funny. Like, I have seen the candidate kind of diverting himself into the NDP platform, you know, as if this is his own, to kind of face the questions from the media, from the people. At least, you could get feedback from those people and help them, get into the communities with answers they could have, but you don't.

I know all my colleagues and myself many times in the House have brought forward this feedback of the pain and the challenges, the utility prices costing my constituents and Albertans. Growing prices: insurance is one of those. I met with a taxi company two weeks ago. They said that these changes have brought \$1.3 million in extra cost to that small cab company in Edmonton. They've been struggling. They're trying. They will try this year, and they might lose next year. They might not be able to keep up with all the challenges they are facing.

I do know that I cannot imagine, you know, UCP MLAs or the ministers, that those people would not approach them. I can't think – but I don't know where that feedback goes. When I've seen for the past four years, during all those challenges, that none of the UCP MLAs actually stood up and shared these views and these concerns, I don't know if it's that Albertans are telling it to the Alberta opposition NDP only or because they don't have hope from this UCP government going forward.

That's why there's this bill we're discussing in this House, because the Premier and the cabinet know what they're facing



practically on the ground. They have planned to buy votes, to bring this bill in so they can, you know, change their image. But that's not what we're here for.

We are the 87 privileged out of a population of 4 million in this province, and we promise our constituents and Albertans when we get elected: we will represent your voices, and we will take your issues back to the House. We will discuss in our caucus, we will discuss with our colleagues, and we will discuss this in the House with all the members.

But one after another, a \$4.7 billion investment, the government in those four years could not tie even one job directly. You know, none of the ministers could stand up and say: oh, this is the job because of that; this is the investment because of this. The Energy minister then in the media accepted that they needed to look at it. Like, why is it not working? But did the government look back? No. They didn't. They came up with another plan, a \$1.43 billion giveaway, a bet, a risk on the election in the U.S., on Trump's election. The timing is very suspicious, when the money was handed over. I think Trump had already lost the election before the money was being transferred.

What we hear from our constituents are the problems that people are facing of houselessness, affordable housing. We have seen the way the government treated municipalities. Now they are discussing also another way. Like, they are trying to fix their own mistakes close to their term. I don't know how much that will do to help those municipalities and the people who are upset with those decisions, because we will not have enough time to, you know, reverse those changes and damages and harms that that bill has done. So out of, like, hundreds of millions of dollars of investment proposals to eliminate or address houselessness, affordable housing, the city of Edmonton was promised \$5,000 from this government, and my councillor tells me that finally they got that cheque two weeks ago, after one year.

This is the kind of help this government is giving to the people. That's the kind of feedback I'm hearing from my constituents. You know, I had better, actually, expectations from this government, that after four years they would have learned something. They had their opportunity with the growing prices of energy, oil, a windfall of money, but they wasted the opportunity by handing, again, \$20 billion to their corporate friends to deal with the responsibility they already had in the contract. It is sad to see that this is how the UCP government is dealing with public money, handing it over to multinational corporations and transferring all kinds of burdens to ordinary Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, with this, I conclude my remarks. I'm sad to see that the government is moving in this direction. I know my colleagues will definitely oppose this bill. I will look forward if any other UCP MLA, government member, can come up with the feedback they get from their constituents and stand up in this House and share that feedback and their views on this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to address Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. The purpose of this bill really is to help build fiscal stability, attract investment, support children and families, cut more red tape, improve provincial funding mechanisms, and make life more affordable for students. Fiscal responsibility really requires that we build a prosperous and a sustainable future. Bill 10 proposes amendments that would legislate a fiscal framework to secure that sustainability. The proposed framework would require that the government use any surpluses to, first, pay down debt and, secondly, to save for the

future. This framework will ensure fiscal stability for all Albertans as we move forward.

Bill 10 also proposes amendments to the Personal Income Tax Act to enable changes to the charitable tax credit rate, starting this year, actually, retroactively. The rate will change from 10 per cent to 60 per cent on donations under \$200. This is really to encourage support for those organizations in our province that do such great work, that make such a great contribution to our society generally, and that do everything that makes us a great place to live. It will actually be retroactive to January.

The government is also making changes to cut red tape for publicly listed corporations, saving them roughly \$7 million a year in mailing costs, if you can believe it, giving them the ability to provide financial and other shareholder reporting documents electronically instead of by mail. This happens across the country pretty much everywhere already anyway.

Changes to the Securities Act will reduce the ability of bad actors to use the appeal process to endlessly delay enforcement. Quite frankly, it'll free up both time and money for the Securities Commission so that they can do what they do best, which is investigate and prosecute violations under the securities laws and rules and regulations.

**5:50**

Credit unions are an important part of Alberta's financial services sector. Changes proposed by Bill 10 will provide them with new opportunities to generate revenue, take advantage of regulations that will support their operations. It'll allow credit unions to provide financial services to residents of border communities and other new customers that they cannot currently serve, again providing sustainability for them.

Horse racing plays an essential role in Alberta's economy, particularly providing benefits to rural communities. To ensure this vibrant part of Alberta's economy thrives, our government is proposing to strengthen the leadership of Horse Racing Alberta by allowing more public and industry representation in the management of its daily operations.

We are committed also to making postsecondary education more affordable. To improve that, the government will implement a 2 per cent cap on tuition for domestic students, and hopefully that will help them as they move forward.

Bill 10 proposes the Alberta agriprocessing investment tax credit, a 12 per cent nonrefundable tax credit for eligible corporations that make a minimum capital investment of \$10 million. The goal here, really, is to ensure that we have the most effective tool kit in order to land large-scale investments that will help grow our agrifood industries.

Building forever families through adoption is a noble pursuit, so we are introducing the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act changes. These bills will provide higher tax credits and other supports that will make adoption more feasible for Albertans by easing some of the financial burden of adoption. We really hope to encourage more families to open their hearts and their homes to children in need of loving families, because we believe that every child deserves a stable and nurturing environment, and these changes will help make that a reality for them.

We're introducing the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act, which addresses long-standing concerns by municipalities regarding predictable and sustainable funding. It will provide that to them. As was announced this morning at the RMA, it will tie future municipal funding levels more closely to provincial revenues – actually, at 100 per cent, at RMA request – and it will help address

the concerns that have been raised for many years by municipalities as we move forward.

Bill 10 also aims to secure Alberta's future by addressing some of the most urgent needs of families, students, and municipalities throughout the province. The proposed amendments in this bill, if implemented, will provide that fiscal stability and ensure that business investment continues to be preferential to Alberta, thus making life more affordable for Albertans.

One last thing: the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act will be strengthened under Bill 10. Currently legislation requires that a portion of the heritage fund net income be kept for protection against inflation only, but everything else over the last few years or the last quite a few years, actually, has been required to be transferred to the general revenue fund. Now, with the proposed amendments, the heritage fund will retain all of its net income.

This is extremely important because if you compare the heritage trust fund from 1983 to now on a per capita basis, it's actually only worth per capita about one-third of what it was in 1983 because we have continually either not made contributions to the fund or we have siphoned them off for general revenue, and of course the population has increased. The per capita value of the fund has significantly decreased from about \$12,000 per Albertan down to just over \$4,000 per Albertan.

These are some of the changes that we've made, great changes for Alberta. I encourage everyone to vote for the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Well, slightly disappointed, because I was quite surprised to see another UCP member stand up there. I was ready with my 15-minute speech, but I will have to condense my 15 minutes into six, which I can probably do. You know, it is an honour to rise . . . [interjections] I don't know why I'm already getting heckled. I've literally just begun. But perhaps the member who continues to heckle, who never does join debate, might like to do so.

I stand here speaking to Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I must get it on the record, you know – and I've shared this before, especially in the previous session – that it is certainly disappointing that at a time when this government has an opportunity to really do some transformational work, instead we see a lot of cleanup bills, administration, statutes, a bunch of things sort of addressed in a bit of an omnibus. This one is not as much of an omnibus, but I think back to the comments from my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, who envisioned a world in which perhaps this government would invest in affordable housing – right? – as an example, something that truly would be transformational for my constituents and constituents across the province. [interjections] Again, I'm fully getting heckled. If the Member for Calgary-Klein would like to join debate on this, I would sure love to hear from him as well.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** On affordable housing?

**Member Irwin:** Well, please do join, then.

You know, health care, public education, housing, all of these things – the list certainly goes on. Instead, a whole lot of not much.

It is, of course, I would say, one of the least robust legislative agendas that we've seen, but from a Premier without a mandate I do get it. I understand why we end up with bills like this one. But I digress.

On this bill, I think I do need to get on the record that one of my most grave concerns about this bill is the slush fund. The slush fund: \$1.4 billion – \$1.4 billion – as a campaign slush fund to really, really buy votes. I mean, as we've heard – we talked about this in question period today – you know, I'm not sure that that Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, the Premier, would like this, at least not the her of 10 years ago. The her of 10 years ago? You know what I'm saying. I can't say her name, so that makes it complicated.

When we look to that member's own words from just a decade ago, she was so against using taxpayers' dollars for any sort of partisan purposes. In fact, quote, you should not be able to use taxpayer dollars for blatant partisan advertising in advance of an election. And, of course, we know, fast-forwarding to right now, the current day, 2023, she's putting \$9 million of Albertans' tax dollars towards pre-election communications, and we see in Bill 10 ahead of us \$1.4 billion for a campaign slush fund. Quite alarming.

This fund – and I've been really, really blown away by the discourse here from my colleagues on this side of the House prior, especially the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, Edmonton-City Centre, well, all of them. I don't want to put anybody on the spot; they all did a great job just outlining how incredibly alarming this slush fund is. The fine print on this fund allows the UCP to spend the projected surplus for re-election before the bills come at the end of the fiscal year. As my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West put it – she said: that's bad fiscal management, and it's exactly how you squander a resource boom. We all know in this House the past saying around squandering a resource boom. I can't say it in this Chamber. But, as has been noted, none of this should come as a surprise to anybody in this Chamber and, in fact, outside of it. The people we meet door-knocking all over the province: they're bringing these things up.

This is the same government that gambled away \$1.3 billion for Trump's re-election, the same government that couldn't account for \$4 billion when it came to COVID spending, and we know they had – what? – nearly \$2 billion in accounting errors the first year in office. Well, it doesn't end there. It doesn't end there. This is the same UCP government that plans to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a provincial police force, a provincial police force, might I add, that Albertans aren't asking for. Oh. Attack Alberta's CPP? Yeah. Again, something that Albertans aren't asking for. They want their retirement security protected.

One more thing – I'd better add this one for good measure – the \$20 billion that this Premier hopes to give away to, you know, her corporate buddies to clean up the messes that they're already legally obligated to clean up.

With all of this – all of this – the UCP has clearly already cost Albertans billions of dollars . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(1)(c) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, March 21, 2023

Day 22

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)	Shandro, Hon. Tyler, ECA, KC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP), Official Opposition House Leader	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)	Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)	Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC), Premier
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	



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Danielle Smith	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
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Dang  
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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Irwin  
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Chair: Mr. Reid  
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Chair: Mr. Hanson  
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Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

[Adjourned debate: Ms Hoffman]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton–Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to speak to Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I can tell you that this bill is less about red tape reduction and more about fixing the UCP errors. This is another piece of legislation that shows this government pushing ill-informed ideas, and it doesn't have the data to back that up.

When we're looking at this legislation – and I think I've said this to every piece of legislation that the red tape reduction ministry has entered – it just seems a little bit ridiculous that we have a minister assigned to something that every ministry should be responsible for doing. This is a piece of legislation that impacts agriculture and forestry, Municipal Affairs, multiculturalism, labour and immigration, service Alberta, seniors and housing, community and social services, red tape reduction, Infrastructure, Culture, and Justice.

Now, I've been through the legislation, and it's quite significant. There are areas of this legislation that do not have concerns, but, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the WCB portion of this legislation, we've watched in this House over and over as our incredible critic has brought up retroactive pay for firefighters. Now, this piece of legislation could have been an opportunity for this government to honour the heroes that so valiantly fought in the Fort McMurray wildfires. They could have gone back and introduced retroactive coverage, but they didn't.

I can say that on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we will always have the backs of our front-line heroes.

**Mr. Nally:** You had three years, and you did nothing for them.

**Ms Goehring:** We are very concerned that the minister responsible has got up in the House and talked rhetoric and talked about not anything related to retroactive pay. But what he hasn't committed to is providing that presumptive coverage that is retroactive, which is really concerning.

I was a member in the Legislature during the Fort McMurray fires.

**Mr. Nally:** That did nothing.

**Ms Goehring:** I had friends that fought in the fire, that had businesses there, that were working alongside so many front-line workers, desperate to keep homes, desperate to keep property. Then hearing the incredibly devastating stories of so many that fled the wildfires, and then to not honour and support those that stayed and fought the fires is unimaginable, Mr. Speaker. When we've continued to bring forward that this should be covered and it's not being acknowledged – and it's certainly not in this legislation – it is concerning.

Now, it has one minister responsible, the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. I'm just curious. How much consultation happened with the other ministries that I named and with all of those that are impacted? Because when you're dealing with that many ministries, Mr. Speaker, putting forward a piece of legislation, that's a lot of consulting that needs to happen. I would love to hear from the member who's been chirping about what kind of consultation he had. Was it him who decided to say no to the Fort McMurray firefighters? Was it the minister responsible that said no? I'm just curious, when it comes to consulting, who said no, and why, when we've asked repeatedly for this coverage to be retroactive, this government hasn't done it. I really hope that when it comes time to hear from the members of government, we can hear some of the reasons why they've said no to the Fort McMurray wildfire heroes.

When it comes to this piece of legislation, there's another piece in here that's a bit concerning, and it's regarding income and employment supports. Now, what they're introducing, Mr. Speaker, is the ability to deny someone income support that has warrants. That gives an incredible disadvantage to people that may not know they have warrants, may have warrants so old that they thought they had been resolved, and now they're in a place where they can't access income support. That is very, very concerning. I can speak to a few people that I'm aware of who have struggled with mental health and addiction, who have received warrants for different instances, and I can tell you that with three of the cases that I'm thinking of, they're related to someone who has failed to appear in court. They're not for horrific crimes. When people are served and they fail to appear, a warrant is issued.

Now, when you're struggling, you don't have a home, when you're struggling with addictions because you can't access the adequate supports and services, I can tell you that getting to court is really difficult. Having these individuals come forward, connect with a support worker who can get them their ID, help them get on to income support and then have them denied because they have an outstanding warrant – to be clear, Mr. Speaker, a lot of those warrants are issued when someone fails to appear in court. They haven't been convicted, so to put this barrier to those on income and employment supports is a major, major concern.

This government will tell you that the reason is because it's regarding dangerous offenders, but that's not what this legislation does. It doesn't discriminate. It says: warrants. Period. There are so many individuals who have come in contact with the justice system, who have faced barrier after barrier after barrier and now are at a place to find support. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes it can take years for an individual to be able to have the capacity to reach out and connect with someone who can get them to the steps of income support. Once they're at that phase, you have this person who's able now, in a position, to apply for income support, and then to have them denied because of an outstanding warrant is ludicrous. It's going to be another barrier that for some is going to absolutely prevent them from progress and stability.

Now, the other thing that is concerning with this is that it will allow the minister to divulge information to assist in locating the individual. This gives the minister the authority to release private information of someone who has a warrant. Now, again, there's no definition of what that warrant needs to be for. It could be someone who failed to appear in court. That is very, very concerning and a significant overreach when it comes to people who have warrants looming. We should be providing supports and opportunities for individuals to access supports, not creating a space where this government is creating more and more barriers and closing doors to those that need actual support and are entitled to support.

7:40

There's a pattern that we see with this government. They talk about wanting to help and they talk about wanting to go through and reduce red tape, but at what cost? I fail to see how this is a red tape reduction. [interjection] Now the minister is chirping again, and I would welcome him when it's his time to speak to stand and share your views in this Chamber.

You know, it's concerning when so many individuals are reaching out asking for ways that they can access supports for their loved ones, trying to find a landlord that will rent to them because they've been unhoused for years and have no formal reference. Now, what would that look like, Mr. Speaker, if not only do they not have a formal reference but they don't have income support? This is another barrier that is creating more and more trauma to individuals instead of reducing red tape, as this bill suggests.

There's an incredible number of individuals in the province that are in a place where they need income support, and as a social worker I've worked with so many who are doing it because they simply need support. People that are accessing income support – it helps Albertans accessing food, shelter, personal items, medical, other benefits that are absolutely essential to their health and well-being. And this minister has put in that someone with a warrant, regardless of what that warrant is for, can be denied. That, to me, just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

I know that – I would love to hear from the minister responsible for Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, not to talk about the key messaging that he's been told he should say and all about the things that red tape is going to do but talk about the human side and the human impact that these decisions and this legislation are making. How does he answer to those Fort McMurray firefighters? I would love to hear that. Talk to Albertans who are paying attention, watching what this government has done, turned their back on Albertans over and over and then put forward a piece of legislation that they all get up and praise each other over.

That's just two of the ministries in this omnibus legislation that have a direct impact on Albertans, people that are vulnerable and struggling and our Fort McMurray wildfire heroes. I would encourage, instead of chirping on the sidelines, to have him stand up in this Chamber and speak to the legislation and speak to the questions that this side of the House are asking on behalf of Albertans. It's something that I think they need to answer to. It's simply bad policy, Mr. Speaker.

It's not going to have an impact or deter people from committing crimes, if that's what they're going to stand up and talk about. It's not going to reduce crime. It's not going to do any of those things. It's simply going to create another barrier for an individual struggling to get ahead, to get those vital supports that I talked about like housing and food.

This winter I had a very dear friend whose brother and his significant other had been unhoused for about two and a half years. They both struggle with addictions, both from a car accident where they were prescribed medication, and both were living rough. They would try to access supports, try to access shelters, but there were so many barriers. Then they tried to access safe consumption sites, and again significant barriers. When it came time for them to find housing, they really struggled. I can tell you that this piece of legislation does absolutely nothing to help those individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before the Assembly is Bill 9. The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening intently as the member opposite was sharing her thoughts on this legislation,

especially as it relates to the part of the legislation that deals with income supports for those folks who have been accused of a prescribed offence. That is some language that she neglected to refer to. She was so materially inaccurate in her assertion about what this bill will do that I just felt compelled to stand up and correct the record.

For those watching at home, what is this about? At the end of the day, this is about dangerous offenders. Mr. Speaker, our government cares deeply about protecting our communities, protecting Albertans, and ensuring that our communities are safe. I think that is in keeping with what all Albertans want to see from their government.

Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, there is a time and a place to put something in legislation and a time and a place to put something in regulation. This legislation very clearly states that this restriction on access to income supports will only apply to those folks who are accused of a prescribed offence, and we have made it very clear that our intention is to in regulation clarify that that is going to be for dangerous offenders. The members opposite are trying to make it sound like every person who has ever had a minor brush-up with the law is all of a sudden going to lose access to income support. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This legislation is designed to protect Albertans from the most dangerous offenders. Mr. Speaker, we have a track record of making great progress in that regard. Many in this House will remember when we brought forward legislation to ensure that dangerous offenders and sex offenders could never change their names in Alberta and hide from their past and hide in our communities. Those were two very concrete steps that we took to make our communities safer. Well, I am proud of the work that the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction is taking to go even one step further, which is to make sure that those dangerous offenders in Alberta who are hiding from law enforcement cannot rely on income support to make it easier to hide in our communities and to avoid justice.

Mr. Speaker, I believe firmly that Albertans want justice and that they want safe communities, and this change in legislation, followed by the accompanying regulatory work that will follow it, will in fact make our communities safer. I can say that in good conscience, and I know that the constituents in my community will sleep better at night knowing that this is in place.

What the members opposite are doing is classic fearmongering. They apparently can think of nothing better to do than to scare Albertans with things that are not even accurate, and they don't care about the harm that those allegations they make might cause. They don't care about the fact that people will be afraid of the things that they are saying even though those things are not accurate, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I felt so compelled to stand up and to correct the record and to explain what exactly it is that this legislation will do and why our government feels so compelled to act on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this is about protecting Albertans, keeping our communities safe, protecting Alberta families. The members opposite should be ashamed of themselves for the way in which they have mischaracterized what this will do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to get up and address this bill, particularly after the statement we've just heard from the minister across, because what we just heard from the minister is wholly inaccurate. I will take the time to talk about why it is that we're really concerned about this.

7:50

You know, with these omnibus bills there's always a problem.

There are so many different things that are being put forward here that inevitably, of course, I support a variety of them. They're just minor changes, or they're decent changes that come from experience, and I support that kind of thing. But somehow the Conservatives always manage to find a way to slip in a poison pill, which just makes it impossible for me to support the bill overall, and this is it for me. This piece of the Income and Employment Supports Act is one that I just really cannot support, and I want to take people to a place so that they can understand a little bit about why it is that we are concerned in spite of what the minister said, and I'll go on to talk about why the minister is essentially wrong about what they have indicated.

What is happening in this particular bill, in this particular section, is essentially the criminalization of poverty. Many people in this House will know about the book written by Victor Hugo in 1862 called *Les Misérables*, and many people will know it, of course, through the Broadway play *Les Mis*, in which a man who is trying to feed his sister's six starving children steals a loaf of bread and is sentenced to jail for five years, ultimately spends 20 years, and is pursued even after by the police. The whole point of the writing of this novel by Victor Hugo over 160 years ago was to say that we cannot criminalize poverty, that it is an injustice, and that whenever somebody commits an offence, we must endeavour to right the wrongs, to invite that person back into civil society and give them the wherewithal and the abilities to integrate back into the society we want with the skills and the resources necessary to become a successful member of society. A hundred and sixty years ago it was identified that this was an injustice, to punish people continually for an offence, and that's essentially what this section of the bill does.

Now, I know the minister gets up and says: oh, this isn't going to be used on everybody. No. Nothing is used on everybody. And he says: you know, don't worry about it; it'll come out when we do the regulations, and that's when we'll talk about what those prescribed offences are. Our point is that he had the choice. He could have put in this bill what the prescribed offences are that this will be used against, and he chose not to do that. It would have been no problem at all to say: those people convicted of violent offences. It would have been no problem at all to say, "It is people that have used a weapon in their offences" or any number of other descriptors. They're all possible. It's quite easy to define terms in a bill like this. They chose not to do that because it allows them to stand up in the House and say, "We don't mean that" when, in fact, their intention is to do exactly that later on.

That's what we see here. We see that this is a bill that can be used against people that simply did not have the money to either pay their fines, which results in a warrant, or failed to attend court, which, again, results in a warrant. Both of those situations are situations that are extremely related to the issue of poverty, people that simply do not have the resources to arrive at court, people that simply do not have the money to pay their fines that they have.

I know, in working closely with the Indigenous community, that they're very concerned about these kinds of provisions, because whenever you put these kinds of provisions in, inevitably they're used against Indigenous people at a much greater rate than they are used against non-Indigenous people. They're very concerned about this, and this is why I say that this is a poison pill, and this is why I cannot support this. What they're saying is that you just opened a great, big, wide open door to go after poor Indigenous people.

Now, I heard the minister. The minister said that that's fearmongering. But I'm telling you that members of the Indigenous community are telling me that they are afraid, and I'm reporting that here in the House. They're afraid that, like so many other provisions that have happened in our legislation over the last 100-plus years, it is really legislation that is designed to go after their community.

They remind me that this government brought in what was known as Bill 1, which was the infrastructure protection act, which was to say that you weren't allowed to protest on public property such as Alberta highways. Then all of a sudden the Coutts border crossing happened. Did they use it against all those White folks down there? No, they did not. So the Indigenous community says: ah, what we're seeing here is a bill that was designed to pretend to look at protecting the people of the province of Alberta but was not used against one group of people but certainly was designed to be used against others. They say that they know within their community that that bill was designed to prevent Indigenous people from protesting when they want to protest infrastructure.

They say: here it is again. Here we have another situation where we're going to see a differential application, because the minister failed in his job to define in this act what a prescribed offence was. Now we're in the same position where Indigenous people across this province are saying: we are going to see this used repeatedly against Indigenous people who are living in poverty because they simply cannot afford to either attend court – they can't afford the cost of coming down from northern Alberta into Edmonton in order to arrive in court on time, and therefore they get a warrant against them for failure to appear – or people who just simply cannot afford to pay their fines. They know this is going to happen.

I just want to take us back to Victor Hugo. This is 160 years ago that in civil society we defined the notion that you should not criminalize poverty, that instead we need to use these opportunities to try to invite people back into the good society that we are trying to create for all citizens. That's what we should be doing. Instead, this government creates yet another bill where its tone is one of the retribution model, and that is that we create laws in order to punish those people who we don't like, those people who somehow make us feel uncomfortable, those people who somehow have violated our sense of what we'd like to have happen in society, without any understanding about why they committed those offences, why they do those things that make us feel uncomfortable, and how we can actually change the way we engage with those people so that they become part of society in a successful way, a justice-based model that Victor Hugo 160 years ago was asking for. It tells you how far back this government's thinking is. It's more than 160 years old. We've seen this time and time again, this notion that this government doesn't understand what it's like to come from a background of poverty, a background of trauma.

I can tell you that the Indigenous people certainly had that experience and tell me all the time that they know from that experience that they are going to have a disproportionate number of people to whom this legislation applies, and they think that that is just a continuation of the colonialist oppression that they've experienced over all the years that Canada has been in existence. They've asked us to take the time to stop and consult with them and say: is this going to be used in a way that is going to be terrible for your community, and if it is, then how do we go about changing it so it doesn't do that?

But no consultation has happened with the Indigenous community. I don't think this minister can give me a single example of going to one of the treaty organizations and saying: "We're going to slip this into the bill. Can the treaty organization tell me what they think about this section of the bill? And what are the concerns? How might we address those concerns before we actually write the bill so that it doesn't have a differential effect on Indigenous people?" They didn't do that. They failed to do their work. They failed to define it properly in the bill. Now they've set themselves up so that I have no choice but to vote against this bill.

I absolutely do not believe in the criminalization of poverty. I do believe that more Indigenous people are in jail because of the history of the treatment of Indigenous people, not because of bad

choices by individuals. It's the legacy of trauma, it's the legacy of poverty, it's the legacy of violence that has resulted in the situation where a lot of Indigenous people have indeed broken the law. They've broken the law because they had few options. They've broken the law because they had few resources. They've broken the law because they had so much trauma that they could not come to the place where they could make the decisions we would hope all Albertans would be able to make. And now we're going to punish them for that. We're going to punish them for acting out the legacy of the history of colonization and traumatic oppression that the Indigenous people have experienced here in this province.

8:00

Again, the same thing that we have argued time and time again in this House: if you simply go out and you have a consultation and you want to do this kind of thing, can you not work with the Indigenous community to actually look at: how can we make sure we can write this in such a way that it actually won't become a weapon against the Indigenous community?

Now, many in the Indigenous community will admit that there's a higher rate of acts such as violence perpetrated by Indigenous people than other people in the province, but they say that there's a reason why that is. What we should be doing is creating legislation that addresses that underlying reason, and if you do that, if you actually go after what's the cause of the trauma – how do the people respond to trauma? How do we get them to get to a place where they're no longer responding in this negative kind of way? Even if they admit, "Yeah, there are probably more Indigenous people that have committed certain types of violence than other groups of people," it's still not okay because of why they committed that violence.

Even if you say, "Oh, we're only going to use this in specific cases," I can guarantee you now, if you keep any race-based data on who this is used against, you're going to see an overrepresentation of Indigenous people, which is, again, why we on this side of the House asked for the collection of race-based data by this government. Again this government refused to do that, refused our bill that would have the police collect race-based data so we could see if indeed this kind of legislation ended up being imposed against Indigenous people in a disproportionate way. And I can absolutely guarantee you that it is going to be, and I can absolutely guarantee that the Indigenous people will feel it is yet another continuation of the colonization that they've experienced in this country for many years.

So I cannot in good faith support this bill even though there are other things in this bill that I'd be happy to have happen. I wish they would stop putting together these bills, this thing they've learned from the Americans, that put all these disconnected things together so that you can't oppose one piece without opposing the whole bill. Unfortunately, I'm in that position.

In my last minute I also want to say that I'm very disappointed on their stance with regard to the WCB. Their argument has simply been that it has not been a major issue because there have not been that many firefighters that have died so far, and they often cite the number of one. And my position is always: are you telling me that you agree with the principle but it hasn't affected enough people yet for you to care? I want to know: how many people have to die before you care? What's the number? Give me the number. It's not one, apparently. It's going to be more.

It's not a future-, forward-looking piece of legislation. It's saying that in the past it wouldn't have had that much effect. It certainly would have had an effect on that family, and it would have had an effect on all the other ones that right now are struggling through the process of working with a very difficult red tape process at WCB in order to get their benefits appropriately forwarded to them. I wish this government would take the chance to say: look, we don't want people

to be in that place, so we'll create the legislation to actually make it possible. We know they did it in Ontario, so they can certainly do it here.

Mr. Speaker, I've been very concerned about the approach this government has taken to the people of Alberta and the very deep lack of compassion for the experiences they have and the lack of desire to create structures that invite people to the greatest level of success and fulfillment of their desires as citizens of this province. I certainly wish they would change, and I am going to oppose this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. the Deputy Premier, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to proposed changes in Bill 9, specifically the proposed changes to the Public Works Act. Working with the Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, Alberta Infrastructure has proposed an amendment to the Public Works Act that will expedite regulations and allow our government to respond to changes more quickly and more straightforwardly. We are actively listening to our industry partners, and we have heard their feedback. It's time for an update of the Public Works Act, which hasn't been updated since 2010. A lot has changed since 2010, including technology and process improvements within the construction industry. We also need to be agile and able to change with the times.

Section 34 of the Public Works Act currently states, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting any matters that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable to carry out effectively the intent and purpose of this Act." Essentially, what that means is that we currently need to adopt or amend a Public Works Act regulation; an order in council is required, or, in different language, an order passed by cabinet. That can be a long process, especially when the whole purpose of amending a regulation is to provide clarity and streamline regulatory requirements. In the proposed change outlined in this legislation, the regulation-making authority will be updated from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister responsible for the Public Works Act. It's a simple change. The proposed amendments to the act will make the government's regulation-making process faster and more agile. Any future changes to the act will be done in consultation with other ministries and partner organizations that would be impacted.

We're also working with the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, who's leading the consultation, on extending the rules of prompt payment to government of Alberta projects. To be clear, the proposed changes in Bill 9 do not consider any changes to the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, but Alberta Infrastructure will continue to work with partner ministries as well as organizations and stakeholders within the industry to explore further opportunities to reduce red tape and streamline government processes. The change we are making here is in direct consultation with and in the best interests of our industry partners.

Over my past six months or so in this chair as Minister of Infrastructure I have been all across the province meeting with our construction industry partners, anything from a quick coffee chat to formal AGM events. I've heard loud and clear from industry that we cannot lead with government fixes and procedural corrections only. We need to foster and build relationships with our key partners. That means this is listening to feedback, taking a good look at how we currently do things and what works and what doesn't. In the end, we have the best regulatory environment in the world, and I do believe we're on our way there, but now we need to prioritize relationships between the government and industry.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a small, achievable change in the Public Works Act and is an excellent first step to fulfilling our commitments by listening to Alberta's construction industry and acting. I'm confident that the changes that we are proposing in Bill 9 will expedite the making of regulations and allow government to respond to changes more quickly, helping Alberta Infrastructure and industry partners to deliver public infrastructure safely, on time, and on budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. This is an omnibus bill, which, you know, we're pretty used to from the UCP government. I mean, there often used to be some decorum in that, not putting 15 pieces of legislation in one bill, but the UCP does this repeatedly. Certainly, if the NDP did that in government, they were often outraged and said: it was too much to have in one bill, and we need to debate these bills separately. Cavalierly, we get these bills all the time with this government. Certainly, they are having, I guess, no integrity in their concerns that they presented previously.

Yes, it's an omnibus bill, and, like my colleagues the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, we're looking specifically at one piece of this legislation, the part that amends income support. It is about the criminalization of poverty, which is what this bill does, and my colleagues spoke very well about that. I know that the Minister of Technology and Innovation stood up and very forcefully indicated: no, no, no; it's not just about warrants; it's about violent offenders, and that's who this is about, and that's who we would deny income support to. But, gosh, you know, when I look in here, it doesn't say anything about violent offenders. On page 21 it says:

The Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support and benefits to an applicant or recipient under Part 2, Division 1 when notified that

- (a) a warrant for the arrest of the applicant or recipient has been issued in respect of a prescribed offence, and
- (b) the warrant has not been executed.

Nothing about: these are warrants for violent offenders.

### 8:10

If indeed that was the intent of the government, then why is it not here? Warrants can be for, you know, not paying some kind of a fine. Warrants can be for jaywalking. There can be a whole diverse kind of warrant. If it is indeed for that, for the violent offenders, then why isn't it in the legislation? This gives the government a wide berth to do whatever they want with folks who happen to be poor, happen to be people who are receiving income support, so we can deny them that if they have a warrant of any kind. This is not specific at all, so it definitely is the criminalization of poverty.

But I just want to ask the government, like: why stop there? Why not people who are on the Alberta seniors' benefit? Or perhaps that's already included in here, and I haven't read all the subsections. That's income support. What about people on AISH? Why aren't they included in here? I mean, why don't you just go for it and take a whole bunch of people off if this is what you want? But why are you picking on this particular group of people? Can you help me know that? Or why do you deny other people other services the government gives? Why don't you take people

who need some kind of health support? They need to go to the hospital, but they have a warrant out. Well, they can't go to a hospital. Why are you picking on people on income support? Perhaps the minister responsible can explain that to us, because it does definitely, definitely look like it is focusing on people who are vulnerable.

The people who are on income support: they need food, they need shelter, and they often need personal items, sometimes medical and other benefits. Oftentimes they're supporting children. A lot of times they're women. As my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford talked about, a lot of times they are Indigenous people, and that's because of our legacy of colonization, something that, you know, we certainly don't want to continue. We want to empower people.

Income supports are meant to also provide some training, hopefully to support people to develop independence and self-sufficiency. So it doesn't make any sense that someone who's struggling – and he may have a warrant out – would be denied funding for food, shelter, clothing. These are the basics. It is unfair, and it's not very becoming of a government that repeatedly says: we care about our most vulnerable. I don't see that. I see barrier after barrier going up in front of people who are struggling in our province. I really challenge the government to make some sense of this, have the minister speak about this: why specifically are you saying this for people who are on income support? What's the rationale for that? You know, why not deny all public services to Albertans with warrants if that's what you want to do? Why are you picking on this group of people?

Then another section later on in this legislation, still on page 21, says, "The Minister responsible for Schedule 9 to the Government Organization Act is authorized to disclose information, including personal information, for the purposes of section 15.1." Personal information can be shared of these people. Well, usually there's a pretty high bar. Private information is not disclosed, and just because someone is on income support doesn't mean that their information should be shared with other authorities. Why is it that people who are poor all of a sudden don't have rights like the rest of us? I'm hoping the minister did his due diligence and talked with the Privacy Commissioner about this legislation and indeed that that was seen as following the rules regarding that, because in my, you know, reading of that, it seems like that should not be done. People need to be – their confidentiality needs to be respected. It is, again, just about taking away the rights of people who are poor.

I know the government does repeatedly say that they want to support vulnerable people in our society, but this legislation is showing us very clearly that it's not. Some of the rationale that was explained by the Minister of Technology and Innovation was that it was because, you know, we don't want to be supporting people who are violent offenders. Well, I agree with that, but why doesn't the legislation say that? It doesn't say that at all. It just says: someone with a warrant.

It's gone far beyond what the minister has indicated, and, you know, I just wonder why this particular program, this particular income support program, is being targeted for this type of disclosure and denial of services. I mean, it just absolutely seems abhorrent and unfair for people who are poor in our province.

Certainly, as a social worker for more than 30 years my job has been to take down those barriers, and having worked within government's programs and without, those were some of the biggest challenges, the uncaring government that did not want to really support people. They wanted to judge people who are poor,

judge people who maybe were victims of domestic violence, judge people who, you know, were newcomers and didn't always speak the language, and they had barriers to employment and therefore lived in poverty.

I've worked my life to make sure that people had access, but I see a government here who says one thing and does another. Certainly, we can see it very clearly with their decisions around the opioid crisis, our drug-poisoning crisis in our province. They make it harder and harder for people to even stay alive by the closing of supervised consumption sites, the reduction of harm reduction, and the moving of Edmonton's detox way out to Alberta Hospital, making it so hard for people to access that.

You know, despite some of the words of the government, that they want to support people to overcome these challenges, really, if you look closely, you see how they are actually impeding people from overcoming the challenges that are facing them. Certainly, it is disturbing to me to see a government target this particular program. As I said – and I'm, of course, facetious in my comments about: well, why don't we just not let people use the health system if they've got a warrant? Of course, not all people who use the health system are poor; some of them are, for sure.

I really ask the government to think about why they would leave out that very specific information, you know, about violent offenders and just put a general warrant: anyone with a warrant can be denied financial support. Why is that not clear? Perhaps, sadly, I'm right and my colleagues are correct, and this government really doesn't want to support the most vulnerable people, wants to make life harder for people who are vulnerable. That is a sad day, but it seems like we're at that sad day.

I think, with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll end my comments.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 9, which is the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. This is, again, an omnibus piece of legislation, that amends 15 pieces of legislation. I don't know whether it reduces red tape or not, but it certainly reduces debate in this House, curtails debate in this House. Many of the changes contained in it could be stand-alone pieces of legislation worth debating here over time.

For instance, this bill adds a new section in the WCB legislation to exempt firefighters engaged in the Fort McMurray fire from the latency period on presumptive cancers. We all know that the Fort McMurray fire was one of the worst natural disasters in Alberta's history, and many brave firefighters, first responders, put themselves in harm's way to save people in Fort McMurray, to save Fort McMurray, and they deserve to be recognized for that. They deserve to be compensated for the harm that resulted as a result of them engaging in fighting that fire.

8:20

Recently Ontario made that coverage retroactive to 1960. I think Alberta can certainly do that. No one who was engaged in that fire should have to fight WCB on how they got that cancer. They deserve better than this. We'll be introducing an amendment later on to make those changes retroactive. As it stands now, that change doesn't go far enough.

Another change in it is that the government is reversing a change allowing the provincial government to terminate agreements without cause with a minimum of 90 days' notice to the city of Calgary or the city of Edmonton. This was initially implemented by this UCP government so they can get out of

green line work in Calgary. When they brought forward that change, many of us here were in this Legislature. The government was asked if they have consulted with anyone from the city of Calgary, any other city that was getting impacted, and there was no answer. They used their majority to ram through that change. Now all they're doing is that they're reversing their own bad decision, that was bad then and that we opposed then. It's a good change; the government should not have done it in the first place.

Another change that my colleagues talked about and the minister of Service Alberta and technology responded to as well:

The Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support and benefits to an applicant or recipient under Part 2, Division 1 when notified that

- (a) a warrant for the arrest of the applicant or recipient has been issued in respect of a prescribed offence, and
- (b) the warrant has not been executed.

There are a number of problems with this provision. As my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford said, it perpetuates, legalizes poverty. Warrants can be issued for a number of reasons, and it may or may not be the case that the person who has a warrant is convicted. In our justice system the Charter of Rights and Freedoms upholds the presumption of innocence before somebody is convicted, so that may offend the Charter as well.

The second problem with that is that although the minister said that it will be only for prescribed dangerous offenders, there is nothing in this legislation that shows what those offences will be. The UCP is asking us and asking Albertans to trust them on this, and their record shows that they cannot be trusted, and they should not be trusted.

Those who are on income support: if you have twice the amount of what the income support is on a monthly basis, you don't qualify. Essentially, if you have \$1,050, you do not qualify for income support. That's how our income support program works. For those who are on income support, that support, that benefit gives them some money to be able to eat and, in some cases, be able to have some shelter. This provision is essentially cutting those individuals, the most poor among us, from that support as well. That's another cruel decision from this clueless government, and that cannot and should not be supported.

As my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford said, it will target Indigenous communities, it will target person of colour communities because they are the ones who are among those who are among the poorest in this society. Without any information of what those prescribed offences will be, it's still a bad public policy. We should not be criminalizing, we should not be perpetuating poverty.

As was mentioned, the government passed Bill 1, Critical Infrastructure Defence Act. On the face of it, it was to protect our main infrastructure. It was brought forward by the government because the then Premier was offended by some youth making a TikTok on a railway line and Indigenous communities protesting in British Columbia. At that time Indigenous communities did share those concerns, that this bill would target them and nobody else. That turned out to be true because when Coutts was blockaded for 21 days, this government didn't mention that piece of legislation, but some from their caucus also visited the Coutts blockade.

Another change is to amend the Petty Trespass Act and the Trespass to Premises Act so that it can apply to federal government agents, again another change that no one is asking for, and even the government doesn't know what the rationale is for this. On March 1 the Government House Leader was at a presser downstairs – I was present there – and when asked about what's prompting this change, the Government House Leader



said, and I quote: we are seeing federal employees trespass onto private land in Alberta, and as a result of that, we don't think that that's appropriate. End quote. That's the Government House Leader on the morning of March 1, 2023. Later that afternoon the Justice department's spokesperson said this, and I quote: there have been no confirmed cases of trespass by federal government employees in Alberta. End quote. The Government House Leader is saying that the government is seeing federal employees trespassing on Alberta lands; the Justice department is saying that they have no evidence of such trespassing.

This change does nothing other than putting federal employees and their families at risk. It will jeopardize their safety. When the government has no evidence, when the government's own Justice department says that they have no evidence of anybody trespassing, they should not be passing this kind of legislation. Although there are a few things that we can put our support behind, there are these things that we cannot support, and for that reason I urge my colleagues and all members of this House to oppose this piece of legislation.

8:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the minister to close debate. The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has waived closure of debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

### Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

[Debate adjourned: Member Irwin speaking]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 10, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, here this evening for the first time, for myself anyhow. Just looking through this bill, which we just got, the biggest concern that the Official Opposition has generally and me specifically is that it enacts the creation of this Alberta fund, which is access to \$1.4 billion that the minister can use in any number of ways for one-time funding.

[Mr. Turton in the chair]

News flash, Mr. Speaker: of course, we are just on the cusp of an election, and the UCP government arms themselves with a \$1.4 billion one-time spending bill in this, Bill 10, and it seems like it's a fairly obvious opportunity for the government to try to buy their way into the next election. I think that Albertans have been observing this government engaged in this kind of activity already with this budget that they just put forward. It's a substantial budget, you know, and completely out of keeping with the language and the direction that this government has used over the last three and a half years, and then with an about-turn of quite a substantial budget that's just on the floor here now, and then plus another \$1.4 billion activated for one-time spending, presumably to try to cover whatever places the government desperately will try to look to buy the favour of Albertans.

I mean, this is wrong on a number of different fronts, Mr. Speaker, not the least of which is that we are entrusted to ensure that we spend money for the people of Alberta, that we save for the future for the people of Alberta, and to be stewards of both the land and the resources that we have here within our boundaries, and so

on. So this whole idea of rushing to election spending within a few weeks – right? – probably goes on the wrong side of all of those principles, all of those responsible things that this House and members of this House should observe: the idea of thoughtful spending and saving over time, the concept of ensuring that you are just and equal in the dispensation of those funds or the saving of those funds or the preservation of the resources that we have available to us. None of those things happened with this Bill 10; quite the opposite. It's like you're opening up the floodgates to just desperately try to cover off whatever the government thinks that they can deal with in the last, you know, few weeks before an election.

That is the main concern I think that we have with this bill. Of course, the regular questions do apply, Mr. Speaker, like "Who did you ask about this?" in order to say: "Yeah. You know, this is what we need. Albertans, this is what we need at this juncture in our history," to give the government access to more than a billion dollars to announce a month before an election. I mean, you'd have a hard time finding people that would concur with that judgment, I think. I really don't think that there was anything that resembled consultation on that. But you can always try, I suppose. I would ask the government who they did ask if they thought that that was such a good idea. And, really, to what end besides the naked attempt to buy people's votes before an election? That's really just so obvious.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, when I've been out talking to Albertans across the province, all over the place, really, this is the recurring theme that I hear from people. They will say some version of, like: "Do the UCP take us to be fools? Do they think that we are so easily bought? Do they think that we can't remember what happened in the last thousand days or more that suddenly is erased in the last 60 days before an election?" I mean, all of those things are just – people take offence to it. Of course, you don't have to even remind people, but it bears reminding that it's not the government's money either. It's the people of Alberta's money, in the first place. So trying to buy the favour of someone with their own money – right? – again, it feels bad. It feels dirty. And it doesn't concur with the best practices of democracy or of what common sense tells you is right or wrong, quite frankly.

Those are the things that I'm hearing. You know, that was before Bill 10 came out, so I mean Lord knows what they're going to think about now, right? That was just with the budget. Then, of course, this amendment act is clarifying some of the – just the depths to which this budget does head down that path.

I mean, there are other sections in here that I really don't have much of a problem with, right? But, you know, again, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Riverview described, you have these bills with many different facets to them, and dollars to doughnuts, there'll be one element in there that completely negates all the other things and makes it impossible to support that bill. In this case it's the Alberta fund, the \$1.4 billion one-time spending powers that this bill does give us.

The other sections that I do see here just offhand – I mean, the thing that jumps out at me is, you know, of course, with the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. I have sat on that board previously and presently. I did like to see that we have some provision to save money in the heritage trust fund. I believe it's \$750 million with this bill. This is what it was designed to do under a much more prudent and reasonable government that started the heritage trust fund concept. It's not just to save money for the future; it also helps to pay for budgets every single year. You get interest off that. You can use that interest to pay for

programs that we all benefit from. Of course, it does create a rainy-day fund. It has an added benefit, too, if you have really a lot of money, that you're not distorting the economy literally, not just provincially but even nationally, by just spending it all in some sort of way.

I mean, that said, you put \$750 million into the heritage trust fund on one hand, then you've got a \$1.4 billion thing that you can spend in eight weeks. That kind of negates that reasonable practice of saving for a rainy day and not distorting the economy on one hand and then, of course, building something even larger, which could do both of those things no problem, right?

8:40

These are the initial thoughts that I've had around Bill 10. I think we can be looking at it – of course, there's more than just me around here, so we can hear from other people – to see if the analysis proves correct, but you know it does have that glaring Alberta fund, section 9, in there that raises very large red flags for not just the Official Opposition but the general public, economists, and anyone who's concerned about the future of our province here.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will allow time for other people to speak, and I welcome them to participate in the debate. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise this evening, which very well could be one of my last opportunities here in the Assembly. With that, speaking to Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, and much like the previous member, the Member for Edmonton-North West, I also have concerns with this legislation, primarily focused around the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act amendments within this piece of legislation.

Now, when we look at even the alberta.ca, the Alberta government's website recognizing some of the changes that are being proposed in here, specifically on this act, a few points down we see that this act will

set policies for the allocation of surplus cash with at least half going toward debt repayment.

I think that's fair, Mr. Speaker. Reading past that:

The rest would be allocated to a new Alberta Fund, which would be used only to fund additional contributions to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund . . .

Fair. And beyond that,

additional debt repayment and one-time spending initiatives.

That is what the previous member spoke to, where I also have concerns, this idea of one-time spending initiatives.

I think that, again, we should be doing everything we can to be transparent and accountable with the dollars that we are spending across this province, especially when we see ourselves in an opportunity for surplus. Of course, this government has found themselves with a surplus, primarily, the majority of the reason being the price of oil. Again, that's fair. We should be considering how we are spending those funds.

But the fact is that there have been so many opportunities for this government to invest in stability in this province. Just thinking back to some of the decisions of this government, and there have been many, Mr. Speaker, that have affected primarily the lowest income Albertans, when we look at the decision of this government to deindex AISH early in their term, the decision to deindex personal income taxes, the decision to cut off beneficiaries of low-income seniors to receive benefits for medical coverage. I mean, the list is

long of the decisions that this government has made that have hurt vulnerable Albertans.

So now when we find ourselves in a situation where there are dollars left over, again, primarily because of the price of oil but also because of some of the decisions that this government has made to cut off benefits and supplies to low-income Albertans, we find ourselves in a situation with a surplus, and instead of potentially looking at how we can spend this in a more accountable and transparent way, whether it's looking at capital plans, whether it's looking at those benefits that have been decreased previously, unfortunately we see this government going down the path of one-time spending initiatives, starting April 1, right before an election, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we've heard previously, whether from this Premier or the previous Premier under the UCP, the importance of not spending government dollars during or close to an election cycle; unfortunately, we see this government going down that path with absolutely zero accountability for those dollars.

You know, I think back to some of the other decisions that this government has made, primarily looking at decisions of this Education minister around the complete lack of funding specific to Edmonton public school board, and of course that goes past just our Edmonton public school board; it goes to the Catholic school board in Edmonton, it goes to municipalities across the province and the school boards that have the important work of funding education across the province. Unfortunately, this government has done anything but support those initiatives of building new schools, of ensuring that there are dollars to put teachers in those classrooms.

Again, I think back to the rhetoric of the Education minister and, coming back to Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, this idea of one-time spending initiatives. Instead of ensuring that we are properly and adequately funding the dollars that should be designated more systematically to things like education, to things like health care, we continue to hear this rhetoric from the Education minister around how the NDP didn't fund schools in Edmonton nearly as close to how this current UCP government has done so. It would be completely laughable if it wasn't so sad for the residents in my community and communities across this province.

You know, just looking back to some of the accomplishments, Mr. Speaker – and I appreciate that there is quite a bit here, and I'll do my best to be quick. Just thinking back to our investments in education and to schools in Edmonton specific to the public school board, I mean, we saw the funding for Aleda Patterson, Alex Janvier, Garth Worthington, Dr. Anne Anderson, Thelma Chalifoux, Soraya Hafez, Jan Reimer, Kim Hung, Shauna May Seneca, Michael Phair, Donald Getty – I'm close; I promise – Svend Hansen, David Thomas King, Dr. Lila Fahlman, Hilwie Hamdon, Constable Daniel Woodall, Ivor Dent. These are all schools that were funded by our government. Some of them were modernizations; many of them were brand new schools. While I appreciate that some of these schools were finished under this UCP government – and they would love to take credit for that – in fact they were funded completely by our government.

When Albertans go to tally up how many schools – you know, we can look at my community. The minister I believe two years ago committed to one Catholic school to be built, and now that's set for '26-27. This UCP government hasn't even been able to build one school in my community in their entire term when we built at least two or three, possibly more, Mr. Speaker, not including the many other schools across west Edmonton that were built.

When we look at opportunities to invest in our community in a more systemic way, in a more accountable and transparent way, we

have mechanisms like our school boards, like our health authorities and municipalities that should be able to access this funding. Instead, this government is going to take it upon themselves to create a \$1.4 billion slush fund named the Alberta fund, Mr. Speaker, and spend that as they see fit right before an election. It's deeply concerning to me because there's no accountability here. Again, we don't know what criteria this government is planning to use. There are no assurances that it is going to be disbursed equally across the province or used on the communities with the most need out there. Instead, we are left to guess at what this money is going to be spent on. Again, when we look at the timeline for this, the lack of criteria, it sure seems like this government is going to use it as an opportunity to get themselves re-elected, and I don't think that that is how we should be spending Albertans' dollars across this province.

Now, we tie this into the millions and millions of dollars that this government is using to advertise their so-called affordability payments. Again, we see this government leaving so many Albertans out, with no accountability as to how this money is going to be spent. We see students across this province not being able to access any of this funding on top of previous decisions of this government to hike interest rates on tuition, increasing tuition to historic levels. There are so many reasons why this government should have been more accountable in how this money was going to be spent. I would say that in many ways this slush fund that the government is creating is on the backs of vulnerable Albertans who shouldn't have seen their benefits cut in the first place, who shouldn't have seen their tuition cut in the first place, who shouldn't have seen schools not being built. Now this government has found themselves in a surplus situation because of all those cuts that they've made, and they are going to be unaccountable in how they spend the money that has been left over.

As the previous member, the Member for Edmonton-North West, said, I think that there are pieces within this legislation that are reasonable and potentially tackling some of the more housekeeping issues that have been brought forward to them from stakeholders, and I can appreciate that, but the fact is that when you tie it in with this unaccountable slush fund, there's just no way that I could see myself supporting this.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. I will take my seat.

8:50

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is next.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise this evening to speak to Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

Before I get into that, I just wanted to acknowledge what the previous speaker had mentioned, about this potentially being his last time speaking in the Chamber. I need to say how important it is that his voice has been part of this Assembly for eight years, and hearing the incredible advocacy that he does on behalf of Albertans is so impactful. I needed to start with that because that has been the voice on this side of the Chamber for the eight years that I've been elected. Knowing that that's what this side of the House represents, it's such an honour for me to work alongside these incredible individuals.

Earlier on this evening we heard from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who had also made reference to this perhaps being one of the last times speaking in the Chamber. I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, of the countless hours of debate that have been held in this Chamber and the incredible, powerful stories of Albertans that we've heard from this side of the House and how their stories are what we're fighting for, individuals in Alberta. When we have a piece of legislation, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, that we're

debating here tonight, it's having that reminder that we're here for Albertans, that we're here to talk about people and how we can better their lives.

It's concerning, Mr. Speaker, when on this side of the House those are the stories that we're sharing, those are the values that we hold, and those are the policies that we want to see brought into place, that actually make a difference for Albertans who are struggling. Instead, we're in the Chamber tonight at 10 to 9 talking about a piece of legislation that essentially gives \$1.4 billion in slush funds for this government to buy votes. Now, that is such a huge contrast between what both parties are talking about.

I hear members on this side of the Chamber talking about wanting to make sure that we leave this place leaving Alberta a better place. I'm incredibly privileged to stand alongside these members that are sharing tonight and have shared for the last eight years that I've been elected. It gives me strength, Mr. Speaker, to speak about what matters. To have this piece of legislation before us tonight is quite frustrating when we know that this government isn't fooling Alberta when they're putting in a \$1.4 billion election campaign slush fund. Section 9 creates the Alberta fund; that's what this government is focusing on.

This government is focusing on trying to buy Albertans' votes. Last night, Mr. Speaker, we were in the Chamber. For those of you that weren't following along at home – maybe you were watching the Oilers game – we were debating the supplementary supply 2023-2024. Just like tonight's Bill 10, we were talking about ways that this government is campaigning on the public dime. We haven't heard from this government any sort of believable justification as to why this piece of legislation was brought forward and tonight why they believe that \$1.4 billion, that can be accessed on April 1, is in the best interests of Albertans right now as opposed to, you know, giving access to a slush fund to the Premier and the UCP.

It's concerning that that's what we're debating right now, Mr. Speaker. This is another piece of legislation, just like the piece of legislation, Bill 9, that we were speaking to right before this, that has more than one portfolio being impacted, and it's a little slip-in in the legislation that they're hoping people won't pay attention to. There are pieces of this legislation that make sense – the Children's Services piece, and Culture has some good things in there – but there are two major pieces of this that are quite concerning. I think that it creates some significant questions when we see a government giving themselves a slush fund and calling it the Alberta fund. That's quite, quite concerning.

This money that they're allocating could have been spent in so many other ways, Mr. Speaker. We're in a health care crisis despite what this government and the Premier continue to say isn't true. We've heard heartbreaking stories from all across the province of people that haven't been able to access a family doctor for years, people that are waiting incredible amounts of time for surgeries, hospitals that don't have physicians, ERs that are shut down. That's where this money should be spent. Instead, we see, under the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, them creating the Alberta fund, which is essentially a slush fund for them to buy votes, a \$1.4 billion slush fund.

It's clear what the priorities of this government are, Mr. Speaker. We have watched for four years as they've attacked doctors, as they fired educational workers, as they refused to listen to nurses and health care practitioners. Instead, they're making sure that their friends are taken care of, and this piece of legislation allows them to do just that. Effective April 1 they're able to use taxpayer money called the Alberta fund to fund one-time funding announcements. I fail to see how this is anything but desperation before a campaign.

It's certainly not helping Albertans. It's not helping the countless number of postsecondary students that I have reaching out to my

office, stressed. The cost of tuition has gone up under this government. The cost of living in general has gone up. This government brags about their affordability. Well, it doesn't impact postsecondary students. They have no access to that money. If they do not have a child, they don't get access to it. If they don't drive a car, they can't access that. When they're saying that it does impact, it absolutely does not.

This government should just simply be doing better, Mr. Speaker. When we look at section 9, it's hidden amongst quite a bit of legislation in here that they're changing and making adjustments to. But I would argue that \$1.4 billion for a slush fund is a desperate attempt from the Premier and the UCP to campaign on taxpayer dollars, and I think that Albertans know what this is about. They see the announcements with no funding behind them. They see these statements from the government that they're helping, that the health care crisis is over, but when you talk to Albertans, they know that that's not true.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my time. I encourage any member of the government to stand up and defend this \$1.4 billion slush fund.

**Mr. Stephan:** Surplus fund, not deficit.

**Ms Goehring:** They're chirping on the other side. I would encourage them, when it's their time to speak, to get up and defend this because, honestly, Mr. Speaker, I don't see any way possible that it can be defended.

With that, I will end my remarks. Thank you.

9:00

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie is next.

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and defend Bill 10 and talk about Bill 10 and the merits of Bill 10. I'm honoured to rise to discuss the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. We'll start with record spending in health care to province-wide affordability measures. Budget 2023 focuses on securing Alberta's future for generations to come, and I'm proud of that. By growing the economy, creating good-paying jobs – and I think that the Minister of Finance said today that there are 100,000 jobs waiting for people to come to Alberta to fill, and that's just the start; I'm proud of that – by strengthening education, by expanding health care, keeping communities safe, Budget 2023 addresses many of the most urgent needs we are hearing from every corner of our great province.

To effectively answer these calls and secure Alberta's future, Mr. Speaker, fiscal stability and responsibility must be upheld, clearly defined, and absolute. That's why I'm happy to support Bill 10. Albertans deserve stability and confidence in the fact that no matter what storms we face in the future, we will be as prepared as possible. As we've learned through this term, we can't predict the future. We don't know what's coming next, but we can do everything in our power to ensure Albertans are taken care of no matter what challenges may come their way. They deserve to know that our province's prosperity is not contingent on uniquely volatile revenue, revenue that's impacted by global markets and events beyond the government's control, no matter who that government is. That said, we need to focus on what is in our control; that is, our expense decisions and our ability to implement fiscal frameworks that provide flexibility for revenue swings while helping Alberta avoid past mistakes.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, for the record that earlier in the House today a member opposite talked about how the only reason we balanced the budget was because of oil revenue. I'd be the first person

to say that oil revenue certainly helped – there's no question – but that is not the only reason that we balanced the budget. We balanced the budget because we exercised a measure of fiscal discipline unknown in the four years before our office, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that our Finance minister – I would argue the best Finance minister in Alberta's history – put in these fiscal rules. He put in these fiscal anchors at a time when it was extremely volatile and uncertain. At a time when we were paying other jurisdictions to take our oil, we still stayed the course. As a result, we balanced not one budget but two back-to-back budgets, setting a record and a trend that we hope will continue. That's what Bill 10 is all about: encouraging and setting guidelines for other governments, future governments, to be held to that same account for the benefit not of us but our future generations, which is why we're all here.

Ultimately, Albertans deserve to know that their future is secure and grounded in fiscal responsibility, preparedness, and stability, and that's what Bill 10 is about, Mr. Speaker. It proposes a new fiscal framework that will provide exactly that. The proposed framework would limit expense increases except where there are unexpected and uncontrollable circumstances, something like a global pandemic, which, hopefully, we won't see again for a very long time. Setting limits would allow the government to continue focusing on improving programs and services while ensuring that Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely.

Aside from certain defined exceptions – and I want to stress those words, “defined exceptions” – Bill 10 will require all future governments to balance the budget and use surpluses to first pay down debt and then save for the future. I think that's critical, Mr. Speaker. If past administrations had focused on paying down debt, we wouldn't be in the position we're in today, and I'm proud of the record of this government and the work that we've done to start turning that around. It would help guide fiscal decision-making by setting guardrails to achieve and maintain balanced budgets while providing a fair degree of flexibility to deal with revenue swings and unexpected pressures. I think that's reasonable. It would also guide the government's management of cash from future surpluses, with a primary focus on debt repayment, investing in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and providing opportunities for one-time spending initiatives.

Ultimately, Bill 10 would bring more stability to the financial outlook of Alberta's government and position our province for a bright future. As our Finance minister has said many times, Alberta's brightest days are ahead. I believe that, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that. I'm thrilled to say that. We've seen some great days in this province. In the 26 years I've lived in this province, there have been some tremendous, tremendous days, but our best days are still ahead. That gives me a tremendous amount of hope.

In addition to implementing a new fiscal framework to secure Alberta's future prosperity, Bill 10 also proposes several amendments that address numerous other concerns we've heard from Albertans. Bill 10, if passed, would implement measures from Budget 2023 to help build fiscal stability, attract investment – attract more investment, Mr. Speaker, because we're already actively attracting and successfully attracting investments – support children and families, cut more red tape, improve provincial funding mechanisms, and make life more affordable for students.

To start, Bill 10 proposes amendments to allow the heritage fund to retain all of its net income. That is remarkable, Mr. Speaker. Right now, as the legislation sits, it requires a portion of the heritage fund's net income to be kept in the fund to protect against inflation. However, any investment income not used for inflation-proofing of the fund must be transferred to general revenue. And this gets interesting. We are learning from the past to secure a brighter future for Albertans. Had we kept all of the previous earnings in the fund

from day one, instead of the \$18 billion that we currently have in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund – wait for it, Mr. Speaker – we would have nearly \$300 billion in the trust fund today. That is remarkable.

I'm sad that we didn't do that, that past administrations didn't do that, but we can't go back. We can't change what's already happened, but we can go forward. We can set the stage for future generations to enjoy what others didn't plan for. That's why we're putting in this bill. That's why we're proposing these fiscal anchors, these fiscal frameworks so that future administrations are held to a higher account on this. Imagine what we could have done through the pandemic if we had had that kind of money in the heritage savings trust fund. It would have been remarkable.

The list of benefits Bill 10 provides for Albertans today and in the future goes on, Mr. Speaker. I'm not done yet. Amendments to the personal income tax amendment act would enable changes to the charitable tax credit rating, an increase from 10 per cent at present to 60 per cent for the first \$200 of donations. This is scheduled to come into effect retroactively on January 1 of this year, and that's really great because Albertans, as we know, are very generous. They are very giving people, and I believe, if I have my stats correct, Albertans give more per capita than any other province. That's remarkable. Now we're giving them an even greater financial incentive to do so. Just imagine what we'll unlock in civil society as that occurs.

Bill 10 will cut red tape and save businesses around \$7 million a year – \$7 million, Mr. Speaker – in mailing costs by giving businesses the ability to provide reporting documents to their shareholders electronically instead of by mail. I don't want to rag on Canada Post too much, but I will tell you that I've had a lot of interesting mail show up very late. I think this is a great change, to get my documents when I need them, as I need them, instantly. And for a \$7 million saving, that's just, like, the icing on the cake.

Changes under Bill 10 will give credit unions the opportunity to provide financial services to residents of border communities and other new customers they cannot currently serve to generate even more revenue through more flexible regulations.

Bill 10 proposes amendments that would strengthen the leadership of Horse Racing Alberta by allowing more public and industry representation to manage daily operations and ensure that this vibrant part of rural communities continues to thrive, a vibrant part of my rural community of Grande Prairie.

Bill 10 also allows Alberta's government to follow through on our commitments to create accessible and affordable postsecondary education – I have three kids in postsecondary education, Mr. Speaker; I'm very happy about that – to create the right conditions for Alberta's agrifood sector to be globally competitive, which is a win for all Albertans; to alleviate the financial burdens for those building their forever families through adoption; and to give municipalities across the province the predictable and consistent funding they have long been asking for, and I can attest to that personally with my role in the ministry.

Mr. Speaker, for this and many other reasons, I support Bill 10 so that the concerns that we hear from Albertans can be addressed, so that we can continue to learn from our mistakes collectively as a province, so that instead of repeating what's already been done, we go forward with a brighter future for the next generation and the one after that and the one after that, so that we can effectively implement Budget 2023, and, most importantly, so that we can ensure Alberta's future will be prosperous and secure for generations to come. I know that's why I ran in 2019, and I'm sure that's why many in this House put the hours in to sit in this Chamber, because we want a brighter future for our kids and grandkids and their kids and their grandkids.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I'm happy to support Bill 10. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

9:10

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 10. I want to start my comments on Bill 10 by just reading a small quote from March 7, 2012. The quote was: you should not be able to use taxpayer dollars for blatant, partisan advertising in advance of an election. Something that I completely, fundamentally agree with, and perhaps the members on the other side should because the person who made that statement was a woman who – I was about to say her name, and I just realized I can't – is now Premier of this province.

Of course, she said that when she was on the other side of the House, and at the time the Conservative government was putting together about \$1.3 million for advertising campaigns just before the election. The now Premier, who was in opposition at the time, stood up in quite an indignant state to say how repugnant it was that this government at the time was using taxpayer dollars to advertise and to promote their political brand under the guise of government advertising.

Here we are a dozen years later, finding that this government is not only spending that small amount of money – the money that, back then, Wildrose House leader Rob Anderson referred to as using taxpayers' money as their own campaign piggy bank – but now, instead of just a \$1.3 million slush fund, this government has identified about \$6.6 million for “developing and implementing the Affordability Action Plan, including an advertising campaign to inform Albertans about affordability [initiatives],” which is advertising their government policy on the eve of an election.

We know what the now Premier thought about that when she was standing on this side of the floor. I would certainly love the Premier to stand up and explain why she was terribly wrong then or why she's terribly wrong now or why she is speaking one way on one day and another way on another day, which we find happening quite frequently with this particular Premier.

I'm very, very concerned that we are in this place of the government taking such a cynical view of Alberta taxpayers' dollars that they would use such significant amounts of money to create funds for their own purposes, that will benefit only them just before an election. The creation of this \$1.4 billion election campaign slush fund, called the Alberta fund, really is the epitome of cynicism by this government.

You know, I think they should hang their head in shame at the fact that they are supporting this kind of activity. They certainly would not when they were on the opposition side. They certainly would have agreed with their own Premier and called this a slush fund that is unacceptable. I think it's fascinating that the government can purport to say that they care about Albertans and that they care about how to spend Albertans' money, but when it comes time to their own good, to kind of getting what they want out of it, they certainly have a whole bunch of money available, and they're using that money just before an election in a way which I think is really undermining the democratic system that we have in this province. I think they should certainly have some shame about it.

I noticed that they don't have money for some other very important things that they could have spent money on. I noticed that they don't have money for a public lab to make sure that we have good resources here in this province for identifying responses to viruses and other health crises. They could have easily had one in this province, but this government said that we don't have the money for that kind of thing. In fact, not only did they not continue a public lab that had been started before they became the government, but they went to the site and they dug out the beginning cement work that was put in, the

foundation work that was being put in, and covered it up at the cost of over a million dollars. They were literally using money to cover up what they were taking away from Albertans. That just seems to be the pattern here in this government.

I noticed this government also did not have the money to keep 35,000 educational assistants in the schools when times got tough in this province, that they did not have the money to provide PUF funding for children who are five years of age who need extra supports in the schools so that they can overcome disabilities, overcome learning issues, and be successful at an early age, which we know is directly tied to success later in life. They didn't have the money for that. They didn't have the money for it earlier when they had the single-year greatest deficit budget ever introduced into this province, but they also don't have it now that they got lucky and got a whole bunch of extra money that they didn't count on from the increased price of oil.

I noticed they also didn't have money for reducing class sizes, for meeting some of the needs of some of the school boards across the province of Alberta who are seeking new schools because the population of this province is rising so rapidly that we have thousands and thousands of new students every year, more students than we've ever had before, and the number of schools are simply not keeping up to it. They didn't have money for that, but they certainly had \$1.4 billion to create a slush fund for themselves. [interjection]

I can see that the government members are laughing about this, because they know what a joke it is that they're pulling on all Albertans. They know that they got away with something here, and they're going to be able to use that money for personal purposes, which are really political purposes.

I noticed they didn't have money to go to the municipalities and say: look, you're struggling, we know, because of actions that we have taken over the years, by giving a tax holiday to some major corporations, by increasing RCMP officers and putting the taxes on you, putting the costs on you. And doing all kinds of other things for small municipalities, increasing the stress that small municipalities have trying to pay their bills. I was standing in front of the Legislature not that long ago with reeves and mayors from all across the province who were here to say that their governments are under extreme stress, and a large part of it is created because this government had made decisions that put more expenses onto them and took away some of their resources. Did they have money to fix any of that at this particular time? No, they didn't have money for that; they only had money for a slush fund.

I noticed they didn't have money to resolve the problem of massive increases in tuition that we've seen under this government for the last four years. We've seen programs at universities go up by as much as 30 per cent in terms of tuition costs during their tenure here in this House. Do they have money to fix any of that? No, they don't. They don't have money for the people of Alberta. They certainly have money for their own advertising so that they can satisfy their own desire to retain power. That's really what it's all about.

I noticed they don't have any money for the people who are living on AISH, whose income this government deindexed, who took thousands of dollars out of the pockets of the most poor people in this province, both poor and disabled people. They took money away from them for four years. Have they made any suggestion that perhaps they would give back the money to the people who live on AISH with this surplus that they had? No, they didn't do that. Not only did they take money away from them by deindexing AISH; they haven't supplied any increases. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Not only did they not deal with the fact that they had deindexed AISH payments over the years, but they have not taken this money and said: look, we owe you a couple of thousand dollars each, so perhaps we should give that back to you. They could have done that. They chose not to do that. They chose instead to give themselves money. They chose instead to create a slush fund that is really about them using government resources to talk about their program of governance and advertise to the people of the province of Alberta using the money of the people of the province of Alberta. This is something that should simply not be allowed, and in fact this Premier said that it should not be allowed. On March 7, 2012, this Premier said that that was not an acceptable behaviour on the part of the government, yet now here we have this Premier and this government doing exactly that.

**9:20**

You know, you couldn't write fiction about this because people would say: that's so unrealistic; no government would act with such malintent. Yet here we have a government that has indeed done exactly that, who have stood up at one time and said that this is wrong behaviour and stood up at another time and engaged in that very same behaviour. This is really unacceptable, and I think that this government should be ashamed to bring forward this Financial Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 10, at this time with this kind of behaviour engaged and embedded in it.

I would have loved to have seen an act that did more to correct the very many mistakes of this government, that resolved the problems this government created with affordability, for example, the fact that they took the cap off electricity rates and people started paying huge amounts more, some in the neighbourhood of 300 per cent more than they used to pay. Because they took the cap off insurance, people's insurance rates went up 20, 30, 40 per cent, and even after they somehow decided that a cap was okay after saying that it wasn't okay, they brought in a cap, and then they allowed a number of companies to increase their rates right away as the cap was coming in. We saw some companies increase their rates by 15 per cent. I mean, they didn't even protect people when they were bringing in the cap, which they originally opposed.

This government has made a lot of errors in the time that they've been in government, and I'm always happy when they fix those errors. I'm just, you know, really surprised that they are here with this huge amount of bonus money that came from the sheer chance of the price of oil going up dramatically from where it is now and then not using that money in a way to make life better for Albertans. I think they could have done that. They chose not to do that.

Here we are now talking about a bill where they have found money for themselves, for their own self-interest, but not money for the people that have been suffering with high rates of the cost of food, the cost of insurance, the cost of tuition, and how difficult it's been for so many people who live on very limited incomes. Seniors who have had money taken away from them for drug coverage, students in schools who have had money taken away from them for their educational assistants: the list of people who have had to suffer under this government rhetoric . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Go away.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Unparliamentary comments on or off the record are unparliamentary.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a little leniency for this particular member because it is his last week being an MLA in this House, and I guess it's his last chance to take shots, knowing that he won't be standing here after May 29.

You know, I think I've made it very clear what I think about this act, and I certainly wish the government would take the opportunity to fix the problems that they've created in a way that was direct and honest in terms of the needs of Albertans and not the needs of their own political party.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call.

**Ms Issik:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reasonably certain I'm not the only person in this Chamber who remembers a certain bumper sticker from years ago. It said something along the lines of: please, God, let there be another boom, and I promise not to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Piss this one.

**Ms Issik:** Sh. Dot, dot, dot.

Why would somebody put that bumper sticker up? It's because our natural resource revenues are worth something. They're worth something not only to every individual in Alberta, every Albertan who is living now of all ages, but they're worth something for those who are yet to be born. The resources that are within the ground in the province of Alberta belong not just to us as Albertans today; they belong to future generations of Albertans as well. At some point this province – because it's a nonrenewable resource, oil and gas will at some point see those royalties eventually vanish. So we ought to be treating these royalty revenues with respect, with the respect that is due for those future generations and for the younger people in our province today.

I'm a bit disappointed, I'll say – and I use that word – I'm just using a nice word.

**Mr. Sabir:** Disappointed with the slush fund.

**Ms Issik:** I'm very disappointed to hear the opposition talking about slush funds. Clearly, they've been given their word of the day by their caucus bosses. They're out there with their anger words for the day, whipping it up so that tomorrow on Twitter they can, you know, have another good Twitter day. Good for them. This is a pretty serious matter, though. It's not to be taken lightly whatsoever.

What is this fund called the Alberta fund? What is that? Well, it's not a slush fund. It is the fund that represents fiscal responsibility and using funds properly when you have a surplus.

I'm sorry, but I door-knock a lot. I talk to constituents every day. I talk to them on the phone. I talk to them at meetings. I talk to them on their doorstep. They all tell me that they want our debt repaid. They all tell me they don't want to spend debt-financing charges instead of putting that money towards services. They all tell me that our heritage savings trust fund deserves to have funds put in it, not just taken out of it. They tell me that every day. They're very happy that a fiscal framework has been put into place, and they're very happy that there's some fiscal discipline.

Guess what? That money belongs to Albertans. It is not there to just spend willy-nilly on pet projects. It's outlined – and I don't know. Maybe instead of just rambling on about this, that, and the other thing that has little relevance to the conversation tonight on this bill, Bill 10, perhaps they could take a look at page 14 and onwards, where we talk about the fiscal framework. The fiscal framework not only talks about surplus funds, but it also talks about balanced budgets. There's a concept for the members opposite.

You know, let's talk about slush funds for a minute here. Does anybody remember the carbon tax?

**Mr. Getson:** Oh, yeah.

**Ms Issik:** Okay. I remember the carbon tax. I remember what it was supposed to be spent on. It was supposed to be spent to reduce emissions. What happened with that? Well, they used it as a money recycling program. That's number one. Number two, they had some programs where we had good people coming from Ontario, driving around in wrapped vans, replacing light bulbs and shower heads, light bulbs and shower heads that any of us could buy at Home Depot, by the way. [interjection] Yeah. That's how they spent it.

You know where the slush fund ended up? At the end of their term they had half a billion, almost, dollars laying around that they couldn't even figure out how to spend. They were really good at taking it out of people's pockets, not just families but every community centre, every hospital, every school, every not-for-profit agency, every women's shelter. Every single place that they could find a carbon tax to take, they took it. Then they couldn't figure out how to – there was a slush fund right there. But good thing that we had good folks from Ontario coming and changing light bulbs for us.

**9:30**

Let's go back to the fiscal framework. The first thing to recognize is how you get a balanced budget, and what are the guidelines for that?

The budget will only be permitted to be in deficit if:

- Revenue declines by \$1 billion or more from the prior-year third quarter . . . revenue forecast.

These are the exceptions that we get. Your revenue has to decline by more than a billion dollars.

- Revenue is expected to decline to an amount that is below the prior-year Q3 total expense forecast.

At year-end, a deficit is only allowed in the consolidated financial statements if:

- A deficit is forecast in the budget as permitted by the exceptions;
- Actual revenue has declined by \$500 million or more from the current year budget amount; or
- The budgeted, voted contingency is exceeded due to unanticipated costs beyond the government's control due to disasters or emergencies declared by Cabinet; expense increases required [by] the Alberta Petrochemicals Incentive Program (APIP); non-cash, non-recurring expense increases required under accounting standards; and/or expense increases by \$500 million or more for payments related to litigation or settlements not anticipated in the budget.

Okay; so there's your exceptions.

One of those exceptions is actually for APIP. And what does APIP do? It's an incentive program that brings businesses and large projects into this province that will generate revenue for years to come based on what? Feedstock of? That's right; nat gas. So, yep, we can put a big project in after a budget is done.

In-year expense growth

is to limit in-year adjusted operating expense increases to the budgeted and voted contingency except when increases are due to:

- Dedicated revenue-expense increases;

So these are expenses that are actually incurred to raise revenue.

- Non-recurring, non-cash expense variations required by accounting standards;
- Emergencies or disasters declared by Cabinet;
- Expenses under the [APIP] Program . . .
- Payments related to litigation.

Okay.

So if we end up with a surplus, then what? This is what these folks across the aisle are referring to as a slush fund. Let's see. What's that for? What's this slush fund for?

50 per cent of the available surplus cash must go to the repayment of debt maturing in that fiscal year with the remaining cash allocated to the new Alberta Fund. The Alberta Fund allows the government to set aside surplus cash while it decides the best use of this cash. There are three allowable uses of cash from the Alberta Fund.

Does that sound like a slush fund to you? Hmm.

- Debt repayment;

That's one.

- Additional deposits into the Heritage Fund;

That's two. Number three,

- One-time initiatives that do not lead to permanent increases in government spending.

Well, that sure sounds like a slush fund, doesn't it? Hmm. Wow.

And our in-year expenses. What are the guidelines for that? Four components, that we

- Require annual balanced budgets, with certain exceptions;

We've gone over the exceptions. We

- Limit year-over-year increases in operating expense to population growth and inflation;

Yes, folks, that's called fiscal discipline. It's long overdue in this province, and people have been begging for it.

- Limit in-year expense growth to a budgeted and voted contingency; and
- Set out policies for the allocation of surplus cash to repayment of maturing debt, saving for the future, or one-time initiatives that do not lead to permanent increases in government spending.

That's the fiscal framework. That is not a slush fund; that is responsible fiscal management of the people of Alberta's money, respecting the resources that belong to the people of Alberta and future generations of Albertans.

And I'm sorry that the debate tonight has just been disrespectful of those who are yet to be born and those who are young. Those resources belong to all Albertans. The revenue from those resources belongs to all Albertans, and it is required that we manage those responsibly, with discipline. Albertans want that. They tell me over and over again. So the side across can keep talking about their word of the day for their Twitter fodder, but I think Albertans deserve better than that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 8 Alberta Firearms Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

I see the hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Yeah. Mr. Chair, I would like to rise and report progress on Bill 8.

**The Deputy Chair:** Sorry. Are you asking that we rise and report on Bill 8?

**Mr. Rutherford:** Yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** All right. Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 8.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed? Carried.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

#### Bill 11 Appropriation Act, 2023

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Toews]

**The Acting Speaker:** Anyone wishing to add to debate tonight?  
Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

#### 9:40 Bill 12 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Toews]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to ask the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like a lot of great work has been done tonight in a very short period of time. I thank all members for their participation. At this time I move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:41 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 22, 2023

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)	Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Deputy Government House Leader	Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)	Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)	Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)	Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)	Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)	Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip	Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)	Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Government Whip
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)	Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)	Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)	Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC), Government House Leader
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)	Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
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Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC), Deputy Government House Leader	Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)	Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)	Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)	Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)	van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)	Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)	Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC), Deputy Government Whip
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)	Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC), Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader	Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Elbow
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)	Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
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Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
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Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
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Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

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Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
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Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
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**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
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Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
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Renaud  
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Toor  
Yaseen

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### *Alberta Hansard Special Edition*

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on your desks you will find a copy of the special edition *Hansard* for the special sitting that was held on September 15, 2022. As you will remember, the sitting was a tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II following her passing on September 8, 2022. This special edition includes all of the words of grief and gratitude that were shared by members on that day. As well, it includes many photographs of the special sitting, the memorial ceremony that was held on the front steps of the Legislature as well as images of the life and legacy of Her late Majesty. I'd like to extend a thank you to members of *Hansard* and the communications team from the Legislative Assembly Office for putting this important document together.

I hope that this keepsake will be a treasured reminder of your service to the Queen and to the province, and if you would like an additional copy, I do have a limited number available at my office.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today I am very pleased to introduce a group of visiting officials from our sister province of Hokkaido, Japan. I had the pleasure of meeting with them this morning, and we discussed a number of important issues as we continue to strengthen ties between our two great regions. We have much of a shared desire of freedom, of support, and I know that they are here visiting members of our Ministry of Education. I invite you to all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, also seated in the Speaker's gallery today is Ms Heather Toporowski. Heather is a constituent of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, has worked in the Alberta health care system for over 30 years, and now coaches leaders in health, education, and government sectors, including providing some leadership coaching to LAO staff and members. I would invite her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has a school group to introduce.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Guthrie school serves military families and students on Edmonton's military base. Through you and to you I would like to introduce the grade 6 class. If I could ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has an introduction.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising on behalf of my friend from Edmonton-South to introduce to you and through you 35 grade 6 students from Monsignor Fee Otterson school, which is located in the constituency of Edmonton-South. The students are seated in the public gallery and are joined by their teacher, Colin Oberst. I'd ask that the House join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Premier has an introduction.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you two of my constituents from the beautiful constituency of Edmonton-South West, Yuki Wong and Harris Liu. Yuki Wong is a recipient of the Queen's platinum jubilee medal. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, [Remarks in Punjabi]. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Dr. Navjot Gosal and Pam Cholak. Now, Dr. Gosal worked as a mixed-animal practitioner in Punjab before moving to Edmonton in the winter of 2008. He was a veterinarian with a mixed-animal rural practice in Morinville but mostly in Lac La Biche before moving to a small-animal private practice in Edmonton. You might have heard him on the radio in previous years on 630 CHED talking to pet owners on a weekly radio show. A proud Albertan raising a son with his wife, as they stand in the gallery, I ask all members this afternoon to join me in giving them a warm welcome to the Assembly.

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sheila Ethier. Sheila founded Blankets of Love, which provides quilts to patients who are in hospital for treatment of mental illness. She's a lifelong resident of St. Albert, an author, and a Global women of vision recipient, 2008. Sheila is here today because her family has been impacted by the backlog of cancer treatment. I ask Sheila to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise and introduce four amazing women who I'm very proud to call my friends. Wendy Walker is an Indigenous singer and songwriter who's had an incredible 30-year career, including representing our province in the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Thank you so much to the minister of Indigenous affairs for meeting with us. Welcome to Leen Yaghi of Nisa Homes, a national housing organization and a safe haven for women and children fleeing domestic violence, and finally, Savita Singh and Anita Ngau from first step together, a community-based group that works to increase the participation and integration of immigrants and refugees in Calgary and the surrounding area. It is truly an honour to have you. If you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Cost of Living and Affordability Plan

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, this past Monday marked the first day of spring. Although this is Alberta and there's always room for one

more or maybe many more snow days, you can definitely feel in the air that spring is coming and summer is not far behind. For many Albertans, myself included, the first few days of spring always bring with them a feeling of hope and optimism, and Albertans are feeling that springtime relief stronger than elsewhere thanks to an exciting trend continuing from last month. Yesterday the consumer price index released its February 2023 data, and for the second month in a row Alberta has led the country in fighting inflation and making life more affordable.

Alberta has the lowest year-over-year inflation growth, at 3.6 per cent, while the rest of the country sits at 5.2 per cent. Measures like the electricity rebates, the fuel tax relief are contributing directly to reduced inflation in Alberta. Targeted supports, including \$600 in affordability payments for parents, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans, are helping them pay their bills and save money for what matters most. Our lower cost of living, affordable housing, abundant jobs, higher earnings, and lower taxes continue to prove that the Alberta advantage is alive and well. Alberta's government has focused on taking timely, effective action to reduce costs and keep life affordable for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things that Albertans are looking forward to about spring: the return of warmer weather, hockey playoffs or, if you're like me, the start of the Canadian football season, with summer almost here on the horizon. But, beyond that, I know Albertans are excited to re-elect a UCP government, that they know has the strongest record on fighting inflation in the entire country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### Ramadan

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to recognize the holy month of Ramadan, which starts tomorrow. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. During Ramadan Muslims around the world observe a monthlong period of fasting from dawn until sunset, abstain from eating or drinking anything, and focus on strengthening their relationship with the Creator and Its creation.

Family and faith-based gatherings are a huge part of Ramadan. It brings people, communities, and Muslim umma together as one. Ramadan is an opportunity to embrace self-restraint and self-reflection. It encourages those with the means to connect with the less fortunate among us, to reach out to neighbours, to the sick and elderly, and to those who are struggling to make ends meet.

**1:40**

Ramadan is also an opportunity for all Albertans to learn more about Muslim Albertans: their faith, history, cultures, traditions, and their contribution to this province. In recent years we have also seen a rise in Islamophobia and hatred, and we also saw attacks on hijab-wearing Muslim women and increased racism and prejudice against racialized people and people of Asian origin. I urge all to take this opportunity to reach out to your neighbour, attend an iftar event, and learn about each other and come together to create a society that understands, respects, and values diversity. There is no place for racism, Islamophobia, and discrimination in our province, and we must stand together against it.

With that, I wish all Albertans observing Ramadan a blessed Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has a statement to make.

### NDP Government Record

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to talk about the big NDP successes when they were in government. Well, that covers that.

In the time remaining, let's talk about the other things that they did, like protesting against pipelines with their Extinction Rebellion besties, leading to the cancellation of the Northern Gateway and Energy East pipelines, followed by a 4 and a half billion dollar crude-by-rail scandal; over \$10 billion in extra costs incurred passed on to electricity consumers, including hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate welfare – such a reckless mishandling of the market – the blatant attack on Alberta farmers, private and home-schools, and the attack on virtually anybody that disagreed with their agenda. And did I forget to mention the carbon tax? Well, they sure did, at least till after they were elected. A hundred and eighty-three thousand jobs across Alberta lost, and the NDP leadership referred to Albertans as embarrassing cousins, as sewer rats, and told Albertans to move away if they wanted a job.

But then it got better. The 2019 election campaign: the largest number of unfunded election promises in Canadian history in the hopes of manipulating Alberta votes. Most people expected the former Premier to hang her head in shame and take over the federal NDP leadership after that failed attempt, but it seems that Justin Trudeau warned her of a vote split, making way for a Conservative victory, so she chose to stay in Alberta and maintain a four-year fear and smear campaign in hopes of getting control of the province once again. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker; the NDP plan to rack up debt, to shut off our resource-based economies, and to shutter small businesses. Jobs would be lost again, families would be destroyed again, a future in Alberta would be nonexistent again. Alberta can definitely not afford the NDP again. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Crown of the Continent Tourism Region

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been my privilege to rise in this Chamber many times to brag about the special corner of Alberta that I'm fortunate to call home. In my little corner of southwest Alberta we have an abundance of beautiful vistas, many of which have captured the eye of Hollywood and have played an important supporting role in film and TV. In fact, we were recently home to zombies and ghostbusters.

We're also fortunate to have not one but two UNESCO world heritage sites in Livingstone-Macleod: Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo Jump and the world's first international peace park, formed in 1932 between Waterton Lakes and Glacier national parks in Alberta and Montana. This is the place I want to invite you to go with me today. At the narrow waist of the Rocky Mountains, where Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana meet, sprawls one of the wildest, most diverse and intact ecosystems in the temperate zones of the world. This area is known as the Crown of the Continent. The Crown of the Continent refers to Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the surrounding communities in Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana. These regions have been working hard together to develop a very special transboundary and international visitor experience, and now their hard work is being recognized internationally.

As I mentioned, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was established in 1932. In addition to being an international peace park, Waterton-Glacier also shares the designation as the UNESCO biosphere reserve and most recently was named the world's first transboundary international dark sky park. Today I want to

recognize the hard work done by Bev Thornton and the Alberta SouthWest regional economic alliance in promoting this area of Alberta. Their hard work has resulted in international recognition of the area as a top global destination and as an alternative to traditional destinations like Banff and Lake Louise. This month Alberta SouthWest was awarded second place in the business and marketing category of Green Destinations' top 100 sustainable stories for 2022.

This summer I invite you and all members to pack your bags and come visit one of the most amazing places in the world right here in our own back park.

### Government Policies and Rural Albertans

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, as the critic for rural economic development, agriculture, and forestry I've been privileged to meet with Albertans from across this great province. During those conversations two things are abundantly clear: Albertans are resilient, they're innovative, they're hard working, and they're honest people; and they feel abandoned by this UCP government.

This government has had four years devastating their health care, forcing communities like Olds to wait with over a quarter of the population on a wait-list to see a family doctor, increased the tax burden of rural Albertans by failing to recoup taxes owed by profitable corporations to municipalities with a combination of slow action and ideas that everyone knew were going to fail. Landowners are paying the price for the inaction of this UCP, whether it be infrastructure spending with bridges and roads, water access to support our livestock industry, and ignoring the fundamental principle of surface rights. Then they gave the ultimate insult to rural Albertans by trying to use their tax dollars to pay off the bad actors that refused to clean up their abandoned wells, that they are legally obligated to clean.

After four years it is clear that this UCP government doesn't have a plan to support rural Albertans and their communities, but the Leader of the Opposition and the Alberta NDP do. We are grateful for rural Albertans and all the people that have crafted our rural economies. As a government we will make sure that rural Albertans have access to quality health care when they need it, close to home. They know that economic diversification will not be considered a luxury under the Alberta NDP. An Alberta NDP government will not leave rural Alberta behind like the UCP has because we will stand up for them with them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has a statement to make.

### Eavor Technologies

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and advocate for Alberta's geothermal opportunity, which is led by a Calgary-based company that represents the spirit of Alberta's entrepreneurialism, Eavor Technologies. Their geothermal technology, the Eavor-loop, represents the world's first and only viable form of baseload, firm, scalable power, encompassing power generation, district heating and cooling systems, and enabling local energy autonomy at scale everywhere. Eavor-loop was established through drilling techniques perfected by Alberta's oil and gas sector and patented by former conventional energy sector workers who now work for Eavor.

Mr. Speaker, the potential of Eavor-loop has been recognized internationally as a mechanism to support energy security and decarbonization goals abroad. The Alberta-based start-up was the only North American company to attain funds from the European

Union innovation fund amongst international energy supermajors, culminating in a \$120 million grant to support the commercialization of their first project in Geretsried, Germany, the largest geothermal-specific grant allocation ever provided globally.

A recognition ceremony of this monumental achievement will occur in Geretsried on August 24. Attendees will include the likes of Chancellor Olaf Scholz and other senior dignitaries from the German government and the European Union. I would urge all members of the Assembly to save the date in their calendar and consider attending.

Unequivocally, synergies and opportunities for partnership exist between Alberta's oil and gas and geothermal sectors. Our province has all the prerequisite requirements, from a labour and capital perspective, to become the global epicentre for geothermal technology exports, mirroring what China has achieved with solar infrastructure. This opportunity should be fully leveraged to promote job creation and economic prosperity for Albertans.

### Retrospective by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, this will be my final statement in this Assembly. I have spent my life in service to people in family, churches, local communities, and, lastly, in our great province. The last eight years have been a supreme privilege for which I am deeply grateful. We have achieved so much as a government, and it has been a sacred trust to represent the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka.

I have learned so much about the perspectives and contributions of other people; about how hard it is to change things for the better; about democracy, its strengths and weaknesses, that it is still the best system of human governance. The most encouraging, hopeful thing that I have seen is the voluntary, spontaneous, generous hard work of so many Albertans. In every community there are ordinary, heroic community people who see a need or an opportunity, who rally others together or they create, by the sheer energy of their passion, innovative and beautiful solutions that enrich us all. This is so hopeful, so inspiring, so reassuring for the future.

*1:50*

The last few years have been difficult for everyone: the crash of energy prices to zero and broad economic pain, COVID-19 challenges not seen since the 1919 Spanish flu, and now the fears and threats of inflation. But worse than all of these is the increasing polarization of society. Social media algorithms reconfirm prejudices and biases. People are grouping into echo chambers, where they no longer listen to others or respect one another. Albertans: we can and we must do better.

It is time to consider others with humility. It is time to put away our grievances and animosities. Albertans, we have the greatest wealth in the world: the wealth of the land; of peace, not war; of unimaginable opportunity; of fascinating technological revolution; of a greening society. With so much to be grateful for, I end one season to begin another being grateful for everything, entitled to nothing.

God bless Alberta. [Standing ovation]

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

### Cancer Treatment Wait Times

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Sheila Ethier is an author, a Global woman of vision, and a registered nurse. Her spouse, Brian, was

diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer on January 26. The doctors told Brian he should see an oncologist before the end of February. This didn't happen. Now the cancer had spread, and Brian is under palliative care. He still has not seen that oncologist. Now, the Premier has said that the crisis in health care is over, but it's not for Brian and for Sheila. So my question simply is: what does she have to say to them today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for raising this issue. My heart goes out to Sheila and to your family.

This is a challenging time for our health care system and, in fact, all health care systems across the country. We know that we need more staff. We know that we need more people to provide the services to Albertans, and we are working towards that, to expand capacity, to hire more people, Mr. Speaker, as part of Budget 2023. We are increasing our capacity. Again, I know that these are challenging times. My heart goes out to anyone impacted . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** I quote Sheila: Brian is in pain; all he wants is to receive the treatment that may save his life. Mr. Speaker, Sheila and Brian were told by several staff at the Cross that the wait time for new patients used to be four weeks, but now it is 10. Sheila wrote to the UCP government looking for answers as to why that is, and she received no reply, so I'll ask Sheila's question today. Why have wait times at the Cross gone up over a hundred per cent, and why, eight weeks after Brian's diagnosis, has he still not seen an oncologist?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as already mentioned, we know that there is increased complexity for Alberta patients. We need more health care professionals, specialists to be able to provide the services, and that is a challenge not only here but around the country. We are investing to be able to ensure that we have the staff to provide the services. I was very pleased to announce with my colleague about increasing the number of doctors through U of C and U of A programs, and also we are bringing in more doctors from overseas so we can actually provide the services to Albertans when they need it.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we're hearing from Albertans who are reporting wait times on referrals to the Cross of three, four, and even five months. Now, on February 28 of this year our opposition raised the issue of the delay being experienced specifically by Brian. The Premier called it "fearmongering," and she refused to answer the question. Three weeks later Brian's cancer has spread. So will the Premier or her minister drop the rhetoric and tell this House what is being done specifically today to deal with these terrifying wait times for cancer care? The specific answer.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated, challenges in regard to having specialists and given the increase in complexity of the cases and the number of cases – there are currently 16 positions under active recruitment for oncologists. AHS is aggressively pursuing both Canadian and international trained physicians. They're closely reviewing the local workforce to be able to provide extra care. You know, we are getting more surgeries done; surgeries have increased by 110 per cent over what they were pre-pandemic. But we know we need to continue to add capacity to our system, and through Budget 2023 we're doing that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is next.

### Anaesthesia Care

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 10:30 this morning I sent three questions to the Health minister in hopes that we can set political spin aside and put some factual answers on the record for Albertans. In a previous question period the minister confirmed anaesthesiologists were being redeployed from AHS hospitals to work in private, for-profit chartered surgical facilities. To the minister: will any surgeries scheduled to be performed in AHS hospitals be cancelled or delayed due to anaesthesiologists being redeployed to these private clinics?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for providing the questions beforehand. I only have 30 seconds, so I'll be providing a more fulsome answer after QP for the member and the Alberta public. I want to start with: the premise for the questions is incorrect. CSFs are part of our publicly funded health care system, no different than attending a family physician or than when previous governments used CSFs. Surgeries have been and will continue to be scheduled so that the most urgent and those waiting the longest get done first. These will be done at the most appropriate venue, either at hospital or CSF. It's all one publicly funded system. We're going to make sure . . .

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, it's not a complex answer to say yes or no.

Despite the minister's and Premier's claims that there's one big, happy health care system, we actually have two systems at work here: public health care funded by taxpayers, with the sole goal dedicated to keeping Albertans healthy, and a private system, also funded by taxpayers, with a competing goal of generating a profit for corporate shareholders. My second question is this. What contractual guarantees were provided to private surgical facilities for AHS to supply anaesthesiologists for operations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be clear. These contracts, which are posted publicly online on the AHS website, are for the CSFs to provide procedures for Alberta Health Services. This is done to increase capacity in our system. It works no differently than a hospital. CSFs provide space, equipment, and care teams. AHS then assigns the surgeons and the anaesthesiologists. AHS schedules these anaesthesiologists to support the highest priority cases and are always available for emergency and urgent surgeries in addition to those schedules on the slate in AHS or CSF facilities. This is part of our public system, and we're doing it . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, public health care provides care to all Albertans regardless of how much money they have in their bank account, regardless of how many other health complexities they may have. For-profit clinics prefer to take on the simplest procedures for patients with the least amount of complicating factors. That allows them to bill taxpayers for the largest volume, leaving hospitals with only the most complex and challenging surgeries. To the minister: are private clinics being given the least complicated patients and procedures either by their own self-selection or by deliberate assignment by AHS?

**Mr. Copping:** I want to be succinct. The short answer is no. AHS does the scheduling. This is no different than our current public hospitals, Mr. Speaker, where the patient is assigned based on the list that AHS have and the priorities associated by the surgeons and the anaesthesiologists. Then they are assigned to what location based on the complexity associated with the cases.

Mr. Speaker, we know that our system is broken. It was broken under the previous government. We know we need to fix it. We're investing to fix it so that we can actually save money and get more procedures done. That's what Albertans want. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

### Government Advertising

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, on Monday night the Premier gave herself permission to spend \$9 million of taxpayers' money on pre-election campaign ads, including \$3 million on the budget alone. Now, yesterday the Premier went to war with her past self, and her past self lost. Later in the day we received a FOIP showing that the former UCP Premier Kenney spent only \$600,000 on budget advertising. Why is the current UCP Premier spending five times that amount to advertise just ahead of this election? Is someone over there a little nervous?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of this past year we're projecting to spend \$20 million in our advertising budget this year. There are many components to that, certainly the affordability measures, which warrant communication with Albertans to ensure that every Albertan and every Alberta family can participate in these significant affordability measures.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have an Alberta Is Calling campaign that is yielding great results. Once again, in the last quarters Alberta is leading the nation in net in-migration.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, let's talk about those affordability payments, Mr. Speaker, because the one fact the Premier is not advertising is the fact that those payments all end right after the election. She left that part out. Hmm.

Now, the Premier once said that this kind of behaviour was – and I quote – offside with what people would consider to be legitimate spending. End quote. Once again, if the Premier is willing to sell out her beliefs in just five months, what will she sell out if she gets four more years?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that 1.2 million Albertans are now enrolled and receiving the affordability payments that seniors, families, and Albertans on core support programs really need. The members opposite are clearly not paying attention. Here's a list of the programs not ending in June: our fuel tax relief – that is a permanent program – natural gas price protection, our indexing of AISH, income support, the Alberta seniors' benefit, the Alberta child and family benefit, retroactive indexing of personal income taxes. Parents will continue to benefit from affordable child care and our affordability measures in postsecondary.

What will end in June is their aspirations at government.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, back in 2012 the Premier and her Wildrose caucus were apoplectic when the then PC Premier announced \$400,000 for advertising. Back then the Premier's executive director accused the Tories of using taxpayers' money as their own, quote, campaign piggy bank. Well, this Premier's piggy bank is a heck of a lot fatter. She's spending 20 times that amount. To the Premier: isn't it 20 times more wrong now than it was then, or do your beliefs change when it's your hand in the piggy bank?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're projecting to spend \$20 million this year on substantive advertising on an Alberta Is Calling campaign, which is working, and to ensure that Albertans know about all the affordability measures.

My question to the Leader of the Opposition is this. Back in 2018-19 they spent \$25 million in advertising ahead of the election. What did Albertans get for that? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning and Official Opposition deputy House leader.

### Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural municipalities are owed over \$268 million in back taxes by oil companies. Recently the Minister of Energy ran away from reporters when they tried to ask questions about the details of his plan to block oil companies from acquiring or transferring licences on wells if their unpaid taxes exceeded a threshold amount. Municipalities deserve an answer. Simple question, Minister: how much do these companies have to dump onto residential taxpayers before the UCP starts to think it's a problem?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, we understand that municipalities and landowners are frustrated by overdue and unpaid property taxes owed by oil and gas companies. We take these matters seriously, which is why on Monday I signed an order to allow the AER authority to prevent the transfer of or issuance of a well licence if a company has outstanding taxes. In these cases the AER must be satisfied that the payment of municipal taxes have either been paid or are a condition of sale. The AER aims to develop and implement this process by April 30, so they will find out in due course. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly, today at RMA we heard from municipal leaders who said that they haven't been consulted; in fact, the solution doesn't fix the problem. These companies are allowed to drill on landowners' properties, extract production, and take away enormous profits during boom times. They used municipal roads, water, drainage, infrastructure, and then left without paying their share. For years the UCP ignored this problem without taking action, and now on the eve of the election they've come up with a promise to make a plan. Why doesn't the Energy minister have a real plan after four years of studying this problem? Four years, Minister. The rural municipalities have a right to know.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Well, this morning at RMA we received overwhelming support for the initiative that this government has taken.

It should be noted that earlier this month a little further encouragement was made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I, having sent out letters to every functioning company in Alberta

who isn't compliant in paying their municipal taxes to request their co-operation. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and I look forward to settling these bad debts in an effort to strengthen the balance sheets of our rural municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, at RMA this morning we clearly heard that consultation has not happened. So I encourage all municipal leaders to join our consultation tomorrow night at [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca). It's easy to see why Albertans are fed up with this UCP government; they're stuck paying higher taxes that the profitable companies can take their own tax bills – now we're watching this minister and this Premier launch a scheme to hand over \$20 billion of Alberta's tax money to companies who've polluted the landscape and refuse to clean up the mess. Why is the Premier turning her back on rural Albertans by sticking them with higher taxes, less infrastructure, and rewarding the bad . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, this just boils down to the anti oil and gas sentiment of the opposition. I want to be clear that the vast majority of companies in Alberta are good operators, and they do not fit this order. Our government strengthened the liability management framework. We empowered the AER's ability to intervene, and we're working to ensure municipalities have every opportunity to collect owed taxes through this order, the legislation implemented to allow for liens against assets, and the letters to delinquent companies. Municipalities and landowners across this province can expect this . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

#### Affordability Plan and Fiscal Policy

**Mrs. Allard:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I frequently hear from constituents who are thankful for the affordability support they've been receiving, thankful for real action from this government. Parents tell me that thanks to affordability payments they've been able to provide their children more nutritious meals and keep them in the activities they love. I hear from households, farms, businesses that are thankful for extra help on their electricity bills, and many of my constituents appreciate the price relief they are receiving at the pumps, including Mr. Sadlier, who has joined us from Grande Prairie in the gallery today. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: can you provide an update on the affordability action plan and how it's supporting Albertans?

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you to the member for the question. The affordability action plan has provided effective and timely relief to Albertans during this period of increased inflationary pressures. The average household is receiving an estimated \$900 in broad-based relief alone, and this includes up to \$500 in electricity rebates to 1.9 million homes, farms, and small businesses since July. I'm also pleased to report that 1.2 million low- and middle-income families, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans have now enrolled and are receiving monthly affordability payments. Albertans have expected timely, effective action on cost-of-living concerns, and we've delivered.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister. Given that even though our economy is strong and this

government has worked hard to make life more affordable today while keeping Alberta affordable long term, the cost of living remains a top-of-mind concern for many Albertans. Given that I hear from many of my constituents who are thankful for the support this government has continued to provide but are still concerned about inflation trends nation-wide and further given that we know that provinces are limited in what they can do on their own to fight inflation, to the same minister: what is this government doing to combat inflation effectively?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm pleased to share that in addition to providing cost-of-living relief to Albertans, our affordability action plan is directly combatting inflation. Newly released consumer price index data indicates that Alberta's inflation rate is nearly two points lower than the rest of Canada for the second month in a row. For February 2023 Alberta sits at 3.6 per cent compared to 5.2 per cent nationally, and this difference is directly linked to our affordability measures, including our electricity rebates and fuel tax relief, measures which are saving Albertans hundreds of dollars and lowering inflation. Alberta continues to lead the way. I'm proud to be part of a government with the best . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again, through you, to the minister. Given that we inherited a fiscal train wreck from the members opposite that required tough decisions throughout this term to get the province back on track and given that we can't address the needs of today if we have to mortgage our future by borrowing from future generations and further given that we want to position the province well to respond to potential future crises, to the Minister of Finance: can you tell this House how responsible fiscal management fights inflation and secures our future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very appropriate question. Responsible fiscal management matters. I've been on the record – and I truly believe this to be true – that the best thing governments can do during times of inflation is spend less, borrow less, and tax less. That's why we're suspending the fuel tax as a permanent feature in Alberta's economy. That's why we reduced our debt this year by \$13.4 billion, saving Albertans \$560 million in debt-service costs. Responsible management matters. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### 2:10 Energy Company Liability

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that if you make a mess, you clean it up; that is, unless you're the Premier's friend. Then what's clear is that you get paid off with Albertans' money to clean it up. That's the premise of the Premier's R-star program, that offers up to \$20 billion in royalty credits for a small number of bad companies to clean up their own messes. This is a giant waste of Albertans' money, especially at a time when our health care system is in crisis and Albertans are struggling to make ends meet. Why is this government prioritizing their friends over Albertans?

**Mr. Guthrie:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP are desperate. It's obvious. They can't find their footing, and their followers are

getting frustrated with their Dumpster-fire campaign. With the lack of traction, they're just trying to manufacture a crisis. There is no program, Mr. Speaker, and there's nothing in the budget, but that doesn't matter to the NDP. If they keep repeating it, then it must be true. The people of this province: they can see through this trash, and it's exactly why they cannot be trusted. On this side of the House we will remain focused on making life more affordable for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, hidden agendas are hidden. That's what we're trying to speak to today.

Given that the president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta said that the Premier's \$20 billion giveaway is how a fox would design a henhouse and given that Scotiabank has said that the Premier's plan could create "negative public sentiment toward the [oil and gas industry]" and that it "goes against the core capitalist principle that private companies should take full responsibility for the liabilities they willingly accept," why is this government so intent on wasting \$20 billion of Albertans' money?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, it should be understood by everyone that the NDP want to see an end to fossil fuel production. We know that our producers are good stewards of the environment. Methane reductions: 44 per cent; oil sands emissions reductions: over 35 per cent. The Pathways Alliance has a goal to be net neutral by 2050, and all of these come with billions of dollars of capital investment, and all of these are done above and beyond mandatory closure limits. The NDP's ideology only paves a way to poverty.

**Member Ceci:** Given that the government has not yet held public consultations on this \$20 billion giveaway – all they've done is hold a few closed-door meetings with a select group of people and friends – and given that the Premier lobbied for this giveaway before becoming Premier and hired another lobbyist into her office to orchestrate this giveaway and given that the minister has said that there won't be anymore details about this handout until after the election, why is this government hiding this \$20 billion giveaway from Albertans? Are they too scared to run on it? Run on it.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Let me provide you with a proof point here, one regarding the provincial board of the NDP. On this board sits Gil McGowan of the Alberta Federation of Labour, who was supposed to be a champion of Alberta workers, but, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case. He opposed Trans Mountain. He opposed Energy East, opposed Keystone, opposed Northern Gateway, opposed the Alberta Clipper, and that's not all. In 2016 the NDP appointed him co-chair of a committee to diversify the oil and gas sector, and by diversify we mean eliminate, one more reason the NDP cannot be trusted. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The minister has had his opportunity to answer the question. Now it's time for the Official Opposition House Leader to ask hers.

#### WCB Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's first responders are heroes, and this is something we can all agree on. We remember the support that Albertans had for the heroes of the 2016 Wood Buffalo wildfire, who put themselves at great risk to protect communities and people. The very last thing these heroes need is to worry about whether they will have access to WCB coverage. They deserve the

peace of mind to know that if they fall ill due to work, they will not have to fight or wait for coverage. I have an amendment to introduce this afternoon that will provide this peace of mind. I've shared it with the minister more than a week ago. Will he rethink his opposition and support it?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member and the member's hard work, and I did have an opportunity to see the amendment. I'll just say this, that we're going to make sure that no firefighters are left behind on WCB coverage in Fort McMurray. We're going to make sure that all firefighters, all emergency services personnel are respected properly but also make sure that WCB and the people that support it, which, of course, are the employers of Alberta, are treated respectfully. All of our decisions are evidence based, something different than they've ever done before.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the WCB is a partnership between workers and employers and given that this debate should be about the firefighters and their families, who are worried that Bill 9 may exclude them, and given the stress and the sacrifice these firefighters put into saving communities from the Beast, they deserve better than a bill that may leave some behind. Given that the government doesn't need to do any work – they just need to listen to firefighters and support an amendment that's already been drafted – can the red tape minister explain why he doesn't think that every hero of the Fort McMurray wildfire deserves the confidence to know that they will be covered for occupational cancers?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, WCB has a fairness review, and they make sure that these cases, as they come forward, are treated fairly. That's exactly what we're going to make sure happens. We've already sent a clear indication to WCB what needs to be done in this particular case, and there's more good news coming. I just wish the member would be a little bit patient. I mean, after all, she was the minister in charge of this file when that particular person that was in that fire died from cancer, and she was the minister that could have made the change. She didn't make the change because she knew it was the wrong thing to do at the time. We're doing the right thing. We'll continue to support firefighters in Alberta.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the UCP has been in government for four years and has done nothing and given that we have a bill in front of the House today that we can amend and make better and given that this should not be about politics – it should be about what's best for our heroic front-line responders, who deserve better than a fairness review – and given that Ontario has shown retroactive coverage is absolutely possible, can the minister explain why he is fine with denying coverage to a single one of the firefighters who were there in 2016 fighting that wildfire? Let me assure him that an Alberta NDP government will correct this failure.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the member has said that she doesn't want to play politics. Well, she's playing politics. She had the chance, she had the ability to sign on the dotted line, and she didn't. You know why? Because it was the wrong thing to do. We are doing the right thing. There is more good news coming. The firefighters in Alberta are going to be extremely happy. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

#### Allergy Awareness and Supports

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, anaphylactic reactions are allergic reactions that can cause severe effects, up to and including loss of life. Severe allergies are often to food, environment, sometimes to

bees and wasps. Thousands of Albertans, including myself, live with severe allergies, and reactions can occur unexpectedly. Can the Minister of Health please share with this Assembly the importance of the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, that was passed earlier in this Legislature?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. In 2019 the government of Alberta passed the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act. The act requires schools to maintain an epinephrine autoinjector within the school for use if a student becomes anaphylactic. This, along with the Canadian anaphylaxis readiness education training program, provides teachers and administrators in all public, separate, charter, private, and francophone schools in Alberta with quick information and access to EpiPens when needed.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that thousands of Albertans live with severe, life-threatening allergies, with effects ranging from skin irritations, hives, severe stomach pain and upset, choking, and loss of life, and given that often people do not know they have a life-threatening allergy as this can develop at any time, can the minister please provide the Assembly with an overview of the measures this government has taken to help protect the lives and health of Albertans living with severe allergies and other related conditions?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. As I noted earlier, we did pass the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, which requires schools to maintain an EpiPen within the school for use if a student becomes anaphylactic. We also provide education about the causes, signs, and symptoms of anaphylaxis and what steps people can take if someone is experiencing issues, including calling emergency services for help when needed.

2:20

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that schools are not the only public spaces where someone may have their first anaphylactic reaction and that someone having an anaphylactic reaction may not have epinephrine with them and given that B.C., New Brunswick, and 35 of the 50 American states are beginning to allow for epinephrine to be stored in public spaces, can the minister please look into whether or not it would be beneficial for Alberta to follow their lead and allow entities the freedom to store epinephrine in public spaces?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for her advocacy on this issue. Certainly, our government can explore what other jurisdictions have implemented through legislation and see what lessons can be learned to improve our response. We know that epinephrine is a powerful drug and, if administered incorrectly or for an inappropriate purpose, may result in harm or even death. Proper instruction on recognizing anaphylaxis, proper use of EpiPens, and emergency steps to follow are critical and not being overlooked, but we're happy to do the research and work with the hon. member.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

### School Construction in Northeast Calgary

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Redstone in Calgary needs a school. It's a vibrant and growing community with young families who deserve access to top-quality education in their neighbourhood, but this government has completely ignored this need. It is disgraceful. Luckily, come May, Redstone will get its school moving if Alberta's NDP is elected as government. To the Minister of Infrastructure: why have you ignored the needs of children and families living in northeast Calgary?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite needs to do his homework. In fact, we have provided more schools in Calgary than the NDP did. During the four years under the NDP, they only built 11 projects or announced 11 projects. We are over 18 projects and six for the CBE alone this year.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that I have done my homework and that it takes about three years to build a school, which means the community of Redstone is going to have to be without a school for some time, and given that government knew about the need for a school in northeast Calgary but chose to ignore it and given that the Alberta NDP is proud to support education in this province and build schools in growing communities, can the Minister of Infrastructure explain why they only approved one new school in Alberta's largest city this year and nothing for the growing community of Redstone?

**Member LaGrange:** Well, I'm not sure how he does his homework, but he would get an F on it because, Mr. Speaker, Calgary was approved for a new elementary school in Redstone, also for a new K to 9 school in Nolan Hill, a new Catholic school in Chestermere, a new high school in Rangeview, a new Bishop McNally high school. We're continuing to fund more and more schools than the NDP ever did, 106 over four years; the NDP, 47.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the students and families who live in northeast Calgary clearly do not matter to this government and given that the UCP school capital plan ignores the need of northeast Calgary and given that the UCP has turned their back on students, staff, and families all across this province by ignoring the capital needs of school boards, will the Minister of Infrastructure explain to Calgarians and all Albertans why he's okay with stuffing students in ever more crowded classrooms instead of building the new school that we need?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, shame on them. Shame on them for politicizing our children. Shame on them, because we've added hundreds of millions of dollars to operating budgets in Calgary alone. We are adding an additional 11 school projects in Calgary in this year alone. Shame on them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

### Francophone Services and Education

**Ms Renaud:** Cette première ministre a bâti un cabinet énorme, et elle a créé douze postes de secrétaires parlementaires, mais elle a choisi d'ignorer la communauté francophone. Le recensement de 2021 nous a appris qu'il y a plus de 260,000 albertains qui connaît le français. Ma question pour le ministre de culture: pourquoi ne pas nommer un secrétaire parlementaire pour les francophones quand il sait que c'est une communauté énorme?

**Mr. Glubish:** M. le Président, notre gouvernement est un allié avec la communauté francophone.



Mr. Speaker, I am a proud speaker of French, I'm a minister in this cabinet, and I work very closely with the Premier and with her entire cabinet to represent the government to the francophone community across this province. We care deeply about Franco-Albertans. We care about their future, and we value their contributions to this province, and we will continue to operate in that fashion.

**Ms Renaud:** Le gouvernement a coupé le financement du Campus Saint-Jean et plus tard combat l'association canadienne française d'Alberta devant les tribunaux pour défendre leurs coupures. C'est un droit constitutionnel d'avoir accès aux programmes universitaires en français, mais le PCU ne respecte pas la constitution ni la loi. Le ministre, va-t-il s'excuser pour leur mauvaise décision? Oui ou non?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, there is a current court case ongoing, and we will not comment on an ongoing court case. That is completely unacceptable.

But what I can tell you is that our government cares deeply about Campus Saint-Jean and the role that they play in our postsecondary institution. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of being there just last week to speak with them and to explore the topic of scientific research in Alberta but doing so in the first language of French. We know it's important for Franco-Albertans to be able to participate in Alberta in all aspects of society but to do that in the language that they were born and raised in, and we will be committed to working with them to make that . . .

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

**Ms Renaud:** Les Albertains doivent avoir accès à l'éducation en français. C'est un droit constitutionnel. Les données de recensement montrent qu'il y a un besoin croissant d'éducation en français. On sait qu'il n'y a pas assez d'enseignants francophones, et quand même ce gouvernement attaque le Campus Saint-Jean. Le ministre responsable pour les questions francophones, va-t-il expliquer aux Albertains francophones qui veulent leurs enfants soient éduqués en français pourquoi l'école francophone n'est pas une priorité pour ce gouvernement?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again the members opposite seem to ignore the record. Under the NDP they only built four schools for the francophone community. We've already allocated 10. While the members opposite don't want to hear this, they actually took apart, they got rid of the francophone directorate that was under my purview, under my department. We recreated that under the French-language service branch. We added the francophone equivalency grant, the French-language service branch. We keep going and working with the francophone community. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Education Funding and Parental Choice

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As families flock to Alberta to gain a better financial future, even more children will be looking to attend one of the many schools and options that our province offers. I've got a brief question for the Minister of Education: what is our government doing to ensure that every family has a place to send their child to school while also ensuring that school authorities are properly equipped to receive the increase in students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2023 adds an almost \$2 billion increase over three years to education operating, with \$820 million specifically going to support enrolment growth. This funding will support school authorities to hire more additional staff, including teachers and classroom supports. On top of this significant investment, the supplemental enrolment grant will also continue next year, which provides additional funding for school authorities facing enrolment growth above a certain threshold. This grant provides more than \$21 million in additional funding to school authorities, and it will continue next year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for the answer. Given that many new students are coming to our province and will find a seat in an Alberta classroom, we know that classrooms may become increasingly complex. Also given that many students in Alberta have diverse cognitive, social, and emotional needs – some may have learning disabilities or behavioural challenges, and others may need extra support learning English as an additional language – to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure all students are set up for success?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to let you know that we are providing \$126 million over three years to address class size complexity and enable school authorities to hire more educational assistants or increase their hours, provide more training opportunities for staff, and/or hire specialists such as counsellors, psychologists, and interpreters. Students with learning disabilities or behavioural challenges or those who need extra support in English as an additional language will benefit from this funding. This is part of \$1.5 billion in Budget 2023 that will go to support our most vulnerable students. [interjections]

2:30

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. member.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is a province that offers choice in education and supports parent choice and given that choice includes publicly funded Catholic education, alternative programs, charter and independent schools, can the same minister please tell this House how choice in education has been supported under Budget 2023, and how does this contrast with how it was treated under the previous government?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I've heard many of the members opposite repeatedly share inaccuracies about education funding. In Budget 2023 our government is making historic investments in education. Make no mistake; the members opposite want to eliminate choice. They do not support public charter schools, independent schools, or home education. I was president of the ACSTA under the NDP government, and let me assure this House that the greatest threat to publicly funded, authentically Catholic education under the NDP was the NDP. On this side of the House we stand for families and students and for choice in education. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Seniors' Support

**Ms Sigurdson:** The UCP government has a very sad record when it comes to standing up for Alberta seniors. One of their first moves was cutting the seniors' benefit, imposing new fees on home care,

and throwing 60,000 Albertans off the seniors' drug plan, and let's not forget the plans the Premier has to get her hands on their pensions. Now the UCP is hiking accommodation rates for seniors living in continuing care. Can the minister explain why he feels that seniors need to bear these extra costs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations is rising.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of our government. Just today we're taking action to support more households with affordable housing and stronger foundations and working with seniors. Our affordable housing partnership program is providing nearly \$66 million to support 11 projects across the province. The funding will support hundreds of families, individuals, children, volunteers, veterans, seniors, and those recovering from addictions. It's a great program.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that raising these fees is just the latest in punishing policies imposed by the UCP onto seniors who worked to build Alberta and given that seniors are already concerned because of the decision of the UCP to eliminate the Seniors Advocate, whose role it was to fight for seniors, and given that once upon a time the Premier herself supported having a Seniors Advocate, that she insisted had to be independent, why did the Premier abandon her support for an independent Seniors Advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. As the hon. member knows, and we've spoken many times in this House, you know, we focused on – given that much of the work that the Seniors Advocate was doing was health related, we combined that office with the Health Advocate and the Alberta mental health advocate, and we also brought staff over from that office. That staff today continues to provide services to seniors to be able to refer them to the program. I'm proud of the work our government is doing supporting seniors, particularly in terms of the billion dollars we're spending to transform our continuing care sector. We're going to continue to support seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this UCP government has deferred this hike of the accommodation charges to right after the election and given that this is just another example of the UCP springing a pile of new costs and fees onto Albertans right after the polls are closed, why won't the minister tell seniors the whole story about how expensive a UCP government is and will be for them before they cast their vote?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that's actually looking after seniors. As the hon. member already knows, fees go up with the consumer price index. We recognized how difficult it would be for seniors if the fees went up, so we actually subsidized those fees this year, you know, to be able to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member had her opportunity to ask the question. The hon. minister can answer it.

**Mr. Copping:** We subsidized those fees so that they only went up a small portion, and we continue to bear those costs associated with it. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my cabinet colleagues to continue to support seniors and make sure the cost of living doesn't go up as high and they can afford it.

### School Construction in North Edmonton

**Mr. Nielsen:** Edmonton-Decore is home to all three high schools in all of north Edmonton. Queen Elizabeth high school opened in 1958, Archbishop O'Leary opened up in 1960, and M.E. LaZerte opened up in 1969. All of them are full. Queen Elizabeth and O'Leary are, in fact, over capacity. Much to the surprise of no one, the UCP failed to invest even a single dollar in upgrading or replacing these schools. Can the Infrastructure minister explain if he has an issue with north Edmonton, and if not, why is he ignoring the needs of the students there?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I have to correct the members opposite. The public school division this year alone received their top five asks for schools. We worked really hard with the Edmonton public school division because in the previous years they weren't actually prioritizing schools that needed to be built in high-growth areas, and the other ones that they had prioritized were actually good schools that did not have health and safety issues, that were not in high-priority areas. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore is the only one with the call.

**Mr. Nielsen:** That's not what I heard from those boards.

Given that the board chair of Edmonton public says that it will be out of high school space by 2027 but given that the attitude of this minister is that the students of north Edmonton should just get used to their overcrowded classrooms since this government is in no rush to build schools that they need and given that while the minister talks about the process of building schools, he's cheerleading the Premier's plan to hand over \$20 billion to bad companies that refuse to clean up their own messes, can the Infrastructure minister explain why he feels these companies who don't follow their legal obligation are more deserving than Alberta students?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, from 2015 to 2019, under the NDP watch, Edmonton only received eight new projects. Under our watch we've already allocated 16 new projects. I have to wonder if Edmonton public schools . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The minister is the one with the call.

**Member LaGrange:** I have to wonder if the Edmonton public school division isn't playing politics as well because their vice-chair is running for the NDP, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Two hundred and forty-four new and modernized schools, I know, at least while I was there.

Given that we will be out of . . .

**The Speaker:** No, no, no. No preamble. This is the point, why there is the no-preamble rule, so that you don't do exactly what you just did.

The hon. member can continue directly to his question.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that we will be out of high school space in 2027 and given that rather than solving that, the minister and government play the blame game to cover their failure to properly support students in my constituency and all of north Edmonton and given

that the Premier has tens of thousands of dollars to sole-source contracts for a campaign manager and nearly \$10 million to spend to promote her government right before an election, can the Infrastructure minister explain why there's money for the Premier's friends while north Edmonton students are ignored?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again, the members opposite need to go and do their homework. Edmonton public school division's overall increase to their overall budget, which is \$1.1 billion: they're going to see almost \$66 million additional dollars just to their operating budget. They have over \$28 million in their operating reserves and over \$41 million in their capital reserves. We are making sure that all school divisions across this province are well resourced, well funded, and ready for students.

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

### Mental Health and Addiction Services

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we are emerging from a global pandemic, Albertans are struggling to find the support they need. The mental health of Albertans is essential to proper growth and development, and it is crucial in building and maintaining healthy communities. If passed, Budget 2023 will invest a record-breaking \$275 million for mental health and addiction support. Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction explain what this funding will do for Albertans?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I just want to reiterate that, if passed, Budget 2023 would provide a record-breaking investment of \$270 million in funding for the Mental Health and Addiction ministry. This is an increase of over 200 per cent from when the NDP was in power. This funding will support key priorities like continuing to build recovery-oriented systems of care across Alberta, that will ensure every Albertan has the opportunity to be supported in their pursuit of recovery from addiction and mental health challenges no matter where they are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that youth in our province have been hit hard these past few years in relation to pandemic restrictions and unconventional learning techniques and given that assisting our youth is one of the top priorities this government has planned for 2023, can the same minister explain what new assistance is available to support youth and children with their mental health and how we can better promote early intervention?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the hon. member for the question. As stated by the hon. member, again, Alberta's youth is one of the top priorities for this government, and that includes their mental health. Through Budget 2023 the province has provided \$2.4 million to Kids Help Phone for children and youth to access professional counselling and crisis services. Our government is also investing \$10.8 million over three years to continue expanding youth mental health hubs across Alberta to help improve youth mental wellness. In addition, we are partnering with CASA, a recent announcement that I made of \$92 million.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that recovery is possible and everyone should be supported throughout their personal mental health and addiction journey and given that our government is working towards modernizing Alberta's primary health care system and further given that this government is planning to transform how addiction and mental health services are treated, can the same minister please explain what Albertans can expect with a more modernized primary health care system and with an Alberta model of care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question to the member. I am working closely, of course, with the Minister of Health to ensure that we modernize Alberta's primary care system. We are supporting recovery and mental health and addiction challenges. Noted was the Alberta model, a model that's getting attention from across the world. People are calling us and asking us how we're experiencing the successes that we are through the recovery-oriented system of care that we have been building out throughout the province. We have taken historic steps such as removing user fees, making counselling services available, affordable, and accessible across the province. VODP is an award-winning program, treatment on demand.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 209, the Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Neglect) Amendment Act, 2023, sponsored by yours truly, myself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give oral notice of Bill 208, the Municipal Government (Tourism Community Designation) Amendment Act, 2023, sponsored by myself.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a tabling.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a number of letters from my constituents who are speaking out for the protection of the Athabasca watershed, calling on this government to work with Indigenous communities in the area. All of these letters were sent before the news of the Kearl tailings leak, so they're more timely than ever, and we'd be wise to heed their warning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were no points of order today. That brings us to Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

#### Adjournment of Spring Sitting

25. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2023 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the

Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, the hon. the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 25. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) this is not a debatable motion.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

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

#### Bill 11 Appropriation Act, 2023

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Bill 11 requests a total of \$57.4 billion from the general revenue fund, consistent with Budget '23, consistent with the budget I presented in this House on February 28. This will add a total of \$180 million for the Legislative Assembly and \$57.2 billion for the government to meet funding commitments as laid out in the '23-24 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the '23-24 government estimates. The government's funding will provide for \$50 billion in expense, \$3.9 billion for capital investment, \$1.5 billion for financial transactions, and \$1.5 billion for contingencies.

Mr. Chair, I ask all my colleagues in the Assembly to support this bill, and I request to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 12 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments that would like to be offered? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Bill 12 will provide authority for government to pay from the general revenue fund for additional costs that are not already covered or otherwise provided for during the current fiscal year.

Again I ask all of my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly to support this bill, and I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 9 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members wishing to add comments, questions, or amendments in respect to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I've actually lost track of how many red tape reduction acts we've had, so I was going to say number 5, number 7, number 8, number 12.

The odd thing I will just mention – because, hopefully, this is the last time I'm speaking to an omnibus piece of legislation called "red tape reduction." You know, it's become sort of a generic term for the UCP government to try to jam in things that would in some circumstances be considered miscellaneous statutes amendments and then in some cases to do things for performative reasons and then sometimes to do legitimate – I believe sometimes there is some legitimacy, but it's often, like, crammed in with other pieces that are completely irrelevant or problematic. I think some of these pieces could be worthy of their own pieces of legislation and conversation, but they try to put it all together into these omnibus pieces of legislation so that Albertans can't really know what's happening.

2:50

This piece of legislation, this omnibus piece of legislation, does change up to 15, if I'm correct, pieces of legislation, some of them that seem, you know, pretty innocuous. If I have some time, I'll go back to those ones, but I do want to talk a little bit about some of the changes that are, I think, worthy of a little bit of debate and discussion. Here in Committee of the Whole is an opportune time to do that kind of discussion, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin with some of the changes that are very small in this bill but that are made to the Income and Employment Supports Act. As I said, this is a very small change in the actual bill, but it does make a change that I think is worthy of discussion. It says, for example – it's section 5 of the bill, and it amends the Income and Employment Supports Act to add a provision. The provision is essentially – and I'll read it into the record, Mr. Chair. It says:

Consequences of outstanding warrant

15.1 The Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support and benefits to an applicant or recipient under Part 2, Division 1 when notified that

- (a) a warrant for the arrest of the applicant or recipient has been issued in respect of a prescribed offence, and
- (b) the warrant has not been executed.

What this does is essentially say that, you know, an individual can be refused – in fact, it says "must" be refused by the director – income support benefits if that individual has an outstanding warrant issued against them.

I think in principle we can somewhat understand this kind of a change and the idea of, you know, one of the ways that we compel people is that we have warrants, essentially, basically, meaning an individual can be brought before the court if found to appear before the court – a court for various reasons; let me just add that. I'll get back to that point. But why should an individual who has an outstanding warrant be eligible for financial support? I can understand that there is some fundamental thinking about that: if somebody's got an outstanding warrant, maybe they shouldn't be entitled to government supports.

However, there's a little bit more, I think, nuance and detail to that that I think we need to better understand because, for one thing, as it stands right now, it does say that it's a warrant that is issued for a prescribed offence. Later on in Bill 9 it sets out that there will be the ability to prescribe offences for the purposes of this act, but until that's decided, in terms of which offences are considered prescribed offences, we have to be clear that bench warrants are issued all the time for individuals simply for nonappearance in court.

A bench warrant is essentially, you know, ordered where somebody fails to appear in court. It means you've missed a scheduled trial date, you've missed an appearance, and the judge issues a bench warrant. Sometimes those are not for significant offences. Sometimes they're minor offences. That individual may

not even know that they've missed an appearance, so they may have a bench warrant issued against them, and they may not be aware of it. I think it's important that we are not further penalizing and isolating and ostracizing folks who may, through – we know the complexities of the court system are hard for many people to navigate, especially if there are language barriers, especially if there are educational barriers, to really understand.

I would hate to see that there are people who genuinely, with no ill intent, may have a bench warrant that's been issued against them, yet now they're being cut off from very critical income supports, which really just furthers, perpetuates that disadvantage that they're experiencing and can further isolate them and create more strain at a time when – I mean, I think this would be the case no matter when we're talking about this – we know that many Albertans are struggling with cost of living right now. We know many Albertans are struggling with finding appropriate housing, with being able to pay their cellphone bills, with being able to, you know, afford transit, and all of those pieces. I don't think it's appropriate to be basically piling on more disadvantage and isolation to folks who may not be aware.

Now, again, there are circumstances where I think we would all agree that there are individuals who, when there is a warrant issued, should not be eligible for government supports. I see that in other jurisdictions, in other provinces. They've been more specific about what kinds of offences: serious offences, right? If there was somebody who has a warrant issued because of a serious criminal offence, I think there can be some consensus here that we don't believe that that person should then be getting income supports.

So I guess my concern around Bill 9 is that we don't yet know what offences will be captured by this, and we want to be sure that we are addressing the problem in a very targeted way to make sure that those individuals who have warrants issued on serious criminal offences are the ones who will not be eligible for income supports. That's just one piece that I wanted to mention about that.

The other piece is that I'm also conscious that we do not want to be in any way penalizing family members who may be innocent of any wrongdoing whatsoever, you know, when perhaps the individual who has a warrant issued against them is perhaps the only – is financially supporting the household. This can be very detrimental for children, for spouses of somebody, for partners of an individual. Again, if we're going to do this kind of action, I believe it should be very specific and targeted so that we are not punishing and further pushing into poverty those individuals who are at no fault whatsoever but may have the unfortunate reality of living with somebody who has a warrant issued out for them.

I'm wondering what measures are being taken, especially because the proposed amendment to the act in this bill is prescriptive. It doesn't say that the director has discretion; it says that "the Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support." So what abilities are there for the director to take into consideration that there may be individuals who are dependent – children, family members – on that person and who are really being hurt by that decision to prevent that person from applying for income supports?

You know, I think there are some other questions that we kind of need to ask about looking at what other jurisdictions have done and what has been effective and what has not been effective. Have there been conversations done with those who work on the ground with those who receive income supports? There are so many organizations, both in Edmonton and Calgary and across the province, who work very closely with those who rely on income supports, and I think those conversations are important.

As well as to note, you know, is this an effective way of ensuring that – does that compel individuals to then, I guess, appear for

warrants or, basically, stand up and be subject to whatever the trial proceeding or court proceeding is? I guess what I'm asking is: does that work? Perhaps that has been done, that analysis has been done, and I look forward to hearing from a UCP minister, either the minister who tabled this bill or the ones responsible for the income supports act, to address that question of how effective this is as a mechanism.

I want to also talk a little bit about the changes that have been made in the act to the Petty Trespass Act. This is an example, Mr. Chair, I believe, of an amendment that is performative at best and wildly likely to be incredibly ineffective. At worst it could actually create greater tension and – I don't know – put some federal workers in very difficult situations as a result of the rhetoric around this change more so than the change itself. You know, Bill 9, under the Petty Trespass Act, basically amends the Petty Trespass Act to include the statement: "This Act binds the Government of Canada." That's what it does. It says that the government of Canada is bound by the Petty Trespass Act, which has always been the case. It always will be the case. It is completely unnecessary for this to be even included in the bill because it's pretty much completely unnecessary.

Of course, we know that the reason behind – and we saw some very awkward, I have to say, press conferences with the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. A really embarrassing performance at a press conference. When asked, really, "What does this change?" the response was: it really doesn't change much of anything; it's clarifying the situation. What this is – it's not even anything that has to do with Alberta, Mr. Chair. You know, sometimes I wonder if the members on the other side are angling for federal politics or they want to be Saskatchewan MLAs. I'm not sure what's going on, but half the time they're not even talking about things that have to do with Alberta.

3:00

This is a perfect example. This was really one case in Saskatchewan, that I don't even remember the details of other than it didn't really turn out to be much of anything, but everybody in Saskatchewan, all the conservatives in Saskatchewan got their hands up in a roar of, you know, federal employees trespassing on private property. I understand that not one single UCP minister has been able to point to a single instance of this being a concern in Alberta. When asked, they could not come up with an example. They're creating a – I don't know, this is a made-up problem, and this is a made-up response and a made-up answer to it. Fine. They want to play games; they can do that on their own time. It's really annoying to do it on Albertans' time and, frankly, on our time. I've got so many other things to be doing, but here I am talking to this.

This is just an example, Mr. Chair, of how this government is consistently performing but not actually delivering. They've done that in so many instances when it comes to the federal government. They're very good at throwing tantrums and writing strongly worded letters and now, in this case, passing a completely redundant amendment, but what have they delivered for Albertans on that front? We've had four years, Mr. Chair, of watching the silly tantrums and antics of this government that has failed to deliver.

I think fondly to why I ran. I think we're all doing a little bit of self-reflection, right? We're at the end of a four-year term. We're looking at re-election for some of us, some of us are choosing to retire, and, you know, we're doing a little bit of reflection. I go back to one of the reasons why I ran in 2019. I had multiple reasons, but one of them was watching as an outsider, not politically active at all from 2015 to 2019 and watching the Premier at that time deliver on something that I knew would make a big difference for Albertans and having to do it by having conversations, negotiating, pressuring, and that was

forcing, essentially, or convincing the federal government to buy TMX. That was something that was pretty critical for our economy, and that was something that the former Premier was able to do, actually deliver something from the federal government for Albertans.

If the UCP wants to continue to do their performative antics, that's fine. I mean, I guess this is the nonsense that we've dealt with for four years. I guess I have the patience to go through it for another couple of days. Really, it's not delivering anything. It's a waste of time, but if they get to pat themselves on their backs and say, "Hey, we passed a piece of legislative change that will do absolutely nothing," good on them, I suppose, Mr. Chair.

What I do want to point out is that hyping up that rhetoric, that there is actually some wrong that they're trying to address here, is actually going to put at risk Albertans, Albertans who do work for the federal government, Albertans who – because there are many of them; there are thousands in this province who work for the federal government who are Albertans – do things like census, who do things like implement surveillance or other kinds of work pursuant to federal legislation, legitimate federal legislation. They perform that work because that is their responsibility to meet those standards. This kind of rhetoric is going to be dangerous, I believe, for some of them, and I don't think that this government cares too much about that. They just care about, I guess, looking like they're doing something even though they're not actually doing something.

I had to put some comments on – as I mentioned, Mr. Chair, there are other pieces of legislation that are amended by this act. Most of them are innocuous, but I know that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a lot to say. I share her concerns around the changes to WCB and making sure that all firefighters – all firefighters – are provided the supports and the coverage that they deserve. I should think that would be something that all members of this House can get on board with. I look forward to hearing a more fulsome discussion about that and to supporting any amendment that would ensure that every brave firefighter who fought in Fort McMurray on behalf of all Albertans – they deserve to be recognized and have their health conditions recognized and covered. It's, quite literally, Mr. Chair, the smallest thing we can do compared to what they gave to all of us. I look forward to having that discussion further.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any others wishing to speak to the bill? Oh, I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, in committee. I want to continue with some of the comments that I shared with this House yesterday when we were in second reading. Again, you know, just to add to my colleague's excellent comments about being exhausted by these omnibus bills, they really just inflict a lot of damage in a lot of ways in that they hide some things, some changes that this government is making in this great big piece of legislation, that does do a few things that are probably good to do – things to fix, things to alter – but what they also do is put in some other things that are sometimes performative and sometimes have the ability to create or cause harm.

One of the areas that my colleague talked about is the changes to income support. Now, certainly, I would agree that there are some warrants for some crimes. There are, absolutely, some people that I don't think should be eligible for government support, but I don't think that we should leave this government with all of the power to come up with this list behind closed doors. They've demonstrated

to us over and over again that they don't seem to have the best interests of Albertans in mind when they're making decisions. They seem to have their own political futures front of mind as opposed to the best interest of Albertans. We've seen repeatedly over the last four years that this government makes decisions that are questionable at best.

Let's say that the government proceeds, and they likely will because, obviously, they have a majority. They have the ability to change whatever they like for now, for a few more weeks. But there are some issues that I don't believe that they've thought of. They've demonstrated to us that they make these decisions like that, without a lot of thought, without a lot of consultation, and certainly without a lot of data and research.

Taking you back, in 2019 this government set us on a course to make poverty worse. That's just a fact, Mr. Chair. They deindexed benefits, all kinds of benefits, not just benefits for severely handicapped individuals, who rely on AISH, but also people who rely on income support and also the seniors' benefit. I won't even get into more income taxes that all of us had to pay because of their sneaky work. But this is what they did.

They started us on a path to make poverty worse. Not just that; they chose not to aggressively invest in affordable housing. They chose not to aggressively invest in preventative social services, and we are seeing things that have happened as a result. We know that food bank usage has exploded right across the province. That's a fact. Just google any report. The Food Banks Canada report is right there. It will tell you the increase. Every food bank is feeling the pressure.

We also know that there are more people in Alberta that don't have homes than ever before, and that is a direct result of changes that this government has made. Now, I will say that, yes, certainly the pandemic also played a role; it played a significant role. But this government almost did everything that they could to make things even harder.

Let me give you an example of somebody on AISH. Let's say that I'm a person with a severe disability, and I qualify for AISH. I receive that benefit. I decide at some point in my life to get married. Now my spouse's income is taken into account when the calculation is made for what I will receive from AISH; there are clawbacks. During the pandemic, let's say, my spouse lost their job and needed to go on EI or got a CERB benefit. Well, it was likely an overpayment because they were probably getting more than they were before – a lot of low-income people, unfortunately, live on AISH – so that income was clawed back.

We know right now, Mr. Chair, there are many, many Albertans that are AISH recipients or income support recipients that are on a repayment plan. That means that they're having money taken out of their deposits every single month to pay back an overpayment because their spouse, perhaps, lost their job and earned more on EI or CERB – for sure CERB – and now it's getting clawed back from AISH or income support. That is the reality, but get this. This government is giving them \$100 affordability cheques right till the election. So they get \$100, but they're losing \$100 to pay back clawback that this government did not fix. They knew about it. We asked repeatedly about it. They chose not to fix it. So they did not make life better for Albertans.

Now this very vulnerable group – and for the most part the group on income support is quite vulnerable. To be eligible for income support, you pretty much need to be destitute. You can't have a lot of savings; you can have a vehicle to get to and from work and things, but you can't have much. You need to have exhausted all other supports before you apply and are eligible for income support. So imagine that you have a director now that is making decisions

about warrants and is just going to say: yeah; if there's an outstanding warrant, you are no longer eligible, or you are cut off.

3:10

And, like my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud said, it's likely that some people wouldn't even know. They don't even know that they have interacted with the justice system and there's a warrant for their arrest. That income support will cease, and then the harm becomes worse. That cycle of poverty becomes worse, and you know what happens? [interjection] They're scoffing over there, which is a bit weird. When it becomes worse, it is more expensive on health care. We know this. Emergency rooms get packed. People go without treatment for mental illnesses, all kinds of treatment. More people are homeless. There are all kinds of problems. Policing: there are more demands on policing because there are more issues. All of these things compound and eventually cost more money. If you invest properly in poverty reduction, and investing properly means not taking away – that is key here: poverty reduction. When that is top of mind, poverty reduction happens. This kind of stuff is really just performative.

Let's talk about people on income support and some of the issues. Now, it shouldn't surprise anyone in this place that there are likely many people that are reliant on government supports that have unresolved legal issues. The social and economic cost of unresolved legal problems and various gaps in access to justice are hard to estimate, but there is no doubt whatsoever that they are substantial, and the costs are sometimes transferred to other sectors, as I said, including personal health, public health, public housing, child care, and so much more. Considering the costs and barriers associated with accessing justice, it is – and we know this – marginalized populations due to intersectional barriers they face.

Now, I'm going to give you this example, and this is just one, likely, that we all can picture. In general, homeless populations are groups of people that do not have homes, face enhanced vulnerability due to mental health conditions and increased potential to become homeless. Chances are that they may at some point end up with a warrant, but think about this. Homelessness stems from poverty and social inequity. Criminalizing homeless populations often creates more disadvantage and does, in fact, contribute to cycles of poverty. I'm telling you this information – and this is actually data that you can look for yourselves. Instead of just scoffing, you can actually do a little bit of research and educate yourselves – I'm speaking to the members opposite – to find out what you could do to make these issues better instead of worse, because this government has shown a propensity for making things worse.

My colleague talked about the impacts on families. For sure, if somebody's on income support and, let's say, there is a warrant, and they are either cut off or not put on in the first place, that is going to impact families. Not just that, but we know – because nobody can live on what income support pays. Let's just be honest about that. Income support, the one program, barriers for employment, is under \$900 a month; the other program is even less. Nobody can live on that. It's just a fact. However, if you take that away, you are going to make issues worse, and so many people on income support already have precarious housing, right? Very often there is a track record of inability to fully pay their rent, let's say, on time if they've skipped a month or if they've been late and they've been warned, perhaps. Now, let's just point out that this government put a lot of people at risk when they decided to change the payment date for AISH and income support to make their books look better a few years ago and had to reverse it because the Auditor General busted them, but people pay their rent late, and there are ramifications to that.

This piece of legislation has the potential to be as damaging unless this government, I think, takes the time to consult with the appropriate people, do a little bit of research, and make sure that their list of crimes is appropriate, make sure that they have some safeties in place for family members, particularly children, if there are older parents, perhaps dependants, dependent adults even, that are being taken care of by the recipient. It is so important that that work gets done because we have seen four years of things that have happened. I don't think, actually, that government sets out to harm people. I don't believe that that's their intent, but that's what their legislation and their regulation and their policy changes have done, inflicted harm to very vulnerable populations. I would suggest that people on income support are pretty vulnerable, so I do worry about this.

In many cases we know that poverty and criminality are in a perpetual cycle with each other. That is just a fact. On the one hand I understand that there are some people that should not get government assistance because they chose to engage in criminal activity. On the other hand, you know, I need to know that this government has done their homework in terms of ensuring that things that they're changing or legislation they're bringing in or regulations they're changing will not inadvertently cause more harm to Albertans. We have just seen that happen far too many times, Mr. Chair, that I am worried that this is going to happen again. Sadly, I've not seen any evidence that this government is doing anything different.

Criminal justice systems create debt through the accumulation of nonrepayment of criminal offence fines, court fees, victim surcharges, restitution. It's called justice debt, and that is also a reality. Can you imagine someone so destitute, really, that they have to apply for income supports that are impossible to live on? It's just a small amount of money to help them. They are so destitute, and now they're cut off from that because there's a warrant. Perhaps they didn't even know about it. This vicious, vicious cycle of poverty: stuck in this place, they are never going to get ahead.

Our goal should be that every single Albertan should be given the support that they need to be successful, to find the job that they want, to be able to care for their family in the way that they want, to be able to live in safe housing, to know they can feed their families. That should be all of our goals every single day, to do everything that we can to support Albertans. I don't believe that this government uses that lens, Mr. Chair. I don't because I've seen far too many examples of policy changes or legislative changes that are really made with a political lens, not a lens that looks at the quality of life of Albertans and their future.

You know, let me just say that when we address poverty and when we reduce poverty and we talk about it and we bring in good legislation and good programming that systematically reduces poverty because that's what it sets out to do, our entire economy is strengthened, our future is brighter. It's just a fact. It is just a fact. I think that – I hope that everybody in this place understands that. I hope that all members of this Assembly are asking themselves the same question or will look at the list that is generated behind closed doors, when eventually it is, and make sure that that list does exactly what we need it to do.

There was a study published in 2021 in partnership with Public Safety Canada, Stats Canada, and Correctional Service of Canada. They found that previously incarcerated individuals make less income, file less tax, and had less participation in the labour market, and more social assistance. Now, the reason that I'm bringing this up is it just sort of validates the point that I made earlier, that we should all be working together to ensure that we keep people out of those places, that we keep people out of the justice system, that we support them so that they don't continue to have these warrants or

they don't continue to have fines amassing that they can never pay, that we help them with job retraining or finding employment, that we support them and lift them out of poverty.

That is not what's happening. I feel like this is a Band-Aid that will say: oh, look at us; you know, we're going to take care of those bad guys that apply for government benefits. Sure, there might be a little group of people that you will identify that should never get government assistance. Absolutely. But I believe that the vast majority probably don't even know there's a problem, don't have the resources to fix the problem even if they wanted to, yet we're going to further penalize them because it's going to make us look tough on crime. We're going to be tough on those who are really, really poor and struggling. If they have a warrant, forget it.

3:20

Again, it's disappointing that instead of talking about poverty reduction, instead of talking about what we can do to actually invest in getting people off income support properly, not tossing them off but helping them transition off, you know, it'd be really great, Mr. Chair, if the members opposite chirping away – as some of them say, I'd be happy to entertain a question, but, you know, that's about it.

Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if I can get a time check from you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Four minutes.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. With that, I'm actually going to take my seat. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. I'd like to briefly address this bill before us, Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. Mr. Chair, the focus I'd like to bring to this is on the Public Transit and Green Infrastructure Project Act. It's right towards the back end of the bill.

You know, most of this bill – 15 statutes are being amended – is innocuous, some of it is problematic, and this is a really problematic part, Mr. Chair, because it was a problem created by the government when they brought this amendment in in the first place. What they did has to do with the green line in Calgary. I'll just spend a few minutes to read what the government did that they're now correcting. What they did is so problematic that they eventually heard from city council, they heard from, probably, people who are wanting to procure that project that this is the death of the project.

What this government did, the minister of transportation, the previous Premier did, is put in a clause that said, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by order, with a minimum of 90 days' notice to the City of Calgary, terminate the grant agreement without cause," a grant agreement from the province of Alberta that was \$1.5 billion. The total project is somewhere about \$5 billion. Phase 1 of this project, that'll take the green line from Shepard all the way to 16th Avenue in the north, is about a \$5 billion project at this point in time, and the government thought it was okay, thought it was good practice to bring in a clause that would kill any procurement wanting to go forward. Why would it kill any procurement wanting to go forward? Because what company is going to stand up and say, "You know, I want to bid on this"? It's \$5 billion worth, but within 90 days a third of that amount of money can come out because of – I don't know – the government believing that it's an LRT to nowhere. That's what we heard from this side before, Mr. Chair.

What I think was going on is that the government didn't like the project – maybe they don't like mass transit, more particularly – so they were looking for ways to kind of slow it down, to kind of create some noise, some interference. I can remember the news articles of

the day saying: this is crazy; how can you procure, how can you get a project going of that magnitude, the biggest one, the biggest public infrastructure build in Calgary's history? This government decides they want to put a clause in that makes it almost impossible for anyone to step up and say: "Yeah. I'll take that project on. I'll design it. I'll create it. I'll create it for the people of Calgary to get them moving from south to north and north to south." But maybe a third of it is going to go away, and, you know, I can't control that if I'm a company. I can't control what this government is going to do.

Today they're taking that clause out. They're saying: we're repealing section 10; we're repealing this bad clause that the minister of transportation and the former Premier had put in place and everybody on that side voted for. They're taking it out because it doesn't work. It doesn't work for a project of this magnitude. You can't shut a project like this down in 90 days. A project doesn't go forward like this with a 90-day clause to kill it. So that's good news. Today we're standing up and saying, you know, that cooler, better, smarter heads prevail, but they didn't months ago, when the government put that in. They thought it was best to put it in then. Well, it wasn't. What it did is that it delayed this project, Mr. Chair.

The previous minister of transportation also said: you know, I want a report; Calgary's got to give me a report; show me where this is going to be a beneficial project to move people, mass transit, that you can do this, that you can tunnel under a portion of downtown, and you can get people moving with the money that the province of Alberta, approved by the previous NDP government, put in place. The government of Canada is on for a 40 per cent share of that project, and the city of Calgary's on for a 20 per cent share of that project. So the previous minister of transportation said: I need a report.

We know that report and the time delay was about a year, Mr. Chair. Things would have got moving a lot quicker had the government just got onboard, just got onboard the C-Train. But they decided to put an arm down, like one of those arms that comes down over a rail crossing. This government put a stop to the C-Train moving forward and the planning and the organization, and that has delayed the project and cost more money to this project. Fiscal sense over on that side is not anything that happens. There is not any effective, efficient fiscal responsibility on the other side, because they delayed a project and made the cost, as a result of inflation, as a result of materials going up, more to the city of Calgary, more to the people of Alberta, and more to the government of Canada.

Mr. Chair, there's no debt of gratitude owed to the other side for finally coming to their senses and taking this out. What there is is the identification to everyone in this Chamber, all people in Calgary that the clause that was put in there was not in the best interest of the project, not in the best interest of the people of Calgary and taxpayers generally, because now the project's going to cost more money. I think that's disappointing. It's not talked about by the other side. They just sort of slipped it in here right at the end.

The same sort of thing went on for the city of Edmonton, of course. I guess you can't punish one city without punishing the other. That's the thinking I think we hear from the other side. Even though the city of Edmonton, even though today probably neither city will stand up and say, "You know, this was the wrong thing to do," they did at the time. They're just glad they're getting rid of this punishing clause that makes it difficult for anybody to get onboard and to procure this project.

So that's good news, that it's finally coming out. It should have come out a long time ago. It shouldn't have ever got in in the first place. It should have never occurred that the minister of transportation stood up and said that he wanted the report as if the minister of transportation knew better than the people who are



working on this project at the local level, the municipal level, who have built one, two, three, several arms of an LRT system that is the envy of cities in North America because of the number of people it transports, because of its effectiveness and efficiency. Calgarians and the people at the city of Calgary and the leadership in council for decades have been doing this work and doing it well, and to have the rug pulled out from under them by this government, this minister of transportation, and the Premier is a slap in the face. It was a slap in the face. But now they're correcting it, so kudos to the red tape reduction minister for doing the right thing finally, but no debt of gratitude is owed to any person on that side for voting in support of this today, because they created the problem.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. [interjections]

3:30

**The Deputy Chair:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has the floor.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll continue with some comments on the green line topic, that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo alluded to in much of his discourse recently, because, of course, it was another omnibus bill that the UCP government brought in under the current Finance minister, Bill 20, which, in fact, imposed upon the cities of Edmonton and Calgary a minimum of 90 days' notice eligibility for the government to revisit or eliminate a grant application.

What happened as a result of this is that it's had a very chilling effect on business, on not only the green line or LRT development in Edmonton and Calgary but just the very notion, Mr. Chair, that the government would see fit to bring in such a draconian measure to basically put a stop-work order on the green line, in particular, in Calgary. It has also had an effect on the valley line in Edmonton. This creates a crisis in confidence amongst the major contractors, who are small in number, who would be able to actually bid on these types of contracts.

It was the largest infrastructure build in Calgary's history, and this government played games with it and let that legislation rest in place until now, finally, it's going to rest in peace after they see fit to react to the immense pressure and outcry that's been raised against it by, of course, former city mayor Nenshi, city councillors, and councillors in Edmonton as well because the measure is one that is a business killer.

At the highest level of finance businesses need to have confidence and certainty, and this is something which we hear the so-called conservative, business-supportive UCP government claiming all the time, that they are looking to create conditions of confidence and an economic playing field that is fair and will attract business. Well, this is anything but, Mr. Chair. This very chilling measure that was brought in by the UCP, that is now being eliminated by virtue of another omnibus measure, was something that the business community is not going to forget.

It was a very, very poorly thought out sledgehammer that this government decided to come forward with. It has a major impact on not only these rapid transit LRT projects but on major projects that either of the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary might want to undertake and other major projects throughout the province that the province will be a funding partner in. It was claimed that indeed the standard practice was the opportunity for the province to exit a grant agreement with certain notice, yet in fact it's not the case.

I know that Mayor Nenshi has commented publicly saying that they looked. They tasked their city managers to take a look and see if indeed there were contracts that enabled the province to exit using similar techniques, but in fact they could find none. I'll table the article that Mayor Nenshi is referenced in when he makes the

statement about the search they made for examples of the city having an opportunity where the province would be able to exit from grants that they had previously pledged legally, if indeed they gave notice to the cities. There's no evidence that it was a standard practice, Mr. Chair.

The very context that we are in right now, where we are hoping that the green line is going to move forward and we're not going to see obstacles to this largest infrastructure build in the province's history put in place again – we'll see the procurement and progress of phase 1 move forward with confidence. That's something, Mr. Chair, that I'm sure the business community, not only in Calgary but throughout the province and the wider Canadian construction industry, looks forward to with interest. Any time a province comes forward with legislation which is so draconian that it actually would seek to put a stop-work order on the largest infrastructure build in a province the size of Alberta, that certainly gets the attention of the business community on a national and international scale.

These are multibillion-dollar projects; \$5.5 billion is the slated cost as it stands currently. That type of planning that has to go into these projects is costly, especially if companies are bidding to be the companies that actually get to build and put in place the infrastructure. They will not have the confidence they need if they decide that the government is going to possibly put in place legislation like this once again because they happen to have some disagreement about the direction of the project or some of the details of the project and the only way they see fit to influence it is to put in this so-called stop-work order, as I call it, by giving themselves a 90-day clause, allowing them to rescind a grant agreement that they had in place, thus, for all intents and purposes, killing the project.

It's a sad commentary, Mr. Chair, that for many, many years this example will be reflected upon by the business community, especially when they see a UCP government involved in major construction infrastructure projects. They'll give themselves pause about whether or not they want to participate. Thankfully, I think that they will find a much more business-friendly government in a few months in this province in the form of the NDP majority government, but we'll let the chips fall where they may there.

I do join my colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo in expressing concerns about the effect on the business community of the sledgehammer, the mechanism that the government gave themselves, that they're now rescinding, to kill such a large infrastructure project by withdrawing their grant agreement. It throws question into the confidence of the business community in Alberta's government to be able to promote major infrastructure projects.

I know that the province is fond of poking their finger at the federal government and saying, "Hey, you're the ones who are putting a spoke in the wheels of major infrastructure projects," particularly in transmission in the pipeline field and mining projects. But here is a prime example, Mr. Chair, where this government themselves really created a problem that didn't have to be created, where because they just disliked the project or wanted to change the direction of a project, they created a mechanism by which they could issue a stop-work order by withdrawing their grant funding and, for all intents and purposes, killed the largest infrastructure project in the city of Calgary. Now, of course, we've seen them rescind that, and hopefully they've learned a valuable lesson. But at what cost?

3:40

That's a cost that I think the UCP government has to tally for Albertans, because it is the largest infrastructure build in the province, Mr. Chair, and we need to know what damage the UCP

government has done. I know that the business community certainly would like to see an accounting, and they probably should be part of that accounting to let Albertans know just indeed what damage they've done to the large business community by having this measure in place for so long.

But I'll move on now to something on a smaller scale, that I've had an interest in in my past role as the critic for agriculture, and that has to do with the happy subject of bees, Mr. Chair. All of us, I think, love bees, except maybe if we've had the experience of being stung by them. On the topic of bees, the omnibus legislation before us speaks to a number of measures that enable a beekeeper to register and prohibits the importation of bees without prior consent. It talks a lot about addressing concerns of threats of disease that might be carried by bees that are imported into the province.

Of course, Mr. Chair, many Albertans may be aware that we don't actually produce what are called packaged bees in the province. We do produce some queen bees, and they are sold to beekeepers for honey production, but the beekeeping industry loses, on average, about 25 per cent of the bees in its hives due to overwinter die-off or kill, and there are further losses due to pests and infections. The result of that is that we have to import bees to replace those that have died over the winter, and almost all of them come from overseas.

This act, of course, looks to try to prevent infection from coming from those overseas sources of imported bees, and while doing so – those are good measures, Mr. Chair, to protect the rest of the bees that are in our province. We have a thriving honey industry, a pride of Alberta, and it's a product that is known throughout the world as one of the top sources of honey. There are many opportunities for growth in that industry.

But one of the things that should've been done – and it's a sin of omission once again, Mr. Chair. Rather than dealing solely with the importation of bees and protecting against contamination of those bees by threats of disease or outbreaks or other emergencies – in addition to these measures, insofar as we need to keep supplying bees from overseas to restock our hives each year after the 25 per cent or so die-off, what we should've been doing is investing in our apiary or apiculture industries to ensure that we produce those packaged bees here in Alberta.

There are many arguments about – people will say that it's difficult to do because of the seasonal differences and so forth, that we can't produce a new crop of bees to replace those who have died off because, of course, we'd be doing so in the wintertime to replace them in the spring, but there are lots of creative ideas flowing out there, Mr. Chair, that would allow it to actually be done in this province. That's economic development. That's creativity. We've done things in this province by using the grey matter between our ears, and I think it was incumbent upon the government to listen to a few of the ideas that are out there regarding production of packaged bees in this province so we're not reliant upon importation of bees from other parts of the world such as Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

We found during the pandemic, especially, Mr. Chair, that, of course, when the supply chains broke down, we were in a really, really tough spot to replace the die-off each year of the bees, the 25 per cent or so that die off each year, from foreign sources because, of course, air transportation was shut down, and we couldn't get bees. We were looking at importing bees perhaps from the United States, and they, of course, were prohibited because of the impact of inbreeding with so-called African bees. It was the fear of importers that we would actually cause a contamination in our own supply of bees, in our own bee population here in Alberta. It put us in a difficult situation. The whole industry was put at risk because

we did not have a reliable supply of packaged bees to replace those that died off in the wintertime.

That, Mr. Chair, is what I would hope one would have seen as an adjunct part of this omnibus bill when it relates to the Bee Act. It was a real opportunity to build upon the experiences that we've recently gone through during the pandemic, when we saw our supply chain basically eliminated for packaged bees, and to look at how we could become a leader in the apiculture industry by producing packaged bees not only for our own consumption here at home but for export ourselves so that those countries who now buy from countries that we have to buy from – New Zealand, Australia, and so forth – would look to us for a year-round supply or a seasonal supply of packaged bees to replace theirs in their country that may have died off.

I mean, that development, I think, is one element of the beekeeping industry that is a natural extension of where we're at. We're world leaders in the production of high-quality honey, and there are growth opportunities there. We use our bees for pollinators of our major crops. Many Albertans will know that our canola crops in particular, any of our flowering crops, require pollination, and you will find beehives being transported throughout this province during the crop-growing season to pollinate the crops so that they grow properly. Without them, we don't have crops. They're extensively used throughout the province to ensure that our crops get pollinated, and it's an industry in and of itself not only to produce honey but actually to pollinate our crops.

Globally, of course, we have bees at risk of dying off because of encroachment of urban development on our farmland. There are diseases in the bee populations that are threatening them throughout the world in many spots. It's a fragile insect, population of insects globally, that needs to be cared for and cultivated, and we have an opportunity to do that in the province, and this omnibus bill, Mr. Chair, missed the opportunity to develop that industry beyond what it does by enabling a beekeeper registration system and prohibiting the importation of bees to Alberta without prior consent.

As the bill says, the beekeeping compliance system is outlined, including designation and powers of inspectors and the authority of the minister in relation to quarantining bees or equipment, but there could have been a lot more done, Mr. Chair, and I'm disappointed that it wasn't. When we do hear from other members, perhaps across the way, who have had experience with bees themselves, perhaps they could comment on what they feel would have been a better opportunity by the minister to bring forward a more comprehensive piece of legislation when it came to the Bee Act to include in this omnibus bill.

[Mr. Turton in the chair]

I could go on about bees for a long time. I certainly think we've got huge opportunities in this province to develop the apiculture industry to a much larger degree than we have and to expand it into growing and repopulating our bee population each year and exporting packaged bees throughout the globe. That's one element of the omnibus bill that I wanted to shed some light on.

I wonder if I could have a time check, Mr. Chair.

3:50

**The Acting Chair:** About 30 seconds, hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, I can continue on about bees for 30 more seconds, I think, but I'll cede my time and let somebody else have the floor.

**The Acting Chair:** Excellent.

Next up the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to say thank you to my colleagues, who have – Bill 9, being an omnibus bill that impacts a number of different statutes, has many, many different parts to it, and I’ve appreciated hearing the debate about different parts of this bill, everything from impacts to poverty to bees to the green line in Calgary. But I don’t think anyone in this Chamber will be surprised that I would like to speak very specifically to the parts that touch on the Workers’ Compensation Board within Bill 9. It’s an incredibly important part of the rights that workers have: the partnership, the bargain that has been struck between workers and employers so that when a worker is injured on the job, they will get the help, the compensation, the coverage to be able to recover, or their families will receive the same in the tragic case where a worker has died.

In Bill 9 we touch on the workers’ compensation section specifically because of the Fort McMurray wildfire. The wildfire started in May of 2016 and became one of the largest – the largest – evacuations in Canadian history and had a huge impact on the community, with over 2,000 structures burned and dedicated efforts having to be made to keep infrastructure and people safe on the part of first responders.

In Bill 9 specifically it seeks to ensure that firefighters who are exposed to toxic chemicals and carcinogens will still be covered with WCB coverage should they have an occupational disease develop, specifically cancers. Now, we know that cancer is the number one reason for firefighter deaths, and this type of occupational disease often takes time to develop, so our regulations for cancers for firefighters in this province oftentimes look at something called the latency period – how long has someone been a firefighter? – based on the science that it takes time for those carcinogens to act in the human body and to cause cancer.

Now, in the case of Fort McMurray we know that there were firefighters who started fighting that fire and essentially weren’t able to fully move off shift for six full days. There were firefighters across the additional weeks that weren’t able to properly decontaminate. There were firefighters who were not able to have a breathing apparatus, so they were literally breathing in the toxins of thousands of burning buildings. The health impact of that is something incredibly significant and serious. We’ve already heard from firefighters who were in Fort McMurray who have developed occupational cancers, and in fact there’s the story of a firefighter from Fort McMurray who has already passed.

Bill 9 seeks to provide presumptive coverage for occupational cancers for the firefighters who were in Fort McMurray, but, Mr. Chair, it fails to cover all firefighters who were there, so I’d like to introduce an amendment at this point.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. Thank you, hon. member. We’ll just wait until we get the original sent over to us.

Thank you. This amendment will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be amended in section 15(3)(b) by adding the following immediately after the proposed section 24.1(3.1):

(3.2) For the purpose of subsection (3.1), a full-time firefighter and part-time firefighter includes the following:

- (a) a full-time firefighter or part-time firefighter who has made an application for compensation that was not accepted by the Board for an injury described in subsection (2);
- (b) the estate of a full-time firefighter or part-time firefighter if that worker has not received a payment

from the Board with respect to an injury described in subsection (2).

(3.3) For greater certainty, subsection (3.1) applies to an injury described in subsection (2) suffered by a full-time firefighter or part-time firefighter any time after May 1, 2016.

Now, the “any time after May 1, 2016,” Mr. Chair, is the crux of what I’d like to speak to when it comes to this amendment. Without this amendment the changes in Bill 9 provide presumptive cancer coverage only from the date that this bill is proclaimed, the date the bill is passed, so essentially a date that is going to end in 2023. Knowing that this fire started in 2016, that is a six-year gap, and we need to include the retroactivity because we already know that there are firefighters who have found themselves struggling with the WCB system for compensation. There is the case of a family that has been in dispute with the WCB for years over a case where the firefighter has passed, and there have been other firefighters as well.

Now, the government has had an opportunity to consider this amendment because it was submitted to the minister over a week ago, and we’ve already talked about this through question period. I will say quite honestly to you, Mr. Chair, that the first time we realized that this wasn’t retroactive and we spoke with the APFFPA, the Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association, and said, “Oh, this isn’t retroactive; we think this doesn’t go far enough,” they said: oh, no; this doesn’t go far enough; we need to cover them all. I came into this Chamber to ask about it in question period, and I quite literally expected the minister to say: we’d be happy to work with you on an amendment to make sure this is covered. And I was surprised, as a former minister of labour, asking a member who represents Fort McMurray, that we weren’t able to get to: yes, let’s work together and make sure that this is completely covered.

The government’s answers on why they won’t support this amendment up till now – and I welcome them changing their mind at any point; I’d be happy to work with them to ensure we get this done – have not made sense to me. The government seems to be acknowledging that, yes, there are firefighters that this won’t apply to but they will get to go through a fairness review process and that fairness review process will eventually get them coverage rather than accepting an amendment that makes it very clear that we are going to extend this coverage back to May 1, 2016, back to the start, when the fire initially began. I have been listening very carefully through media and through multiple questions in question period, trying to understand the government’s argument for why this amendment will not be accepted today, and I am hopeful that through the debate perhaps I can even get a bit more clarity because it does not make sense to me.

What this amendment does is that it makes it incredibly clear to families, to firefighters and colleagues, to the WCB, and to all Albertans that any firefighter who was on the ground during the Beast who develops occupational cancer because of the toxic exposures that they had, the inability to decontaminate, because of the work they were doing to protect lives and livelihoods, infrastructure, and the citizens will automatically have that presumptive coverage through WCB. Without that, saying that there is a subset of these firefighters that are going to need to go through a separate process does not make sense to me, and I don’t understand why the government is making firefighters and their families go through some alternate way.

Now, the government has said that the Alberta WCB system does not typically do retroactivity, and that’s completely correct. I acknowledge that. As the former minister of labour I am aware of that. But that is also a choice, and that is a choice the government is making in the directions that it gives to WCB, and it is a choice that other provinces make differently. Ontario has made their

presumptive cancer coverage, not specific to an incident but just in general, retroactive by 60 years. They've just updated their cancer regulation to include new cancers, which Alberta needs to do, and the minister keeps signalling that that is coming, which is great news. I encourage him to get on with it and to do that because they've been in government for four years and Alberta's regulation is out of date. But that's great.

In this case we are asking for retroactivity to a very specific, catastrophic, traumatic event that all Albertans are aware of. I think that Albertans understand why retroactivity makes sense in this case given the nature of the toxic exposures that firefighters had to work through. They were doing their jobs. When someone is going to their job and doing their job and they get sick because of that or they get injured because of that, it is incumbent on all of us to make sure that we have a strong workers' compensation system that will protect them. To hear that there are already families that have struggled and had to fight on top of fighting cancer, it's incredibly frustrating to me that we can't get this right.

4:00

The government loves to talk about: why didn't you do what when? Well, today we have a bill in front of us, an amendment in front of us that the government can support, so let's talk about today. Let's talk about getting to a place where both government and opposition can come to agreement on this amendment, providing the clarity to all firefighters and not relegating some to a fairness review process. Let's send this clear signal. It is specific to one event: the Horse River wildfire, that started in May 2016, that first responders spent weeks fighting, first responders who deserve our support.

Now, I would welcome any member of the government to speak on this amendment because I truly am looking to better understand the lack of support. It is not just me and my voice calling for this. The Alberta Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association, the firefighters' union in Fort McMurray have been advocating for this for many years. The Edmonton Fire Fighters' Union has been a leader when it comes to advocating for this coverage that we need to have for those first responders. So there are a number of people who are watching this debate and are interested in seeing the government do the right thing.

The fact that Alberta hasn't done retroactive before may be true, but that's not a reason not to do it. We know we can. We know other jurisdictions have. And this is specific to a single event. We are not opening the barn doors wide for chaos and it will disrupt our system. We are just making sure that any firefighter who has been diagnosed with cancer in these past six, seven years that are currently not going to be covered by Bill 9 will be able to find themselves in this legislation, understand that they are getting the coverage, and not have to go through a fairness review process but will instead be able to say with confidence that they know that they are getting the coverage.

I, again, don't understand the government's unwillingness to work with the Official Opposition on this. I would be happy to accept a government amendment that fixes this issue. I just want to see this done right. I just want to make sure that this happens in the correct way. That's one of the reasons why I have been talking about this in the House and with firefighters for years now. The Alberta NDP has committed to making sure that this is done and done correctly should we form government. That commitment was made last year. The government has certainly been aware of this for a great deal of time.

It was an honour to be able to speak to the firefighters' conference and convention back in I think it was May of last year about these very topics and to stand with the Leader of the Official Opposition

when she made this commitment again in December of last year. It's something that we've known for a while.

I think this amendment is clearly written. Really, the key thing is section (3.3), that talks about "any time after May 1, 2016." Although we know of a couple of cases now, Mr. Chair, there quite literally may be other firefighters who've never applied to the WCB because they knew that they fell outside of the latency periods. We can't say that this is only one or two cases. There could be many more.

Changing this and changing this the right way is the best way to manage this. Asking people to reach out to the minister's office is unfair. We want to see consistent coverage, we want to see retroactive coverage for all the first responders who were on the ground in Fort McMurray who battled what became known as the Beast and who were exposed to so many toxins for weeks, days, sometimes without rest, without the ability to decontaminate, without the proper protective procedures being able to be in place because of how catastrophic that event was.

My intent, Mr. Chair, was to be convincing and to really put forward the arguments for why I believe all members should support this amendment. I hope to hear that support from members of the government caucus, because I think this is incredibly important. I know this is important to the members impacted, and it's an important example of making sure we have a strong workers' compensation system that is there for all workers, that we recognize the risks that workers put themselves under and our need and our responsibility to take care of them.

With that, I look forward to debate on this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone else to speak to the amendment? I see there the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. Please proceed.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I realize our time might be starting to grow short in this session of the Legislature. This possibly could be my last time to address this Assembly, so I don't want to waste it, but I do want to be very direct in what I want to talk about today. As you can imagine, I do rise very much in support of this amendment that my friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods has brought forward with regard to the proposed changes in Bill 9 for the WCB.

I have had an amazing experience, over the better part of three decades, being able to advocate for hard-working Albertans. I know that during that time the things that I would fight for within labour, within unions also impacted work sites that weren't unionized. If you managed to get higher wages in a union shop, there's a good likelihood that in a similar industry you'll see those wages go up. If you get better safety conditions in a unionized shop, you will see better safety conditions come up in non-union. You know, it's been that way forever.

One of the things that were advocated for way in the past was, of course, WCB coverage for workers. Now, the thing that has unfortunately happened over the years is that the WCB has become adversarial towards workers. It was never intended for that to happen. It was supposed to be much like an insurance policy. If you get into an accident, you have insurance to try to get your vehicle fixed. If you get hurt at work, you have something to back you up until you can get better and return to work in a full capacity.

Over the years, obviously, there have been very, very directed efforts to try to raise that up and to try to stop how adversarial the WCB has become. When we're talking about Bill 9, the changes to the WCB, and the implications they have on what ended up being referred to up in Fort McMurray as the Beast, it is to try to make

sure that the heroes that ran towards that fire while everybody else was running away, as they should – that we have those individuals' backs no matter what. You know, changes to try to protect our firefighters: it's not something new to Alberta. There's been a concerted effort right across the country to try to raise this up, to try to cover the cancers that we know – there's no speculation here; there's no controversy; there's no guesswork – impact firefighters and the jobs that they do.

Again, I'll be very clear. I'm not opposed to the changes to the WCB here in Bill 9. What I'm clearly saying is that it's tripping right at the finish line. All we have to do is change just a little bit of language to push it across that finish line, to make sure that in the event, again, that we should have a major catastrophic fire, our firefighters, these members, will know that they're taken care of, that their families will know that they're taken care of should we lose any of those members.

4:10

Some of the things, I know, I have been arguing for for a very long time, and part of those three decades was another two spent not only on my own work-site Health and Safety Committee but my union's provincial Health and Safety Committee. How do we come up with language to protect people so they go home each and every night?

You know, as they say, we don't live to work; we work to live. Everybody needs to come home at the end of the night. Thinking about the images that I know I saw from Fort McMurray and the stories that I've heard over the years – my neighbour literally right across the street from me was a deputy chief with Edmonton fire. I was surprised the day when I spent time with Edmonton fire not only doing their fire ops, which I've done twice now – and I think that only gave me a tiny, little inkling of what they face. He was telling me about how he finally got up there but that it was a week after they finally got control of it. He said that the conditions were horrendous. It's not like he was complaining; he was trying to tell me what it was the members were facing.

You know, as every member in this House knows, over the past eight years that I've spent here, I've made no bones about where I come from, where my priorities have been, what I advocate for, and I proudly continue to do it now and will continue to do it in my time outside of this House: trying to make the lives of workers better.

Now, here's where I might ruffle some feathers, Mr. Chair. I have heard members of this House, members that are part of the government, part of the government caucus, who've very proudly talked about the roots they have in labour and what they come from. I'm going to issue one final challenge. It's likely what it's going to be. If indeed your roots are in labour, if you believe in fighting for the safety of Albertans, if you believe in trying to make their quality of life better, then it should not be any problem whatsoever to accept this amendment, because that's exactly what it will do. It will make the lives of Albertans better. It will make them safer.

As I'd mentioned, with the WCB being adversarial, this will at the very least take that adversarial role away for our firefighters. I've always said that all it takes is one example. We already have that example where we have lost a member and they're now having to fight to get their claim reviewed. That just simply should not happen. If you really, truly are a labour advocate, if you're fighting to make the lives of Alberta workers better, you need to do what it takes to eliminate that. Saying anything else? I'm sorry. It means you don't actually believe in fighting for hard-working Albertans, and it doesn't mean that you have the backs of firefighters. I know that's rough, Mr. Chair. It's meant to be. I've fought too long to sit here and candy coat things for people.

We have an amendment. Like I said, what's proposed in Bill 9 for WCB: it's not wrong. It's not bad. It's good, but we can make it even better. I cannot urge members of this House anymore. Take the emotion out of it. Take the politics out of it. Just look at the language. We know the language is falling short. It's stepping in the right direction, but it's falling short. We can add this little bit, push it over the finish line. Truly, everyone could then stand up in this House and get to say: we have the backs of our firefighters no matter what. We've already seen examples elsewhere that it can be done. We can do it here in Alberta.

I am adamantly pleading with members of this House, please accept this amendment. I know you don't like other amendments that we've brought forward over the course of the 30th Legislature. This one's genuine. This one will do the job. Going forward, I guess we can always have other arguments later about what we can do to change WCB to make it better for all Albertans.

I'll be supporting this amendment, and again I urge all other members of the House: please accept this.

**The Acting Chair:** Excellent. Thank you.

Anyone else to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Chair. The firefighters can already access benefits for fighting the Fort McMurray wildfire through the WCB process. All Bill 9 does is clear the red tape to those benefits and prevents denial.

I am aware of two cases impacted by the NDP amendment. As part of their standard operating procedure the WCB already has a fairness review panel to deal with these two cases. Our government will ensure that these Fort McMurray firefighters will get the benefits they deserve.

The NDP is playing fast and loose with what's really going on here. Retroactivity does not need to be applied when the WCB fairness review for two people achieves the same thing. Our government has worked hard to reduce red tape in Alberta, and adding another amendment with a process that already covers the situation is an unnecessary addition. That is why I am urging my colleagues to vote this amendment down.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

Up next, I see the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment brought forward by my colleague for Edmonton-Mill Woods, the House leader and former minister of labour.

Now, we have had some stand in this Chamber and say, "Well why didn't the NDP do anything?" or "What did the NDP do about this?" Well, what the NDP did, Mr. Chair, when this member was minister of labour: in 2018 we introduced the workers' compensation amendment act that added a mental health disorder presumption for correctional officers, emergency medical assistants, firefighters, police officers, and sheriffs; expanded that coverage to also include many others; and took action to support firefighters and others who were facing challenges in the system. Our government took action.

Now, of course, as we continue, we learn more and we find more that needs to be done, and I respect that the government finally listened. Certainly initially, when we had the initial debates on these questions and this was brought forward by my colleague on behalf of the firefighters – let's be clear, Mr. Chair. This is not something we dreamed up out of thin air. This is not something that, as the government is claiming, is a politicization of the process. This is

the voice of the firefighters themselves, so I'm pleased that the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development eventually came around from his initial position back in December and that now his colleague the minister of red tape reduction is including it in this bill.

4:20

However, the same firefighters who approached my colleague and who she spoke for in December, the same firefighters who stood and commended the government for bringing this forward, are now standing and asking the government to make one further change, that simple change to add retroactivity. Because the government has chosen not to listen to them, my colleague has brought forward this amendment. Mr. Chair, that is not a politicization unless the minister of red tape reduction is accusing the firefighters of our province of being political.

Is he accusing them of attacking his government? Is he accusing them of introducing a redundancy, of not understanding the system, of not understanding the challenge their own members face? That is the reason that amendment is here in front of us today. I, for one, will take the word of those firefighters, will take the voice of those firefighters over that of this government. It's my hope that other government members will do the same, because – let's be clear, Mr. Chair – this is not a government and these are not members that are shy about exceptions in legislation.

When they feel it suits their political interests, Mr. Chair, they are prepared to do all sorts of interesting bending and twisting of convention when it comes to legislation in the province. Let's remember Bill 10, introduced at the beginning of the pandemic, where these government members were willing to stand and vote for the members of cabinet to have the ability to change, alter, or create new legislation out of whole cloth without ever setting foot in this Legislature. But they stand and say: "No. We can't provide retroactivity for these two firefighters; that's going too far."

These government members were willing to pass a piece of legislation giving them the ability to unilaterally tear up their contract with physicians in the province of Alberta and then do so, but it's too exceptional for them to provide retroactivity to cover these firefighters. Instead they say: no; go and fight it out in the system.

The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development is willing to sit in a cabinet with a Premier, who he once said he would oppose that sovereignty act that she intended to bring forward. Let's be clear: another extraordinary piece of legislation, which again attempted to give members of this cabinet the ability to alter legislation, change laws without ever setting foot in this Legislature. He was willing to stand for weeks and support that before this government finally recanted in the face of public pressure, but he says no; he cannot stand and make an exception here, an exception that has been demonstrated to be possible in the province of Ontario, for the sake of these firefighters.

There are government members, Mr. Chair, that were willing to stand in support of this Premier when she was running in the leadership race for their party, when she said she intended to exert extraordinary influence in our justice system. They stood in full-throated support of her then, and the question is: will they say it is too exceptional now to stand in support of these firefighters?

Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. This is not a question of this being a government that is so concerned about the rule of law, that is so concerned about proper procedure that they simply cannot allow this to pass. They have demonstrated time and again on the record that is not the case. If they will not support this amendment today, it is because they don't want to, because they don't feel that it's politically significant enough for them. That is their choice, and that

is the message that they are sending to working men and women, to firefighters across this province.

I'll have more to say on the rest of Bill 9 later, but I think that's enough for now. In a moment we'll get to see just where the priority of these members and this government actually lay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

Next up, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to say thank you to the minister for responding to the amendment. I am asking for more clarity because, from a plain-language perspective, I do not understand the government's reasoning, and I would genuinely like to, because we're talking to the same stakeholders. The idea that firefighters who may have been impacted between May 2016 and today need to go through a different or fairness-based process rather than being clearly included in Bill 9, when we know that it is a very defined time period because of the catastrophic event from Fort McMurray: to me that creates an additional barrier or possible confusion because we know that there are a few cases. We believe there could be additional.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

There could be people, firefighters, who have been diagnosed with a cancer that, because the cancer latency period is 25 years, they have not even applied to the WCB because they knew that they were not covered, they did not match it. Without this amendment, which clearly indicates that this is retroacted back to May 2016, there may be firefighters who were on the ground in Fort McMurray who will never approach the WCB or get the compensation that they are owed. That could happen.

I think that the amendment shows a very clear: firefighters who were on the ground from May 2016 on who develop occupational cancers will get the coverage that I believe so strongly all Albertans support that they should get. I hear the government saying, "Oh, they will get the coverage but through a fairness review process," so my question is, then: why not just accept the amendment? Why not accept the amendment that clearly provides the coverage and responds to what firefighters have asked for? If the end result, according to you, is that, through the chair, Mr. Chair, I'm trying not to – if the end result is that they will get coverage, then why not accept this amendment, which makes it clear and will ensure that no firefighter falls through the cracks because they were unaware and did not know?

Why have a hidden, unclear fairness review based process that only some firefighters will go through rather than having clear coverage and retroactive support for all firefighters? I've been listening closely. I am trying to understand, and it does not make sense to me. So I would ask the minister if he could please try to clarify for me and for – I know there are firefighters who are watching our debate today. I am asking this in a very genuine way because this doesn't make sense, why you are rejecting this, when accepting it would provide the clarity, respond to what firefighters are asking for, and ultimately, according to the answers we've been given, provide the exact same result.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to pose questions or make comments on amendment A1? I see the hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up today and talk about inhaling and exhaling at the same

time. Now, Mr. Chair, the firefighter they're referring to that fought the fire died while that member was the minister of labour, while that member had the opportunity to sign on the dotted line and change things. If she thought it was so important to change at that time, why didn't she? Well, I'll tell you. The reason why is because they're playing politics today.

It sort of reminds me a lot of the comments in relation to advertising before campaigns. Now, Mr. Chair, we saw \$20 million being spent by the NDP advertising before the last campaign, before the 2019 campaign. It reminds me of the \$9 million they spent advertising the very popular carbon tax just a little while before that.

What we have in place here is a piece of legislation that works, that is going to work because it has a fairness provision. We don't have exactly the same legislation as Ontario or other jurisdictions; we have legislation made in Alberta for Albertans, and that's why we have a fairness provision within that legislation to make sure that there's nobody that falls through the cracks. Now, Mr. Chair . . .

**Ms Renaud:** You know they're falling through the cracks.

4:30

**Mr. Jean:** No one is going to fall through the cracks of this government.

They did through the last government, the NDP government, when they were in power. We know that. That's why I say to you today that inhaling and exhaling at the same time takes a talent, saying one thing and doing another thing and being all of that righteous indignation that is coming from the opposition – because they know that they had the opportunity to do it, and they didn't do it. We are doing it. We're getting it done. We're going to make sure we do it properly. We're going to do it on the evidence, because WCB is there for the people of Alberta, the workers of Alberta, and it's very important.

I've met with the groups of firefighters. I was actually at the fire. I was there during the time that that fire was burning my town down. Mr. Chair, I was providing food and water to firefighters, I was supporting them, and I was in there. I don't remember any of them being there. In fact, all I remember from them is a lot of chatter, a lot of talk but no substance. This government has substance, and we are standing up for the firefighters. We are going to make sure that no one falls through any NDP cracks because we actually care about firefighters and we care about the workers in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with the minister. This government has substance. It's a substance that, if I were to name, would be unparliamentary.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

To be clear, Madam Chair, our government made substantive investment, did substantive work to support Fort McMurray through that fire. That minister knows because that minister was briefed every day by our government about the situation, had access to the officials, unlike his government throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We provided open access to the opposition during the time that he was leader. The minister knows full well.

He certainly has creative interpretation of the facts both today and of what occurred then. I don't question that the minister was there. It was his hometown; it was his constituency. He looked out for the people there, and I recognize that he looked out for the firefighters then, but the question is whether he will today, Madam

Chair. There's certainly plenty of righteous indignation on that side of the aisle, too.

The fact is, as I said, that what we are bringing forward today are the voices of those firefighters. They are asking the minister of red tape reduction, they're asking the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development to make this amendment. Again, as I've laid out, they are not shy of making all kinds of other exceptions when they feel it suits their political interests, when it's their job that they feel is on the line as opposed to the lives, livelihood, and health of these firefighters. I suppose we'll leave it for those firefighters to judge when we hold the vote today.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To all of our colleagues here today, honestly, across the aisle: we're all trying to work through something here with genuine intent. To the minister: obviously very near and dear to your heart since that was your home. I understand that there was personal loss as well. A real plea to everyone in the room: if we can just keep our sticks on the ice, so to speak. There are a lot of emotions here, and we don't want to politicize this, honestly. It comes down to looking out for good folks that stepped into harm's way when most of us would have run the opposite direction.

I remember full well, you know, the Fort McMurray fires. There were no recorded deaths at the fire scene, but there was a young couple that had a traffic incident getting out of there again, coming back to areas to get out of there. Coincidentally, up in that area we'd been pipelining a couple of years prior, and we still had a thousand-man camp sitting at Christina Lake, or Mariana Lake, I should say. The camp manager there was Glen Brooks, former lance corporal from the airborne, and he ran the camp for us. He started welcoming people off the highway to get them in and find a place for them to stay.

The firefighters went above and beyond trying to do what they could. I remember, you know, hearing some testimony from the command centre and the chief that was up there, that had that responsibility to take care of it. It took an awesome toll, and not one of those people, first responders, whether it was firefighters or otherwise, flinched. They literally went headlong into that. So I can understand that there's a lot of emotion here today because we all feel compelled to do the right thing for those folks that stepped up.

One of the best things that we can do, I would hope, since this might be one of my last speeches in this place as well, is that honestly we can hang our hat on something good, that we had a meaningful impact on them. It's with that spirit that I believe the member opposite brought this motion forward and is really just trying to take something that's good and trying to make it a bit better. Now, with that intent there are invariably some issues that could arise, and I think that maybe it's not being fully articulated here in the House, again, with some of the emotions and where we're at in this season – I think someone said it – on the eve of an election. We all know we're looking down the barrel of a gun in that regard.

But I won't be voting in favour of this. I do really appreciate the intent of it, wholeheartedly, from my heart right across the aisle to the member. But looking at a prior lens in a prior life, looking through contracts and processes and procedures, I think where a lot of the hesitancy on this is is that if we try to tweak it too much more than what we have in the existing legislation, the new legislation coming forward might inadvertently cause some issues on the back end. Again, when there's already a process in place to catch, with the fairness review panel – I think fully that's what's taking place here. The fairness review panel has to run its process as well.

If the folks in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, through you, Chair, to the member opposite that brought this motion forward, choose to have me as their MLA again and if that process falls through the cracks and it doesn't meet the intent, then you have my full commitment that we review this at a later date and take a look and see if we can do that. But it's with that, too – and, hopefully, the member can understand, through you to that member and the others opposite, that I'm fully supportive of the concept, but I'm concerned that we might cause some other issues in behind the process. Again, it's with that full intent to make sure that none of our first responders have any issues.

So I would compel folks to understand the spirit of the intent of this, with the amendment, but to vote against it so we can get the bill through and then allow that process to take place. Again, a full commitment from me, if there is an issue later on, that we can go back and look at that, if it has to be tweaked through regulations or an amendment in an act. But I think we should take our win. I think we should do what we can while we can to make sure we get it there – if it's not a hundred per cent, at least it's 99.9 – and then review those items later.

So it's with that to everyone here, Madam Chair, if we can keep the emotions down – I know it's emotional, but it's really with good intent on both sides of the aisle. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others on amendment A1? We'll go to Edmonton-Meadows and then the hon. minister.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't take very long. I just wanted to thank you, Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, for jumping into the debate, but unfortunately that doesn't serve nothing at all, actually, what we are asking here and what is the issue. We open the bill, we are debating the WCB, and all we see is a real case, that we are discussing here. It's not a principle. It is not just a thought process. We are guided by the principle: we learn more, we do more or learn better, do better. This is exactly what this case is. This is the real-time case.

More of this – this area belongs to the member from Fort McMurray. He's well aware of this, and it's very sad to see and hear the kind of rhetoric we're coming to. Even this should have been very personal to a member from Fort McMurray. He didn't see who in Fort McMurray even it was warning. I don't know if he was able to see there were firefighters actually putting their life on the line to control the fire, a national disaster, and protect the people in Fort McMurray. That is what we are discussing here today. "Have something the NDP didn't do": if we come to your rhetoric, is that the basic principle: you wouldn't do it? If this information was not there then and we have the case here and those hard-working firefighters – and I don't call them workers. National heroes, because they go into the situations: they're not ordinary work; they're not at ordinary work. When people are dying, when people are in danger, they jump on the situation, risking their life to save others.

4:40

We had a natural disaster, one of Canada's largest natural disasters, and that's what we're discussing here, and there's a live case on this. It's sad to see the government House members' attitude and approach towards this, and they couldn't understand it. In a few days I'm really disheartened when I see the government has a very big heart on a number of those issues that are not related to Albertans at all, but when it comes to helping real people, I don't see that approach. Once again, I will request and I will encourage, I hope, that you might show big hearts and look at this amendment with a bit more sympathy.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Madam Chair. You know, I do get emotional about this issue. It is a very important issue to me. I've fought hard for this.

I just want to say that historically in Alberta WCB does not do retroactivity because they have in section 17(3) of the act – and that's the fair process review centre – the ability "to reconsider any matter that it has dealt with and to rescind or amend any decision or order previously made." Now, I would also note that not only did the member opposite, when she was the minister, not make this particular issue for that firefighter that died on her watch retroactive, but she never made one WCB issue retroactive. Not one, Madam Chair. Not one. She didn't do that because she knew it was not the right thing to do. It wasn't necessary because under section 17(3) of the act they have the ability to reconsider and go back in time and to deal with the issue if it's considered unfair. The process is there; the process works.

I've said it in question period; I'll say it again: there's more good news coming for firefighters. In fact, we were number one in Canada for firefighter coverage, for WCB coverage, and then other provinces copied us. The great news is that very soon Alberta is going to be number one by a large margin, number one again, because this government cares, because this government cares about those people that take care of us. We're not going to let this firefighter or any other firefighter from the Fort McMurray fire or other fires that contracts cancer that's directly related to any of these fires behind. It's just not done, Madam Chair.

This government is a caring government, is a government that relies on evidence and makes sure that the people of Alberta that put their lives on the line for us and their families are taken care of, because that's what a caring United Conservative Party government does. We take care of those that can't take care of themselves. The minister of affordability: he came forward with a huge package, over \$2 billion, to take care of those less fortunate than some of us, the people that are the most vulnerable: seniors, young people, families. During a time when inflation is hurting everybody – and might I add, Madam Chair, that that initiative has made Alberta the lowest jurisdiction in Canada for inflation, under 4 per cent whereas the rest of the country is above 5. That speaks to the caring nature of our government, just like this does.

In the coming weeks, the coming days possibly, I encourage all members of this House and all firefighters, all families of firefighters to watch, to watch what we're doing to take care of the most vulnerable, to take care of our firefighters, to take care of Albertans, because we know that the only people that are going to take care of Albertans are this government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The minister can't help bringing politics into this, and that's fair. I'm very proud that in 2018 under the NDP, as I was minister of labour, we were able to make sure that Alberta had the strongest primary site firefighter cancer regulation in the country.

I'm glad, genuinely glad, to hear that the government, after four years, is finally going to do the adjustments to make sure that our firefighters have the coverage and support that we are now behind on because other provinces have done more. That is wonderful and a success for firefighters, and I would encourage him to do that as soon as he can, because we've been asking about that for some time.

But I'm incredibly disappointed by this government ignoring this amendment and not providing clear retroactive coverage for firefighters, because it does absolutely cause firefighters who are



already fighting cancer to have to go through an additional, different process to fight for coverage, which they should not have to do but the minister has clearly described that they will, and it does risk letting firefighters fall through the cracks. What does that look like, Madam Chair? That is firefighters who are fighting cancer or possibly passing away from cancer not getting the coverage they and their family deserve and possibly having to go through an additional bureaucratic battle to get that coverage. That's what this government is risking with not accepting this amendment, which clearly provides very narrow support to firefighters who were on the ground in Fort McMurray and retroactivity in this one case.

As I've said in my remarks, I fully understand that retroactivity is not something Alberta has typically done with the WCB, but it makes sense now and in this case because of the catastrophic, traumatic event that we are talking about. I've heard the government. I've heard their response. I don't think I'm going to hear any new arguments. At this point, Madam Chair, I disagree. I think the government is doing the wrong thing, and they are forcing firefighters who are fighting cancer, families who have lost loved ones to go through additional steps. It is disappointing to me, but I appreciate the debate that we've had here today, and I look forward to a future NDP government rectifying this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:48 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Renaud
Dach	Nielsen	Shepherd
Deol	Pancholi	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Long	Schow
Allard	Lovely	Singh
Fir	Madu	Smith, Mark
Glubish	Nally	Stephan
Hunter	Panda	Turton
Jean	Rehn	van Dijken
Jones	Rosin	Walker
Loewen	Rutherford	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 24
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We'll go back to debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 9. Are there members wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 9. [interjections] Oh, I apologize. And report progress on Bill 12 and progress on bill – I apologize. I do not move any motions at this point in time.

Let's move on to Bill 10.

**The Chair:** Let's do that.

**Bill 10**

**Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023**

**The Chair:** Are there any members that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. I think what we can clearly see is that this is a bill about giving the Premier every tool she needs to use taxpayer money to try to secure another term. What it does, this piece of legislation, is create the Alberta fund, which is a \$1.4 billion election campaign slush fund to buy votes. That's exactly what it is. In addition, it sets up conditions to bypass this place, the Legislature, oversight, by allowing the minister to designate a number of things, which we'll get to a little later.

You know, this couldn't be any more clear, Madam Chair, that this is a government – I mean, we are just weeks away from an election. We see a government spending millions on advertising, and now we see that they have put \$1.4 billion aside, basically for a slush fund. It bypasses oversight, and – you know what? – it's vote buying. That's what it is. Now, this UCP has a horrible track record when it comes to spending money on things that are questionable at best, and I think it's important to remind this government and anybody paying attention of their track record.

Let's talk about the first – one of the things. I mean, there are so many things. Going back to 2019, we saw them bring in another piece of legislation, an omnibus piece of legislation, that included all kinds of things. In addition to deindexing benefits of some of the most destitute, I would say, people in Alberta, people that are living in poverty for the most part, people that have disabilities so they're on income support and AISH – they deindexed that benefit and told them that they wouldn't find it onerous and that it was really important to get our fiscal house in order. That's what they said, all of them. They stood up, they defended it for years as we continued to tell them about the problems.

At the same time, they decided that they were going to designate about \$120 million for a war room, an energy war room. Now, all of us know how ridiculous that has been, what an enormous waste of money that has been, and actually embarrassing on the world stage a number a times. But it is what it is.

The next big fiscal train wreck happened around . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Was you.

**Ms Renaud:** You know, it's unfortunate that they can chirp but they can't stand up and contribute to debate. It is unfortunate that we have to remind this government about that.

Now, here's another one, Madam Chair, that you'll find interesting, I'm sure, because it's almost as big as the slush fund that's being created here, and that's when this government decided right before an American election that they were going to bet a whole bunch of money on then President Trump being re-elected. Kind of interesting that they would bet on this person being re-

elected. I mean, all it takes is looking at polling. Clearly, they look at polling. They know what polling is about.

**Mr. Schow:** Hillary looked at polling, too.

**Ms Renaud:** Sure.

You know, the point is that they bet Albertans' money, resources, on something so ridiculous, never mind that he had a track record that there is no need to mention here because it's – well, there's no need to mention it here. We'll see, I guess, in the next few days if there's something that happens, first time a previous President being indicted on crimes. Sort of looks like that's the way it's going. It's interesting that this government chose to bet a whole chunk of Albertans' money on his being re-elected. That tells you a lot.

At the time, Alberta's Finance minister said that this \$1.3 billion investment of taxpayers' money to the now defunct Keystone XL pipeline project was a prudent gamble. That's what this government said, that it was a prudent gamble, when polling was pretty clear – I'm not American; I don't vote in American elections, but just being an observer, it was pretty clear what was happening. But this government thought it was a prudent decision.

**5:10**

And here's another quote, actually a quote from something the Energy minister at the time said: added that this decision to put all of this money behind this was meshed with the broader commitment to grow Alberta's wellspring industry. That doesn't even make sense when you look at the state of American politics and that this government chose to waste all of those resources on a gamble. That's a fiscal train wreck. They made a comment a day after the project operator, TC Energy Corporation of Calgary, officially abandoned the multibillion-dollar cross-border project. They said that it was a good idea still, that it would mesh this wellspring of industry.

Around that time, you know, there were also numerous court challenges. Of course, this government doesn't actually like to pay attention to fact and what's going on. We also had the person that was also running for the job, the Democrat, Joe Biden, the now President of the United States, who was very clear that if he was successful for his bid for the presidency of the United States, this would be over. There was no sort of hedging or hints. It was very clear, crystal clear. Still this government chose to waste Albertans' resources on a bet that was sure to fail. That was one thing.

Here's some reporting, some public reporting, around the end of June in 2022. You know, we heard from, actually, the Auditor General this time telling us that there were some serious problems around \$4 billion in COVID spending in 2020-21, serious problems in COVID spending. This is a government that wants to create a \$1.4 billion slush fund. This is their track record. So \$4 billion in COVID spending that wasn't really clear. Now, we have a really terrific Auditor General. I believe we have a really terrific Auditor General in Alberta, and I think that that office is certainly looking at the financial statements but also looking at ways to improve. I think, you know, the report did talk about what we could do better in the future. Unfortunately, this government really chose not to take those recommendations. They just chose to not follow the recommendations and to not do the work, so we continue to see these financial problems going forward.

You know, some of the findings: the audit at the time could not trace how \$1.3 billion in federal aid for the safe restart agreement made its way through the ministries and was spent. This is the Auditor General of Alberta saying that there's a problem here. With billions of dollars, it's not clear where it went. Did it actually help? Did you meet any targets? Did you meet any goals? Did it make life

better for anybody? This government has not been able to demonstrate that with \$4 billion in COVID spending. This is a government that wants another \$1.4 billion for a slush fund just weeks away from an election. That is not good.

Some of the other findings that the Auditor General shared with Albertans going back a couple of years. This government has a problem – they don't have a problem announcing the spending that they're going to do; they do have a problem sort of coming out the other end and saying: well, we did spend this much, and here were the results.

One key finding was that the results analysis did not always include the spending end results. Here's a list. Ministry of Health, disclosing the quantity of PPE and rapid tests distributed but not how much was spent on each of the categories of PPE, contact tracing, or rapid testing. There was no information. There was no clarity about where that was spent. The Ministry of Health, again, not disclosing the number of vaccines received by the federal government. This is the Auditor General saying that we have a problem here.

The Ministry of Health not describing what it achieved by spending \$260 million to protect staff and residents in long-term care. Still we know they were devastated. People living in long-term care during COVID were devastated. They were devastated by illness, by death, by isolation. This government – there's just no clarity on where the money went and what were the results.

The Ministry of Education not disclosing individual initiatives spending or results for \$263 million in spending for the safe return to class. These are federal dollars that the province of Alberta received during COVID to distribute for a number of programs, and the Auditor General of Alberta is saying: whoa; we have a problem. It's not the first problem this government has had. There have been many. Let's fast-forward a little bit further to the Auditor General telling Albertans about some of the errors that this government has made in their accounting that they actually had to go and correct.

One of the things that this government did – and maybe you will remember this – is that they decided that they were going to make life better for disabled Albertans by changing the date that they received their benefits, so changing the date that the money showed up in their account. Before the UCP decided to mess with this, they used to get their funds a few days before the end of the month so that there was enough time to go and get a bus pass if needed, to make sure the rent was paid on time, all of those things. This is a group of people typically with not a lot of resources. As you can imagine, they're living from month to month on that deposit, so when things are a little bit late, life gets difficult.

This government decided to just unilaterally change the date. "We're going to make it for the 1st. We're doing it to line up all the programs," which wasn't really true because they didn't do it for seniors. They only did it to the big programs to make the budget look better. They actually only recorded 11 months of expense in a 12-month period to make their books look better. They got caught by the Auditor General, and they had to make that change. They had to reverse this because it was wrong. In the meantime tens of thousands of Albertans were impacted by this decision. They didn't bat an eye.

This is the kind of fiscal mismanagement you get from this UCP government. It just goes on and on. That's just one teeny example from the Auditor General. They flagged \$1.6 billion of accounting blunders. That's not me. That's the Auditor General of Alberta's report card on this government.

He noted that the government also had to make a hundred-million-dollar adjustment to the Keystone XL pipeline investment. The government made that investment before the fiscal year-end,

but the money wasn't reflected in the balance sheet. Just a little error on this government's part.

There was also \$152 million added to costs for two more income support programs. This is what I was talking about. Assured income for the severely handicapped: they recorded 11 months out of the 12. I mentioned that. The Auditor said that the department adjusted the numbers to "appropriately disclose that Community and Social Services exceeded its budgeted appropriation by \$120 million."

The Auditor also criticized the environment department for muddled oversight on grants handed out under a \$563 million fund that places a levy on heavy industrial greenhouse gas emitters. The Auditor said that there wasn't enough evidence to show that projects receiving fund money were, in fact, reducing emissions. Another example: \$563 million and this government could not prove the results. This is not me saying this. This is the Auditor General of Alberta. This is one more financial disaster from this government. This is a government that wants to create a \$1.4 billion slush fund weeks before a provincial election. It's not good.

Well, we heard yesterday – it was actually quite funny. I think the Finance minister corrected one of our comments, saying that it was a structured slush fund. I think he said it in jest, but I would suggest that's exactly what this is. This is a whole bunch of money sitting there for this government to decide where they're going to spend it depending on where they need the most votes. That's all this is. There is no transparency. There's no oversight. There's no debate in this place about deciding where these resources are most needed or how they will most make life better, none of that.

This is a pure and simple partisan slush fund. It is unfortunate that so many of the funds that Albertans need to make health care better in this province, to make education better in this province, to reduce class sizes, to do all of the things, to properly reindex benefits that were cut in 2019 – instead of just going forward, making people whole, and getting rid of those cuts that started in 2019, no, this government would rather take \$1.4 billion and put it in a fund for them to decide unilaterally what they're going to fund right before an election. You think that's not partisan? That is. That is partisan.

It's incredibly disappointing that this UCP government has so little respect for Albertans that they have the audacity this close to an election to say: "Yeah. Don't worry about it. We're just going to put \$1.4 billion over here, and we'll let you know where we're going to spend it as we go. Don't worry. Trust us." Albertans don't trust this government. This government will find out soon enough; Albertans don't trust them.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all I have.

5:20

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm really excited to stand in support of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. There's a lot of good material in this act. I won't have time, of course, to cover all of the merits of this bill, but I'll just cover a few.

When you go to page 6, it talks about amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. Of course, one of the great things that this Legislature has done – and I appreciate the members opposite. They supported this amendment as well. In Alberta we have the most generous charitable tax credit in the entire country. I love it that Alberta – you know, we have the highest per capita of giving – compared to any other jurisdiction in Canada gives the most to charities. I think that speaks to the many great individuals and families that we have in Alberta. It is truly a place of freedom and prosperity.

What the amendments to this act do is that individuals, on the first \$200 that they donate – you know, this Legislature as a whole voted to increase that tax credit, from a provincial perspective, to 60 per cent. So when an Albertan gives \$200 – on their first \$200 of charitable donations now they receive 75 cents on the dollar back. Wow. What a great – I think it's something that I hope that each and every one of us in the Legislature can be proud of. It's a wonderful thing. It helps and recognizes, perhaps, Albertans that have more modest means. Perhaps they want to donate to a charity, and now that we partner with them – the Alberta government, the taxpayers partner with individuals who give to charities – they can receive, for their \$200 donation, \$150 back.

The reason why I love that amendment as well is that it establishes parity with the political donation tax credit. Of course, if individuals donate to a political party here in Alberta, they receive a tax credit of 75 per cent as well on the first \$200, and now we've established parity with that. The donation limits on charities, rightfully so and from a policy perspective, are much higher for charitable donations than political donations. I love the fact that we have created parity of treatment for our charities in Alberta.

Not only are we the most generous, most beneficial place to donate for individuals donating over \$200, but now, of course, we also have established ourselves as the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada for people donating \$200 or less. Now we give a 75 per cent credit. And you know what? Bill 10 amends that to make it effective for this year. Any Albertan that donates in 2023 will receive a tax credit, 75 cents on the dollar back. What a wonderful thing. I hope that the members opposite don't find that offensive. In fact, I expect they wouldn't. I certainly hope they wouldn't. They supported the bill, and I appreciate that they did that. That's a really good thing.

Again, of course, I don't have time to cover everything, but one of the other things in Bill 10 is that we've amended the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act. You know, in Alberta we are blessed with natural resources. We are a land of prosperity. We have eliminated the 50 per cent factor, now making municipalities a full partner in terms of 100 per cent, you know, sharing under the fiscal framework. That increases the amount and resources they get through the provincial government to help them as they seek to serve Albertans. My understanding is that they're very excited about that. Again, another positive aspect of Bill 10.

I want to talk a little bit about the Alberta fund because it seems that the NDP doesn't necessarily understand how we have an Alberta fund in the first place. The Alberta fund is really a surplus fund. If we didn't have a surplus, we wouldn't have any amount in the Alberta fund. Of course, the NDP, if they were ever in government, would never have an Alberta fund. They only have a deficit fund – right? – and a debt fund. That's the NDP fund: a debt fund, a deficit fund. We have an Alberta fund. The only reason there is an Alberta fund and that there's a billion dollars in it is because we have a surplus, right? Of course, well, the NDP never had a surplus. Why? Because they were very bad fiscal managers. They were a horrible government.

When they came into power, they jacked up corporate tax rates, of course, making us very uncompetitive. Guess what happened to our corporate tax revenues as a province when the NDP came and jacked up corporate tax rates? Overall revenue from a corporate revenue tax perspective actually fell. We've reduced corporate tax rates so that we are the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business. You know what our corporate tax revenue has done? Even though we reduced corporate tax rates, we actually now have record corporate tax revenues. You know, that is a wonderful thing.

I think, you know, when we kind of talk about surpluses and prosperity, we're having record migration to Alberta, right? That is a wonderful thing. While the NDP like to talk about us being a fiscal train wreck or they like to talk about fiscal management, well, people seem to be voting with their feet, and they're coming to Alberta. We see people coming from all across Canada, from all over the world because this is a land of prosperity and freedom, and I love that. In the fiscal framework it talks about expense growth, and it seeks to limit expense growth to inflation and population growth.

Before I became an MLA – of course, I am from Red Deer. I love Red Deer. It's where I grew up. It's where I came back with my young family. I raised my family in Red Deer. It's a beautiful place. It's centrally located in the Calgary-Edmonton economic corridor. You know, it's not too big, not too small. We have a beautiful river, parks system, trail system, and we're close to these beautiful lakes, the beautiful west country, which I love. It's such a great playground. Of course, we have the mountains nearby. Most important, it's a place where I raised my family. I love the individuals and families in Red Deer, as I think each and every member in this Legislature loves and cares about the individuals in their community. What we're seeing in Red Deer – and I expect that we're seeing it throughout the province of Alberta – is that people are coming here, right?

Even though from a macro perspective we live in a very challenged economic environment, Alberta is sort of a shining star, not only in the world but in Canada. People are wanting to come here. Why do you think that is? Do you think that's because they want to come to a woke, socialist, fiscal train wreck? No. They're coming to Alberta because we are leading Canada in economic growth, right? We have the lowest taxes and the highest incomes. That is our inheritance and our legacy. That is the Alberta culture, freedom and prosperity. Does that have anything to do with the socialist, woke NDP? Madam Chair, it does not. It has nothing to do with them. So, of course, they wouldn't understand the concept of an Alberta fund being a surplus fund.

**Ms Renaud:** A slush fund.

**Mr. Stephan:** It's a surplus fund because if there was no surplus, there would be no balance in it.

Of course, the NDP: it's a foreign concept to them because they were horrible people in terms of how they managed this province. Yeah. Madam Chair, sorry; I didn't mean that. They were horrible fiscal managers. They were very incompetent. They did a horrible job. The reason I know that is because when I visited individuals and families when I was knocking on doors in Red Deer-South, you know, there would be individuals that perhaps worked in the oil and gas sector, right? Under, unfortunately, this horrible government they chased out capital. They drove away businesses. They've never apologized for the economic harm that they did.

5:30

When they were in office, when they became government, during the four years that they were in government, private-sector jobs actually shrunk under their mismanagement. They've never apologized for that, but that – of course, they had their billion-dollar deficits. They were horrible government. I mean, they did a horrible job. We know that. But they inflicted a great human cost kind of underlying their incompetence. They drove away Albertans from being able to provide for themselves and their families. They chased away capital under an NDP, socialist, woke government. Businesses didn't want to come and invest in Alberta. No; they left, right? They were, like, partners with their bosom buddy Justin

Trudeau, part of an NDP-Trudeau axis, a socialist, woke alliance. They were just a horrible, horrible government, and it's so good that they're gone. Really, because they were a horrible government, what are the fruits of horrible government? Huge, billion-dollar deficits.

I'm so grateful that we find ourselves now in a place of freedom and prosperity. We have record migration coming here. You know, I know why Albertans are coming here: because it's a place of opportunity. The clouds have lifted under this horrible grey NDP storm cloud going away, and in the next election they'll be even further away. I'm very happy about that because we've be able to repair the damage that they've done.

I'm really excited, Madam Chair, about supporting Bill 10. I love individuals living in their means. Of course, this government never understood what that is. They were a horrible government. We have surpluses. We are on the right track, a place of freedom and prosperity, and I'd invite the members opposite to vote in favour of Bill 10. Vote in favour of freedom and prosperity. Vote in favour of us undoing the horrible things that they did.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 10. I'd like to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for a colourful speech, perhaps his last in this Legislature. Certainly, it was one that allowed me to completely fill out my Conservative cliché bingo card, so I certainly appreciate those efforts on his part.

Madam Chair, the Member for Red Deer-South spoke at length about the Alberta fund being a surplus fund. Certainly, this government does have a surplus, in part because of the social debt, infrastructure debt, debt they've created in many other areas in the province of Alberta and in part due to a soaring price of oil, for which they can take absolutely no credit. But, certainly, I would note, Madam Chair, that it has been observed by economists in the province of Alberta that with the drop in the price of oil this government could in fact find itself running a deficit under its current projections. So while the member celebrates and claims fiscal responsibility, we know what the realities actually are, that this a government that continues to gamble on a high price of oil, which is about the opposite of what this member is claiming.

Again, it's very similar with this Alberta fund slush fund. The fact is, Madam Chair, that even if this was actually a surplus fund, it is not fiscal responsibility to set \$1.4 billion aside for the government to simply spend on a whim one month before an election. That is not the kind of integrity or fiscal responsibility the Member for Red Deer-South was just claiming that his government champions. Certainly, if any other government before had attempted to do such, I'm pretty sure that member would have been in strong opposition and spoken vocally against it. When it is his government approaching an election in which he is perhaps in danger of losing his seat, he's in favour.

Now, there are many things that could be done with that \$1.4 billion, Madam Chair. When we were speaking about the legacy of this government, as many of their members have and as the Minister of Finance did and took extensive time during their discussion on Bill 10 to brag about their record on investing in health care and other areas – let me tell you a bit of a story about a current situation under this government while they are setting \$1.4 billion aside in a slush fund for their election campaign.

Down in High River, for nearly 15 years the High River youth and adult or teen clinic has been providing safe, confidential,

accessible sexual and mental health services to teens and young adults in and around High River. It is celebrated. It is respected. I received a letter in support of it from the boys and girls club in the area recognizing the deep impact it has on supporting young people, youth, in that area. Many of the youth they serve come from vulnerable groups, like the LGBTQ2S-plus community, or from Indigenous communities. I received letters from doctors, from the boys and girls club, others calling it a vital part of health care in their community, important and life-saving, a vital preventative service.

Madam Chair, under this government as they were preparing this budget, as they were preparing to set aside \$1.4 billion for their election slush fund, on February 7, just a few hours before Dr. Jennifer Norheim, who has been at that clinic since it began, was getting ready to open the clinic for the day, she gets a call from her local PCN, who had gotten a call from Alberta Health telling that local PCN that they could no longer use their funding to pay for her work at the young adult and youth clinic. No warning, no offer of time to negotiate, no suggestion of how they could find another way to fund that work, just simply an ultimatum: you cannot fund that with your dollars anymore.

Now, the argument, Madam Chair, was that that work should be done under fee-for-service. Well, the Minister of Health is crusading on having accepted the recommendations of the MAPS committee, the early recommendations, which talk about trying to get away from fee-for-service. Regardless, while this government was preparing to set aside \$1.4 billion, as in here, in Bill 10, for their election slush fund, they told that local PCN they could no longer use their dollars to fund the work of Dr. Norheim.

So Dr. Norheim is left with the choice, Madam Chair, of choosing to volunteer her time at the clinic, do that work unpaid, as this government demanded so many family doctors do throughout the course of the pandemic while they were still maintaining their war against physicians in the province of Alberta. Dr. Norheim can't afford to do that, so the clinic will be closing as of March 31, the end of next week.

And you know what, Madam Chair? Dr. Norheim mentioned that there are no family doctors accepting new patients in their area. None. So those young people will lose their access at the youth and young adult clinic, and they will have no other options in the community to access that care. None. That is the reality on the ground while this government celebrates their \$1.4 billion in this apparent surplus fund that the Member for Red Deer-South is so proud of. What better use of a surplus than to actually fund access to care in the community for vulnerable youth? But, no, they're not doing that; they're setting this \$1.4 billion aside to campaign for their jobs. It flies in the face of everything that the Minister of Health and the UCP say they're actually working to support.

In the words of Dr. Norheim: this is a decision that will add more chaos and instability to the system. It will hurt access to primary care. It will increase the pressure on their local emergency departments while this government stands with their chosen fixer, Dr. Cowell, and claims that they have solved all of these issues. Again, Madam Chair, more interested in their re-election than actually doing the work they were elected to do for Albertans.

**5:40**

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that this clinic is precisely the kind of model of care that an Alberta NDP government will invest in, that we will support regardless of the price of oil, because that doesn't change the need in the community or the needs of these youth.

The Member for Red Deer-South talked about people voting with their feet. When we're talking about family doctors and care in the

community, Madam Chair, better places where we could be spending this \$1.4 billion that they're using for an election slush fund, let me tell you that just today we got the results for residency positions across Canada, young, graduating doctors making their choice of where they want to go do their residency, training, and potentially build their career. In family medicine Alberta had 42 vacancies. From what I've seen, that's the highest of any jurisdiction in Canada. B.C. had two vacancies. Young doctors are voting with their feet in the face of this government and its decisions and its supposed fiscal responsibility.

That is a different kind of debt, one that doesn't show up necessarily on the actuarial table but certainly does show up for these youth in High River and the tens of thousands of other Albertans who do not have a family doctor and don't face much of a prospect of getting one under this government.

This is part of a pattern, Madam Chair. This government, as they're preparing for this election, you know – and in their debate on Bill 10 and in some of the other debate this government has talked about election advertising. “Boy, the Alberta NDP in 2018” – let's see; so that's a full year they're talking about here, about the amount of government advertising that was spent on an election that took place four months after that, when they themselves are massively increasing government advertising spending directly before the election, including \$9 million that they're awarding themselves in supplementary spending.

You know an interesting thing, Madam Chair? On February 1, 2019, the former Premier, the hon. Jason Kenney, committed that a UCP government would extend a ban on nonessential government advertising to include not only the campaign period but also the months leading up to it. Promise made; promise not kept. Indeed, instead what we saw this government do was, through Bill 81, the Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2021 (No. 2), create a fixed election date, which then removed the existence of that campaign period. All of a sudden, conveniently, there are no rules and restrictions anymore on government advertising right up to the red line.

What we see, again, Madam Chair, is that through this \$1.4 billion slush fund, through the massive increase in government advertising spending, which the Member for Red Deer-South would have decried if any other government were doing it but he's happy to support to potentially try – and I do say “try” – to save his own seat, this government is willing to abuse the use of taxpayer dollars, the same dollars that they claim they're so proud to protect, the \$1.4 billion, as I noted yesterday, that they clawed out of the pockets of AISH recipients, folks on income supports, seniors that receive the Alberta seniors' benefit, students who needed special-needs support in schools, family doctors as they were scraping to get by, having to close clinics and lay off staff in the midst of the pandemic. None of those folks, none of those causes, none of those issues were as important as this government needing to save its own skin. That is the reality of what we see before us in Bill 10 with the Alberta fund, a \$1.4 billion slush fund for the next election. But Albertans see it, Madam Chair.

Now, certainly, there are a number of things in this bill that we don't find objectionable. Certainly, as the Member for Red Deer-South said, making it easier to begin the expansion of the tax credit for charitable donations: we have no issue with that whatsoever. The government choosing to force Albertans to make donations, which, basically, is what we have with this \$1.4 billion slush fund: that we do have an issue with.

Nonetheless, we've seen quite clear where this government's standards lie and what its intentions are and how far it's willing to go when it's seeing the writing on the wall as Albertans make quite clear what their thoughts are on this government's record, on the

choices it has made, on the level of arrogance and entitlement that they have brought forward, that rivals that of the 44-year dynasty of the PC government. Indeed, you could say that in some sense it exceeds it, because they managed, where it took 44 previously, to get there in four.

Thankfully, in May, Madam Chair, we have the opportunity to cut that short and make sure it ends at four and bring some integrity and respect for Albertans back to this government. I look forward to the opportunity to do that.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is always a pleasure to rise and speak in this Chamber. I stand today to express my support for Bill 10.

Firstly, I would like to applaud the Premier, the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, all the ministers for coming up with a budget that will secure the future of Alberta. It balances the priorities of Albertans in health care and education while ensuring the government lives within its means.

This budget builds on Alberta's strong foundations and continues to position the province for further diversification and growth. Through this government's fiscal responsibility during the past four years, supports and reliefs to Albertans during this time of high inflation are readily available without incurring debt.

Speaking of debt, Madam Chair, through this government's proper management of provincial finances, we are now able to reduce and pay down the provincial debt, which was never done by the members opposite during their time in government. What they did was to accumulate more debt. The members opposite were not even able to balance the budget, and it seemed that they never intended to balance it, as can be noticed in their continuous assertion of a spending spree. They even hinted that they would increase taxes. As we already have seen, it drove away job creators and billions in investments. While they plan to spend more and incur more debt to Alberta, leaving future generations to pay for it, they have yet to mention any shadow budget.

On the other hand, this government has planned to balance the budget from day one of assumption of office. It is a wise and thoughtful plan to eliminate the largest deficit in Alberta's history. In fact, during the start of this government in administration, the deficit has decreased even faster than initially planned. A balanced budget would give us the ability to reduce the debt-servicing charge and pay down the debt. It would remove the burden to future generations to pay debt that they did not incur.

When the previous government assumed governance of the province, debt servicing was under \$800 million a year. When they were ousted from office, it was about \$2.3 billion a year. As this government pays down the debt, Madam Chair, we are able to redirect this debt-servicing amount to more useful services that Albertans rely on, including health care, infrastructure, social programs, child care, and education.

5:50

Budget 2023 is another opportunity for this government to create and build Alberta's future, with a forecast surplus of \$2.4 billion and robust economic activity poised to lead the country in economic growth. It is aimed to have financial stability, and it ensures a greater, successful future for Alberta by growing the economy, creating good-paying jobs, strengthening health care and education, and keeping Alberta communities safe. Through the well-thought-out strategy of this government our economy is showing encouraging signs of recovery and growth, but there is a lot more

to be done to further diversify, to strengthen our workforce, grow our resources, and extend the needed help for all Albertans.

Madam Chair, Budget 2023 also includes inputs from Albertans and stakeholders. The government received feedback and submissions from Albertans and various stakeholders through consultations conducted by way of online surveys, written submissions, and telephone town halls. Everyone's views were considered by the government, and all received were of great help in understanding the priorities of families, businesses, and communities. Having said that, let me express my appreciation to all who participated with the Budget 2023 consultations. Alberta is continuously moving forward through the government's focused, responsible fiscal management and relentless pursuit of economic growth. It has put the province on the most sustainable fiscal trajectory, creating expanded financial capacity and resulting in additional government revenues.

The job-creating corporate tax cut introduced by this government, Madam Chair, is proving to be a more sensible approach than the increasing of taxes imposed by the previous government. Through this approach it is estimated that for the fiscal year 2023-2024 there is about \$1.6 billion more collected in annual corporate tax revenue at the 8 per cent rate than the previous government did at 12 per cent in 2018-19, demonstrating the huge investment framework established since this government took office.

Multibillion-dollar investments have started to come into Alberta, Madam Chair. It has been forecast that Alberta will again have outstanding economic growth this year. Amazon Web Services is building its second cloud computing hub in Calgary, amounting to \$4.3 billion. Infosys and Mphasis opened their tech hubs last year in Calgary and created thousands of jobs in the province. RBC has also established a tech hub in Calgary, with about 300 jobs. EY created a new finance hub, with about 200 jobs in Calgary, impressed with the talented workforce. Just recently Appexus technology is to open its new Canadian headquarters in downtown Calgary, creating 125 jobs in the process. An additional huge investment that has landed in Alberta is Lynx, Madam Chair. Canada's newest low-cost airline joins Flair and WestJet as Alberta-based airlines.

These are just some of the many investments creating jobs in Alberta and boosting our economy, Madam Chair. We saw the employment rate hit prepandemic levels in December 2021 by gaining about 130,000 jobs for the year, including 6,100 to the oil and gas industry. Moreover, in January 2022 we heard that Canada lost 200,000 jobs, but Alberta's economy gained over 7,000 jobs; 8,200 jobs were created in February 2022, which means that more Albertans are returning to work and receiving a regular paycheque.

Alberta got off to a strong start in January this year, with our province gaining 20,600 new jobs, and almost 11,000 more Albertans gained full-time jobs in February. Since 2021 Alberta has created more than 221,000 jobs. Our plan is working, and we are putting the right policies in place to grow and diversify the economy.

Under the NDP 183,000 Albertans lost their jobs, and businesses fled our province. This proves that Alberta's economy has momentum, and this government is focused on even more job creation in Alberta, which continues to be the economic engine of Canada. With a strong focus on investment attraction, job creation, and economic growth, Budget 2023 sets the stage for Alberta to remain Canada's economic engine for decades.

A \$176 million grant to the already successful Alberta at work initiative will help Albertans build their skills and find good jobs. It

will also assist employers in their search for workers in existing and emerging sectors. Further investment in aviation and aerospace, agrifood manufacturing, and \$24.5 million for the Alberta technology and innovation strategy will enhance emerging and innovative technologies and help attract even more venture capital investment to Alberta.

Let me also add that Alberta continues to be a world leader in sustainable and responsible resource development among oil-producing jurisdictions. This shows that while we recognize that Canada's largest exporter is still the oil and gas industry, we're experiencing broad-based investment and economic diversification in our province. Nonetheless, this investment climate and composition does not mean that the government's approach in carefully handling the province's finances will twist.

Alberta's government continues its disciplined spending to maintain balance and to secure Alberta's future. Albertans need a strong health care system with the capacity to manage extraordinary surges and provide an excellent standard of care to all. That is why Alberta's government is also setting new records for spending in health care through Budget 2023. Madam Chair, we have the best front-line health care workers in the world, and Budget 2023 provides the right supports to ensure that Albertans get the care they need when and where they need it.

We are seeing a record-high investment into the Health ministry's operating budget. An additional \$965 million this year will help the Ministry of Health continue building a stronger health care system and ensure that the government can do what's needed to improve wait times for ambulance services, emergency rooms, and surgeries.

EMS services will be strengthened with \$196 million in funding over three years. This means that more staff will be hired, and it implements the recommendations made by the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee. Over three years \$15 million will be spent to source more EMS vehicles and replace or upgrade related equipment.

As we aim to increase surgical capacity and help reduce wait times, Madam Chair, Budget 2023 commits \$237 million over three years for the Alberta surgical initiative capital program, including \$120 million in new funding to support additional projects in Alberta Health Services owned facilities.

To attract, recruit, and train more doctors and nurses, with a focus on family physicians for rural areas, Budget 2023 also allotted \$158 million for these initiatives. This record investment also ensures . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the committee is now recessed until 7:30 this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, March 22, 2023

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

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

#### Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any with comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 10 here in committee. I did have some comments last evening around the general, the second reading type of thing. And then, you know, second reading did imply reading, and upon further analysis I did see a section that I did want to draw the attention of the House to, which is section 15 on page 42 of Bill 10. As we said before, there are a number of sections in here that we have no quarrel with. I mean, there are lots of things that needed to get cleaned up. It sort of reads in some ways like a miscellaneous statutes act, but then in other ways there are other areas that I think perhaps we could have a little more close analysis of. So I do have an amendment that I would like to bring forward in regard to section 15, which is on page 42 of the bill, if everybody wants to flip there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

This will be amendment A1.

If you would read it into the record for us, we'd appreciate it.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West to move that Bill 10, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, be amended by striking out sections 15(2) and (5). As I said, those are sections that you'll find on page 42 and page 43 of this bill.

I guess what I was told by the minister's department when they brought forward this bill was that they were looking for ways by which they could allow for collaboration with other postsecondary institutions to support regional access to collaboration and undergraduate degree programs and stuff like that, right? Now, the thing is, though, that the example that the ministry gave for us was NorQuest, but of course NorQuest is not one of the private, independent colleges in Alberta, you know. In fact, it's funded like Bow Valley and Lethbridge College and so forth. It's in a different category to that. So my concern around sections 15(2) and (5) was that it could open the door for the government, without making new laws, to bring forward further degree-granting powers to private universities without the proper oversight that that change should entail.

If you're bringing forward a private degree and they're offering an undergraduate degree in the arts, let's say, for example, at a private university or private college, then there's usually a process that should go through that's quite rigorous. This seemed to circumvent that somehow. You know, I've been around long enough to see that we've had a number of colleges historically in Alberta that would come in and offer degrees and so forth. Number one, sometimes we had complaints, students had complaints about the quality of education that they were receiving. And then: to what

degree were the colleges with their certificates being actually recognized by employers and across Canada and across North America and around the world?

Always, when you are making changes to degree status and accreditation status, Mr. Chair, you have to make sure that you are ensuring the reputation and the credibility of not just the institution that might be asking for those changes but for our whole postsecondary system in general, because, of course, whether it's fair or not, the public and individuals will judge a degree or a ticket or a diploma or so forth, you know, collectively, sometimes saying: "Well, this is an Alberta diploma. Hey, have you heard that the Alberta diplomas maybe are not coming through as reputably as other places, from certain schools and so forth?" Part of our job here in the Legislature is to make sure we protect that reputation as well as protecting the integrity of degrees and diplomas that students will receive from schools around the province, right? Also, that protection means value for money, too. Of course, it's very expensive to go to school. If people are spending and getting for something that's advertised as one thing but maybe it's not, then, again, that is not fair to students and, again, affects the reputation of our postsecondary system in general, too.

My amendment – probably everybody has received that now – simply strikes out sections 15(2) and 15(5), which is, I think, a not unreasonable thing to do. Indeed, you know, if the purpose is to have more collaboration between colleges, like NorQuest or Bow Valley or something like that, to talk about other degree-granting potential, I mean, they're free to do that, and there are other ways by which we can do that. We don't have to remove the regulatory oversight that this body does provide to postsecondaries around the province. I believe there are other ways to do that. So I would encourage everyone to at least take a sober second look at this section and, hopefully, support my amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this section of the bill and specifically with regard to the amendment that's just been brought forward by the previous speaker. I certainly want to caution this government about how they move forward with changes to legislation that affects universities and academic institutions, particularly when it comes to independent academic institutions, that often find themselves in a very different category than some of our major institutions like the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, for example. These institutions have, often, a different perspective on what it is that they're trying to accomplish in their work, and as such, you know, we should be a bit cautious about how we deal with them.

In this particular case we have under section (5) that it allows the minister the ability to add regulation-making authority. I'm concerned about having the minister given that kind of responsibility when they are not part of the very significant peer-led process of making decisions at a university. Moving decisions to the minister's ability and having institutions do that is something that we need to be a bit cautious about because the whole nature of successful universities is that they work on a collegial basis, that they work to examine each other to ensure that their standards are up to an appropriate level, and I think this is a good way to go about doing it. I think that they are the generators of knowledge. They are the transmitters of knowledge.

7:40

We should always try to ensure that it is the people who are most steeped in the area of knowledge that are the ones that would be making the decisions over all of the aspects of training our students, of ensuring that our students get the right kind of experiences, that they are exposed to the highest level of current information, and that they reach the standards that they need to reach in order to be able to graduate and be recognized as professional representatives within whatever field they have chosen. I think this is a good standard. It ensures that the people with the most knowledge in a particular situation are indeed making the decisions, and it has proven to be very effective over the years around the world in keeping the standards at a very high rate.

As such, I think it's important that we ensure that our universities all stick to what has been demonstrated to be a very good standard in society and that we ensure that the universities in the province of Alberta try to achieve that highest level of standard, as many of them try to do. I mean, we are fortunate to have universities here in Alberta that are considered in the top 100 in the world. We certainly want to maintain that level of success, and we don't want to do anything that will undermine the reputation that our universities have. Having a reputation is very significant in terms of being able to get grants from around the world, to attract excellence in research and scholarship. You know, we need to guard that here in this province to ensure that that's always the thing that we focus on most when we think about what a university does – that is, that it's achieving a level of excellence – and we shouldn't be doing anything to undermine that.

I know that there is a different kind of model in the States, that universities are often run by people with particular kinds of agendas and aren't always concerned about, you know, achieving the standards of excellence that our universities here in Alberta are trying to achieve. I would hate to see us move in any kind of direction that would start to slide down that slippery slope that they have in the States, where they have situations where a guy named Trump can put a university together and charge a lot of money for people and not produce any results and eventually have to close down. All of those students who went to that university not only lost their money, but they lost their time and they lost their opportunities. That's a dangerous place that I think that the Americans have gone, and I certainly don't want to see us go in that direction. The way we guard against that is that we ensure that all the decisions that are made in universities are reviewed by the other universities, the peers in the other universities, that they set the standards, that they review whether the standards have actually been met, and then they set a course for correction if ever a university is offline.

I know that as a university instructor I participated in exactly those kinds of processes. I have had the opportunity to meet accreditation standards and was very happy to receive feedback from, you know, experienced, knowledgeable people from around Canada who have given us direction about things that we should improve or things that we should change. I'm very happy that that's the process because, indeed, if we want to maintain our accreditation, we would respond to those kinds of criticisms and defend ourselves if indeed we felt the criticism was offline. It was an important, rigorous, collegial process, and I think that kind of a process is one that has resulted in excellence and one that we want to continue to support.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to applaud the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing forward this amendment as it highlights very specific concerns.

Adding to the debate, I would really like to contribute how this actually impacts a lot of racialized people here in the province of Alberta. Of course, as you well know, many racialized people have been coming to the province of Alberta over the last 50 years, calling it home. The population of racialized people has been increasing, and we're very close to almost being at 50 per cent racialized people here in the province of Alberta. The Alberta of today looks very different than the Alberta of 50 years ago.

Now, the reality is that a lot of these racialized people are coming because of economic conditions in their own home country. They don't have as much equitable access to being able to provide for their families, so they look at coming to Edmonton and Alberta and Canada as an opportunity for them to provide a better future for themselves, for their families, especially their children. Especially their children. When they get here, often it's very difficult for them to receive accreditation for past education that they have received in their home country.

I've come across many a racialized constituent that now calls Alberta home, that has been in this particular situation, and then desperately is seeking some kind of recourse to be able to get education as quickly as possible so that they can enter into the job market and be able to make more money than just, for example, working in the service industry. I mean, that is an option for many of them. However, they would like to be able to provide for their families a lot more than just minimum wage, for example.

So then they go to some of these private postsecondary institutions, and they've actually come to me – a number of them have come to me and, for example, they've signed a contract with one of these postsecondary institutions for thousands and thousands of dollars. For some reason or another they have been unable to complete the program, and then they're left having to owe all of this money to that postsecondary institution, that private postsecondary institution. Then not only that, but we actually see a lot of these private postsecondaries saddling a lot of students with a lot of debt.

I mean, for some programs, yes, there is an opportunity for people to get some kind of grant from either the federal government or even to some extent from the provincial government as well. However, the vast majority of them can't access these grants, but they're so desperate to be able to provide for their family and also – let's be real about it – send money back home to dependants that they have back home, family members who they have back home who are going through very difficult times because of the economic situation in their home country.

I won't get into that, but in my particular perspective a lot of immigrants are coming here because, I will say, economic interests of Canada and the United States have impacted their economies in a negative way. Because those countries are saddled in debt through either loans that they received through the International Monetary Fund or the International Development Bank, they have created the conditions such that the economic situation in their home country has made it so that they can't actually have a future there. So because of that situation, they end up coming here, hoping that they're going to have a better future here. And, of course, with these postsecondary institutions, those who attempt to enrol in some of these programs or some of these courses and things like that end up being saddled with an enormous amount of debt, and it puts them

in a very precarious state because eventually they have to pay that back. It's a very difficult situation.

7:50

I applaud again the Member for Edmonton-North West for bringing forward this amendment. I'm not saying that there are an incredible number of bad actors when it comes to private postsecondary institutions – there are a lot of them that are doing an incredible job; they're providing opportunities for a lot of people so that they can go back and get an education and then enter the job market, and a lot of them do then provide for their families – but unfortunately there are some bad actors. That's why this amendment is suggesting that sections 15(2) and 15(5) be stricken from the bill, so that instead of this being done in regulation, it'll have to actually come back into legislation so it could actually be discussed inside this House, where we can actually debate these matters before just writing kind of, like, a blank cheque to a lot of these postsecondary institutions so that they can do whatever they like.

Of course, as I was stating, saddling a lot of these students with debt actually adversely impacts a lot of racialized communities here in the province of Alberta. I would beg the members on the other side of the House to give this a second thought, to really consider this amendment, that it really does impact the pocketbook of people who are desperately seeking opportunities to become further educated, too, so that they can supplement their income. At the end of the day, we're trying to make it easier and better for Albertans to be able to access better paying jobs inside of the Alberta job market, so that they can provide for their families, make sure that their children can go to postsecondary educational institutions, which is what a lot of them end up coming to Alberta for. They want to see their children be able to go to postsecondary and be able to get an education so that the whole family can then improve their lot.

With this particular amendment, again I ask the members to please consider it. It's something that should come to the House through legislation rather than just having the minister focus on particular regulations, so that there can be more oversight of these private postsecondary educational institutions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview to join debate.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate on this amendment to Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. Of course, as my colleagues have all shared, it does strike out two sections, the part that gives the minister the authority to just, through his office, through regulations, designate these independent academic institutions or take away that designation, either/or. Both of those pieces in the legislation the amendment wants to strike.

There's a bit of a trend, of course, with this government. The UCP has brought other bills forward giving ministers authority to do things through regulation. That means that they get to do it through a ministerial order, not by bringing it to this Legislature so that all 87 members can have a say, so that it can be a transparent process. We can all, both in opposition, independent, or government members, speak to that. I guess I just ask: why? Why is this needed? Why does it need to be done sort of clandestinely? We know that, as I said, many other pieces of legislation – probably the most egregious one was the health bill during the pandemic. It gave extraordinary powers to the Health minister, and even the UCP could see in time that that had gone too far, and they did introduce

legislation to take that power away. That was an important step back.

But I think that it does erode democracy when these types of bills come forward. We know that a constitutional democracy has checks and balances. Certainly, putting the legislation in front of the members of this Assembly is an important aspect of the oversight. It gives people an opportunity in our province that may have interest in this area to know what we're talking about, and then they can reach out to their MLAs, give them feedback about it. But all of that is being, you know, taken away because it just can be done behind closed doors by a ministerial order.

This amendment, of striking out these two sections, I commend all the members of this Legislature to support because it takes away that undue power. I mean, I think it's much better if that legislation can be brought to the House. Just looking at the way the bill is written now, it's always really important to ask, like: who benefits? Who benefits from legislation? Why is someone bringing this forward? Who is the government wanting to support in this? It's always important to look at, you know, who's going to have a benefit.

Let's just think about that, and I know some of my colleagues have already talked about this. Will students benefit by this, by the creation of an independent academic institution that the minister can just designate? I don't know; we have some pretty significant public institutions in our province. We know private institutions don't have that rigour of public oversight. Why is it that we need private ones?

We know from past experience – DeVry is an example. You know, it closed suddenly. Students were left with a lot of debt. Their courses were – they may have been midstream in their academic career, and all of a sudden the institution that they were meant to complete their degrees in was gone. Besides the other, you know, issues that have been brought up, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie talked about how much newcomers to Canada are impacted by this and perhaps taken advantage of by some of these institutions. So it doesn't sound like students are benefiting.

Would staff benefit from this? I guess they would get a job, but there is that precariousness about whether that institution is solid enough, you know, and if it's a for-profit model. It seems like there are so many factors. And that's what happened with DeVry. They had issues with enrolment in the States, and that impacted some of their – well, I think Calgary was the only one that had a DeVry academic institution, and that closed because of stuff that happened in the States with the markets and that kind. So – I don't know – it makes it pretty precarious for staff as well.

Would the owners of these private institutions benefit? I mean, I guess that's where I'm heading. I'm thinking that's probably why the UCP wants to do this: because they've been in consultation with people who want to start up private academic institutions, so this is kind of reaching out to them for support. You know, they could obviously stand to make a lot of profit from these types of private institutions, so perhaps that's what it's about.

I think the fourth group that I'd ask who benefits would be the community. Do they benefit from this? But, again, if it is a pretty precarious situation, if it's not an institution that's going to stay and support people over time, it probably will take more away than support the community.

This amendment goes a long way to, I think, supporting that not to happen. We want to make sure that we have strong academic institutions that are here for a long time, that are serving the community, the students, and also that the staff have stable jobs in them. I guess I commend all of my colleagues in this House to vote for this amendment so that the minister cannot designate, just by ministerial order, by regulations, the independence of an academic

institution that is degree granting. I just commend everyone to support this amendment.

With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

8:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone else wishing to speak? I see the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak against the amendment that the hon. member opposite has put forward tonight. Independent academic institutions play a very important role in offering choice in postsecondary education to Albertans. You know, a number of the issues that have been raised by the other side I believe are very weak. There's an accreditation process that is required before any postsecondary institutions can ultimately receive the status as an accredited degree-granting postsecondary institution in the province. Moreover, there would be rigorous review before any changes were made by the minister. Again, I believe that it would be in the purview of the Minister of Advanced Education to ensure that there are additional responsible school choice options for postsecondary students in Alberta. That's why we believe this regulation-making authority is important in Bill 10.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Anyone else to add to the debate this evening?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the main bill, Bill 10. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-North has risen.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am honoured to rise to speak to Bill 10. One of the reasons I ran for public office was because I always wanted to see responsible and accountable government, and I think this bill has achieved that objective. Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, will help build fiscal stability, attract investment, support children and families, cut red tape, improve provincial funding mechanisms, and make life more affordable for students. These measures are crucial to Albertans, and they are critical to the well-being of our province. With the implementation of Bill 10, Alberta will be able to safeguard the present and provide security for future generations.

Bill 10 would propose amendments to the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act to legislate a new fiscal framework for Alberta to prosper. The fiscal framework would require all future Alberta governments to balance their annual budgets, with certain exceptions, and use any surpluses – and I emphasize the word “surpluses”; they would have to create surpluses first and then deal with that – to first pay down debt and save for the future before investing in one-time initiatives. It would require a government to use 50 per cent of surplus cash to pay down debt maturing in that fiscal year. The rest would be deposited into the Alberta fund to give the government time to determine how to responsibly use it.

I truly believe that this is the way forward for Alberta and for Albertans. A balanced budget would allow more fiscal stability for our province without adding further burdens to our debt, that taxpayers and future generations of Albertans are forced to pay out. Bill 10 would also require transparency to Albertans. The government would provide a detailed reporting on the use of funds from the Alberta fund. A government that keeps secrets is not a government that works for Albertans. Transparency is an essential component to healthy government-public relationships.

Bill 10 states that money from the Alberta fund can only be used for three purposes: to further pay down debt, to invest in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, or for one-time initiatives that do not permanently increase government spending. Enforcing rules that will be applied pertaining to any government entity is important in ensuring that a government cannot make sweeping changes to Alberta's savings plan and funds. Consistency is the key when it comes to future planning, especially for a growing province such as Alberta.

Mr. Chair, Bill 10 also proposes amendments to streamline the transfer of money from the general revenue fund to the heritage savings trust fund. Currently legislation requires a portion of the heritage fund's net income to be kept in the fund to protect against inflation. Any investment income not used for inflation-proofing of the heritage fund must be transferred to the general revenue fund.

This new legislation would allow the heritage fund to retain all its net income. If we had done this from the very beginning, as stated by a number of members on this side, there would be close to \$300 billion in the trust fund today instead of \$18 billion, that we presently have.

Mr. Chair, I remember that this fund was established in 1976, actually May 19, 1976, under the government of Alberta, and at that time we had Premier Peter Lougheed, who was an inspiration for me to get into politics. So gone by is gone by. We need to protect this fund now. Although we are unable to protect the past, we can look forward to the future and recognize how we can do better and ultimately make better decisions.

Albertans deserve responsible policies that create effective and positive changes. Albertans deserve to feel financially safe and secure for many years to come, and they deserve a government that promotes these values. With all the good that comes with Bill 10, the section pertaining to postsecondary students is particularly important to myself and to my constituents in Calgary-North. Mr. Chair, affordability is a top priority for many Albertans, but affordability for postsecondary is especially important. Reducing financial barriers for students to access postsecondary education is a personal goal of mine but also for this government.

With Bill 10, Alberta's government would implement a 2 per cent cap on tuition increases for domestic students at the institutional level at a public postsecondary institution for 2024-25 and future academic years. A 2 per cent cap would make a significant difference for tuition and tuition increases. Students should not have to feel barred from classes because they cannot afford to attend, especially with consideration of inflation.

Bill 10 would make sure that more students will be able to enter postsecondary institutions, and it will also ensure that they can afford to stay until graduation. It is so important that Albertans have access to postsecondary learning, and I am very proud that Bill 10 effectively addresses this issue.

Lastly, I would like to touch on Bill 10 tackling the financial hurdles of families wanting to adopt in Alberta. Every child deserves a safe and loving environment to grow up in. The process of giving a child a caring home should not be difficult or expensive. With Bill 10, new subsidies, a higher tax credit, and other supports would make adoption more feasible for Albertans.

8:10

Mr. Chair, this bill incorporates aspects from various categories that are incredibly important to our province and to Albertans. Bill 10 will allow Albertans to feel confident in major financial decisions of the government while also building vibrant communities, municipalities, and supporting strong families, students, and individuals. Those are the reasons that I will be

supporting this bill, and I urge members on this side and on that side to please support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Other members wishing to add comments, questions, or amendments? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure, you know, on one of my final occasions, to rise and speak to a bill in this Chamber. It's interesting, the bill that I'm speaking to. Honestly, I appreciate that much of this bill is housekeeping, but there were a couple of numbers where my eyes went over and went back and went over and went back, and I thought: this can't be correct. But here it is, printed in black and white, that the government, this government, that has often decried, when it's been in opposition, previous government spending before an election, including the Premier when she was the leader of the Wildrose Party – I was in this Chamber listening to her decry how outrageous it was that the then Premier, Alison Redford, had spending in her budget ahead of an election.

Mr. Chair, it is absolutely ridiculous, preposterous, absurd that this bill gives this government a \$1.4 billion slush fund ahead of the election. If there is actually a true conservative over there, they should be outraged. Apparently, there aren't; the UCP are a bunch of socialists. What world am I living in? A \$1.4 billion slush fund for one-time infrastructure investments: like, you can't scream "buying votes" more than \$1.4 billion worth of them, one-time investments, before an election.

There are members in this House that served back in 2015 that agreed and voted in favour of legislation that we brought forward which put a buffer zone around the election that prohibited governments from spending ahead of writ drop. Why? Because everybody sees it for what it is: it's buying votes. One of the first acts that this government did under the former Premier Jason Kenney was to undo that legislation, which allows the current government to be able to spend \$1.4 billion in April. That's in addition, Mr. Chair, to the \$3 million of advertising in this bill plus the \$6 million additional advertising fund in the sup supply bill.

This bill is an attack on democracy. If every party doesn't have the same ability to spend that kind of money, the government is essentially bribing Albertans with their own money ahead of the election. It's absolutely ridiculous.

What I like less are conservatives in socialist clothing, which is what this bill is doing. Honestly, Mr. Chair, this goes against every fundamental tenet and pillar of democracy. This was the exact reason that in 2015 the newly formed NDP government brought in election financing as our Bill 1, which banned both corporate and union donations and said that if individual Albertans want to make contributions to political parties, then they should be able to, with a limit on how much they can donate, but we should remove the ability for corporations and unions to be able to donate. And we did.

We did bring in a bill that then ensured that governments couldn't take advantage of tax dollars and their position to be able to make a whole bunch of spending announcements right before the election. Members on the other side that were in this Chamber voted in favour of it. I mean, I can start naming them by constituency, who voted in favour of it. It was essentially every member who is still in this Chamber who was elected in 2015. I don't know if we had unanimous consent, but members agreed that it is undemocratic and unfair to all the other political parties if the government takes advantage of their position of being government and using tax dollars.

The other thing here, Mr. Chair, is that governments should not be allowed to use tax dollars to buy votes on the eve of an election. It's beyond frustrating that the government is doing this. You know what? Honestly, I'm quite surprised that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board actually supports this and has put this bill forward because I believe – and I still want to believe – that he's a man of integrity and that this crosses that line of giving the government the ability to do major announcements, injecting \$1.4 billion, on the eve of an election. It begs the question. The government had four years to be able to make these announcements, to make these investments, so I will struggle to accept the answer that these are critical investments that Alberta needs. Maybe. But then they should have been made six months ago or three years ago, or they should be postponed until after the election, not used as a way to try to curry favour. So that's disappointing.

Like I said, the rest of the bill is mostly housekeeping, which I can support and I appreciate, but this one section, along with an additional \$3 million in advertising – Mr. Chair, political parties during the campaign period can only spend somewhere around \$2 million, so this is giving the government another \$3 million to advertise. You know, I appreciate the argument that the government is currently using on advertising, yet if the government checks what they said in *Hansard* in 2018-19 or in 2014-15 or 2011-12, all of those opposition parties said: well, this is ridiculous. I mean, back in the day Alison Redford spent a few hundred thousand dollars, and the then leader of the Wildrose lost it. I encourage Albertans to check *Hansard* and look at the comments that she made, citing that it is completely undemocratic, that it's buying votes, that it should not be allowed, that it places the government at an unfair advantage, which it does.

I appreciate that the Deputy Premier is trying to signal the chair. I'm talking about Bill 10. I'm giving context to previous opposition parties, which the government was . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** And will be again.

8:20

**Mr. Bilous:** . . . and will be soon, decrying, through the chair, that this was completely undemocratic. And it is.

I mean, I honestly believe that members on the other side of the Chamber in the future will look back and go: yeah, that was completely undemocratic, trying to spend \$1.4 billion in the month preceding the election. It really begs the question: are we still in Alberta? Are we still in a democratic country? Are we still in a democratic place? This type of pre-election spending should not be allowed by any political party. It shouldn't be.

I appreciate that governments have a job to do and that some spending, which is again why I can support the majority of what's in this bill, needs to take place. But a one-time funding announcement of \$1.4 billion: no matter which way you cut it, Albertans will recognize that this is an undemocratic move meant to buy votes.

For that reason, I cannot support this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to speak? The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just want to get up and respond to the hon. member. Firstly, let me say and let it be on the record that I appreciate his concern around fiscal responsibility. That's a concern we both share.

But, Mr. Chair, I struggle to understand the section that he's referring to when he talks about \$1.4 billion in pre-election spending because included in Bill 10 are, in fact, a number of sections related to establishing fiscal rules. These rules, in fact, will provide more structure, not less, more discipline, not less, more

oversight, not less, more transparency, not less than the current financial administration rules, that are in place today. They will not supersede the financial administration rules. They will add to the FAA, the Financial Administration Act, where those rules are found.

Mr. Chair, Bill 10 does not give the government any ability to spend \$1.4 billion ahead of the election. It simply does not. If the member is referring to the Alberta fund and the provisions, the ability, and the very specified narrow uses of the Alberta fund, I want to add some colour because there are three allowable uses . . . [interjection] If the member opposite would listen, he may learn right now.

There are three allowable, eligible uses for funds from the Alberta fund. Number one is to hold the funds for future debt repayment. I think everybody in this House would agree that that's a very legitimate purpose. Number two, funds from the Alberta fund can be transferred to the heritage savings trust fund. It's excellent when we can in fact transfer additional funds to the heritage savings trust fund, and I will add, Mr. Chair, that this year we're sending over an additional \$2 billion. The third eligible use is in fact to use the funds for one-time, non-reoccurring projects. To fund those projects, they have to be one-time, non-reoccurring, and align with government priorities.

But in the absence of an Alberta fund, that ability was always there. The Alberta fund does not create the ability. The Alberta fund creates transparency around the use of those funds. In fact – in fact – any spending from the Alberta fund for one-time expenditures has to be subject to an appropriations bill, an appropriations bill debated right here on the floor of this House. It is required.

We have a budget on the floor right now. [interjection] Again I would ask the member to listen because he has lots to learn here. We have a budget on the floor today. We've gone through the estimates process. We will be, I trust, passing that budget in a transparent way, and that appropriations bill will guide the spending of the government for the upcoming year. Any expenditures from the Alberta fund are subject to that process, Mr. Chair. The Alberta fund adds more structure, more transparency, more discipline, not less.

**The Deputy Chair:** Others wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a privilege to rise this evening. [interjections] I'll just give everyone a moment. Before I begin, I am hoping that as I get into discussion on Bill 10, you will provide some latitude and maybe more latitude than you've ever provided a member before. You know, with this being my last opportunity, very, very likely, this evening to address the House – and I would be happy to make a contribution to a nonprofit charity of your choice, nonpartisan preferably. And for any Albertans who have a private member trying to bribe the chair on their bingo card, you can mark that one off.

But in all seriousness, with this being my last opportunity, very likely, to speak to the Assembly and to speak to Albertans – and I'm usually quite an emotional person, Mr. Chair, so I'm going to do my best here – I just want to take this opportunity, first of all, to recognize my parents, Kimberly and Regan; my amazing sister Mikaelyn, who inspires me every day; my beautiful, patient, brilliant wife, Kailey, and partner, coming up this month, of 15 years – I don't want to get that wrong . . .

**An Hon. Member:** You're not even that old.

**Mr. Carson:** We've been partners for 15, married for far less. . . . our amazing son, Clark, who is about 20 months old now. In addition, you may or may not know, Mr. Chair, that we are

expecting another boy. Now, everything I've done over the last eight years has been for my family, and I hope that I have made all of them as proud as they have made me.

Mr. Chair, it's not lost on me, the privilege that it is to stand in this Assembly. As I've said before, my mother was 14 years old when I was born and raised me as a single mother for many years. There is no way that I could repay her for what she has sacrificed to provide for me.

But every day as an MLA I think about the many Albertans who find themselves in situations where they need support. Now, my role as an MLA has always been about giving back to the province and my community, that helped me in so many ways from childhood on, and I believe it's my job to leave the ladder down, so to say, not pull it up behind me.

You know, going to Britannia junior high, followed by Jasper Place high school, finally NAIT: there are so many educators that have helped and inspired me along the way. To the health care providers at our local hospitals, like the Misericordia, to the health care aides that provide support to seniors throughout our communities, to the thousands of volunteers of nonprofits who support a variety of important initiatives across the province: thank you from the bottom of my heart. I know that goes the same for all members of this Assembly.

Now, I could not ever have imagined to find myself on this journey. There are so many people to thank. Again, I appreciate your indulgence, Mr. Chair, I really do. The many volunteers and caucus staff that have helped over so many years, personally Sabine and Phil in my office, who work on behalf of so many constituents, as well as the many CAs that have supported me and my office over the years: I am forever in debt for your support.

I'm very close, Mr. Chair. I promise.

The MLAs that have served with me over the last four to eight years: there is nothing that I could say to properly portray how important your voices and your friendships mean to me. You know, you truly are my family. Each and every day I see them breaking down doors and smashing glass ceilings for those who will follow.

Finally, to the sheriffs and Legislative Assembly security that protect our democracy every day, to the pages who provide support to our members, to the table officers, and other support staff here in the House: thank you for everything over the last eight years.

You know, Mr. Chair, our democracy is a beautiful and imperfect system. We must do everything in our power to strengthen and protect it. That includes finding ways to make it more equal, to give voice to the voiceless, and to inspire others. This has been the honour of a lifetime, and I will do everything in my power to repay my community, which has provided so much to me for so many years.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

8:30

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I just want to say: good for you on getting the years together right, because it's in the public record for time eternal. Good for you. Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, we're ready for the question. You didn't give me enough time to practise in Committee of the Whole last night, so bear with me.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Chair, I move that the committee rise and report bills 9 and 10 and report progress on bills 11 and 12.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**Mr. Turton:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 9, Bill 10. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 11, Bill 12. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? Carried.

**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**  
**Bill 8**  
**Alberta Firearms Act**

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Justice and move third reading of Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act.

We introduce this legislation to clarify and protect the province’s role in regulating firearms and to advocate for lawful firearm owners. The Alberta Firearms Act will put the interests of law-abiding firearms owners first. It accomplishes three main goals: one, it supports the firearms community in the face of Ottawa’s attacks on lawful firearm owners; it reduces confusion and increases accountability regarding the Chief Firearms Officer’s role; and, three, it creates tools that enable Alberta to protect its jurisdiction over firearms. Mr. Speaker, with over 340,000 licensed firearm owners in the province, with over 680 firearm-related businesses the firearms community is an essential part to the Alberta culture and heritage in this province.

The suggestion that this legislation is unnecessary or creates a less safe environment for Albertans is patently false, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Firearms Act enables Alberta to protect its jurisdiction over firearms and raises awareness of the work of the Chief Firearms Officer, who, I must recognize, has done a fantastic job in a very short amount of time since her appointment. She has tirelessly reached out to the public across this province, including the Alberta firearms community, in helping to educate Albertans about the importance of safe, lawful firearm use.

By passing Bill 8, the Alberta Firearms Act will ensure that the important work can continue. The Alberta Firearms Act will strengthen Alberta’s ability to regulate, administer, and advocate on behalf of firearm owners. The act will clarify the role of the Chief Firearms Officer within the provincial legislation to provide the CFO with a stronger, clearer role and require the CFO to issue an annual report in order to enhance public accountability.

Upon its passage the Alberta Firearms Act will be the most comprehensive provincial firearms framework in the country. As the Minister of Justice has said, by establishing in legislation the role of Alberta’s Chief Firearms Officer, this legislation will elevate the responsibilities and legal mandate of the office to the fullest

extent of the law. Alberta stands unequivocally with hunters, farmers, sport shooters, and the Indigenous peoples, all of whom understand the importance of responsible firearm ownership and its part in Alberta’s heritage and culture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move third reading of the Alberta Firearms Act.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there members wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 8?

Seeing none, I look to the minister to close debate.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Waived.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:37 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Madu	Smith, Mark
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nally	Stephan
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Guthrie	Orr	Turton
Hanson	Rosin	van Dijken
Horner	Rowswell	Walker
Jones	Rutherford	Wilson
LaGrange	Sawhney	Yao
Long	Sigurdson, R.J.	Yaseen
Lovely		

Against the motion:

Carson	Sabir	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen	Schmidt	Sweet
Feehan		

Totals: For – 28 Against – 7

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

**Bill 9**  
**Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023**

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

Bill 9 continues this government’s efforts to eliminate red tape for Albertans and Alberta businesses. It marks another step toward our goal of reducing red tape by one-third by the end of 2023. Since 2019 we’ve eliminated thousands of burdensome regulatory requirements. We’ve streamlined processes and procedures to make life easier for Albertans, and we’ve also reduced costly and unnecessary administration. Mr. Speaker, the changes we’ve made through our six previous red tape reduction bills have helped make Alberta one of the most business-friendly environments in all of North America, and job creators are taking notice of our efforts to make it easier to invest and do business here. We’ve sped up approvals and enabled the use of digital communications for organizations. We’ve maintained important protections for Albertans’ health and safety as well as the environment, and we’ve created opportunities for businesses to expand and grow.

Mr. Speaker, by eliminating unnecessary red tape, we also continue to improve the way we deliver services to Albertans and

make their lives easier, and we've done it all by listening to Albertans who best understand the challenges that red tape presents. Hundreds of Albertans have shared their red tape reduction ideas on our cut red tape website, and through nine separate industry panels we've listened carefully to the recommendations of experts in our key industries. Their comments and participation have guided us in prioritizing initiatives that have the most impact on the ground, and we continue to see this reflected in Bill 9.

Bill 9 is the seventh red tape reduction bill the government has brought forward and includes 14 sets of amendments across nine government ministries that will save Albertans, businesses, and government time as well as money. Many of these common-sense changes respond directly to input from Albertans and Alberta businesses and will lead to more outcome-based regulation, greater legislative clarity, and improved service delivery through digital solutions while supporting economic growth and job creation and improving the way we deliver services to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, our government made a commitment to make life easier for Albertans and Alberta businesses by reducing unnecessary red tape. With Bill 9 we're doing just that. This is further action we're taking as a national leader in cutting red tape for job creators, taxpayers, and families.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I'd like to thank all members for the thoughtful discussion that's taken place about this bill. I will continue to bring forward legislation that reduces and eliminates unnecessary red tape.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. the minister of red tape reduction has moved Bill 9, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, for third reading. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on the bill that we're considering here this evening for third reading, specifically Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. This is the latest in a series of red tape reduction bills that the government has brought forward that have varied from the completely meaningless and empty to downright cruel, and we have examples of both of them here in this piece of legislation.

Now, when the minister got up to introduce this bill here just a few minutes ago, you know, he talked about the thousands and thousands of pieces of red tape that this government is alleged to have reduced. It's quite the easiest thing in the world to do, Mr. Speaker. You make up a target, a completely fictional number, and then you say, "Well, we'll reduce that completely fictional number by one-third," and then, oh, all of a sudden: it's four years later; we've magically hit our target that we made up from the very beginning. It's quite the easiest thing to do. It's like playing darts, and then once the darts have hit the board, you go walk up to the wall and draw the circle wherever the dart has landed. It's an incredible trick that the government has played here on itself, thinking that it has reduced red tape by a third, because it's a completely meaningless number.

How do we know this is meaningless, Mr. Speaker? Well, I've had the privilege to sit on the Public Accounts Committee for the last couple of years, and every annual report from every department has one brief section on the so-called red tape that they've reduced, and they say: well, when our bean-counters went through the department, we found 10,478 pieces of red tape that exist in the department, and we reduced 2,949 of those. They give themselves

a big pat on the back, and then the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain asks the deputy minister to go into more detail about the alleged red tape that they've reduced, and then they go back and forth and talk about how good a job they've done. Meanwhile they don't get into any of the real issues that have cropped up in that department every year. It's a mutual appreciation moment of public accounts.

Our members on Public Accounts have started challenging the departments to release the lists of the alleged thousands of pieces of red tape that they claim to have reduced in their annual reports. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? They failed to produce a list at all. So I think the reasonable Albertan would suspect when the minister of red tape reduction makes these claims about thousands of pieces of red tape that his government has allegedly eliminated over the past four years. If his department can't produce a comprehensive list of those things, then I think that the average Albertan has the complete right to be skeptical that any meaningful red tape has been reduced whatsoever.

9:00

I look forward to being proven wrong, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the minister could make a call to the departments that have allegedly reduced red tape and get these lists, that our members have been asking for in Public Accounts for the last few months, and table them here in the Legislature. I think that would be an illuminating exercise for all of us, to go through each department and see exactly how many thousands of pieces of red tape they claimed to have eliminated and what those are and a detailed explanation as to how the lives of Albertans have been improved by the elimination of each of those pieces of red tape. That would be, I think, a tremendous service that I'm sure the minister is no doubt willing to do to justify his claim that his government has reduced thousands and thousands of pieces of red tape.

Mr. Speaker, these red tape reduction bills would normally just be a minor irritation, like I said, just this government creating a fictional target for itself and then claiming that they've achieved it four years later and giving themselves pats on the back if it weren't for the sections of this bill that actually hurt people. I'm specifically referring to the changes made in this piece of legislation around the WCB.

Now, I'm very encouraged, Mr. Speaker, that the Workers' Compensation Act is being amended so that the latency periods for firefighters who were in the Fort Mac fire from May 1, 2016, to June 1, 2016, are being removed. I think it's only fair that people who were exposed to more than a lifetime's worth of carcinogens in the matter of a few hours and who have subsequently developed cancer in the process of saving the thousands of people who live in and whose livelihoods depend on Fort McMurray, that those people be treated fairly, that we look after them because they did so much to look after us.

Upon review of this bill, our caucus identified the fact that these changes only apply on a go-forward basis and that anybody who has already applied to the WCB for compensation and who has either not made it yet through the system or who has been denied compensation won't be covered under this piece of legislation. That's incredibly heartless and cruel to those members of the firefighting community who gave their all to save a significant portion of this province from disaster and are now suffering the personal health consequences of their bravery, and the government is telling them: too bad; there's nothing we can do.

You know, I want to thank my friend the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for continuing to raise this issue in question period day after day. When she raised this issue in question period the first time, I remember the Premier quite clearly saying: oh, we'll take a



look at the amendment that the member was going to bring forward, and the minister will have more to say on that once we've had a chance to review it. Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, before we got out of question period, the minister had already decided that, no, he wasn't going to entertain these changes. So any hopes that somebody who might be covered by this amendment might finally be eligible for WCB coverage for injuries, disabilities, health conditions that they've suffered or developed because of their work to fight the Fort McMurray fire were dashed within an hour of my friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods asking the question.

My friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods, I think, in her generous spirit, thought that the minister didn't realize exactly what he was saying no to, so she gave him a second chance, asked him again whether or not he would consider this amendment, and he flat out refused. In fact, Mr. Speaker, he gave an answer so bad that he was not allowed to answer any further questions on the matter here in question period. Instead, the member from Fort McMurray started answering the questions from my friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods on his behalf.

At that point I thought: well, finally, we're making some progress. Surely, the member from Fort McMurray wouldn't deny his own friends and neighbours and constituents who bravely fought this fire and are now suffering the personal health consequences, surely he wouldn't be so cruel and heartless as to deny them access to WCB by allowing this amendment.

Imagine my shock and surprise when, in fact, that's exactly what he stood up and did over and over and over again. He did it again today, this afternoon in question period, and then later this afternoon all members of the government voted against the amendment that our party brought forward that would finally give these heroes a chance to be covered by WCB when they've previously been denied the coverage that they're properly owed.

We haven't heard anything resembling a reasonable argument as to why this amendment couldn't have been adopted. At first, they said that it wasn't possible, that it was legally impossible to look back, to create these kinds of look-back clauses in the legislation. Well, that turned out not to be true, because just a few days after they floated that excuse, the Conservative government in Ontario amended their workers' compensation legislation to allow similar people to have retroactive coverage all the way back to 1960. So there went that excuse.

Then they were all out of excuses, Mr. Speaker, so they just started to throw metaphorical dirt in our eyes, said: well, you had four years to change the system; why didn't you do it? Well, we made significant changes to the WCB system that significantly improved the way that it treats injured workers.

I know for a fact that the number of calls and e-mails to my office from people who are upset about how the WCB has been treating them plummeted after the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods made significant changes to the operations of the WCB through a number of pieces of legislation that she brought forward here, and I commended her for her work. All Albertans who have been through that system should commend her for her work in improving a system that was really not well suited to treating injured employees fairly. She made significant advances on that front.

But nobody gets everything right all the time. This is something that needed to be addressed – can still be addressed – and the government, when it says, “Oh, you could've done something but you didn't do it when you had the chance,” is tacitly admitting that it is a mistake. But instead of owning up to it and just accepting the amendment, they want to pitch a fit, point their fingers at the NDP, blame us for not doing what we should have known needed to be done four years in advance, and then they refuse to do the thing that

needs to be done. Mr. Speaker, it's completely unfair. I don't know why the government would be so stone-hearted on this matter.

**9:10**

By his own admission, the member from Fort McMurray says that the number of people who would be impacted by this change is very small. I don't know the exact numbers. I'm sure the minister could provide them if he were so inclined. That makes it even more galling to know that they refuse to adopt this amendment that my friend brought forward, because an effect to the overall WCB system would be so minor as to not be noticed, but that would be life-changing to those people who would be covered under WCB who right now are being denied. Absolutely life-changing and validating.

Those people know that the injuries and health effects that they suffered were a direct cause of the Fort McMurray fire, but the processes that they're going through with the WCB, or that they've gone through, have told them that, no, on paper it isn't. We owe them not only the financial compensation that they deserve for the health effects that they suffered saving this province, but we also owe them the validation that will come from having the WCB tell them that what they're going through is a direct result of their heroic actions in the Fort McMurray fire.

It floors me that these members opposite are so stone-hearted that they refuse to take action on this. I know that firefighters won't forget. Certainly, the firefighters who laid their lives on the line in Fort McMurray won't forget. I know that in spite of the way that this government has treated them, should Albertans ever find themselves in need of their services, they will go and risk their lives again without question. It would only be nice if the government would return the favour of service and treat them with the dignity and respect and the sense of care that they treated us with. But I guess under this UCP government that's only a one-way street. These are people who are only interested in taking from others and not giving back. It's a real shame.

I'm glad that I don't have to live with this on my conscience. I'm glad that my friends here in the NDP opposition are on the right side of history. I suspect that there are 60 or so members who will live to regret this day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I dive into the debate at hand on Bill 9, I hope you'll allow me some latitude for a few parting comments in what could be my last time to rise in this Chamber. Firstly, as a proud born-and-raised Albertan it has indeed been an honour and privilege to serve the 48,000-plus constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek, my hometown of Calgary, and people across this province. As MLA 900 – and some of my colleagues will know that my Chinese friends would like me to have number 888, but that happens to be the privilege of the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, so kudos to him – I'm reminded of the small number of Albertans who can claim to have enjoyed this rare opportunity for and privilege of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I came into this Chamber with a commitment to principled behaviour, ethics, integrity, and fairness, and I am proud to say that I am leaving it with those commitments intact. And trust me; it has not always been easy. But rest assured that I'm not about to break into song with my own version of Frank Sinatra's *My Way*. I'll spare you that tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work that I've been able to do in aviation, housing, seniors' care, and cross-border relations and will

take those accomplishments and the friends that I've made through those sectors with me in private life outside of this Chamber. But this is really, most importantly, my last chance to thank so many people who have allowed me this privilege, and I apologize in advance in knowing that I will forget many more inside and outside of this building.

Firstly, I would like to thank my wife, Cathy for enduring love, support, hard work and encouragement, patience and guidance in the almost eight-year journey of serving family, friends, neighbours, and constituents in our roles as candidate, MLA, and partner. All of you know that when we sign up, they sign up, and it's not always an easy role, with politics often creating unimaginable challenges in our relationships and in our lives. Special thanks to my now adult children, Jordan, Justin, and Georgia, who have also supported me in so many ways with their love, encouragement, and hard work, learning about the world of politics from the inside and often engaging lifelong friends in the cause and being understanding when duty called and being understanding and knowing that I would rather have been by their sides.

Mr. Speaker, knowing that they are always watching reminds us all to lead by example and to make sure that they're proud of us, of what we do, and when we do it. And kudos to the extended families we have all enjoyed that are vital to our roles, be it parents, siblings, or just those people in the community that adopt us as we adopt them as members of our political family or, further, as a part of a passionate and dedicated team off and on the doors. To them a huge and heartfelt thank you, which brings me broadly to my incredible volunteers and the people that show up so selflessly to give of their time, energy, passion, and commitment to democracy. That is what makes so much of this all worth while in this Chamber. I thank them for the thousands of hours of commitment in supporting me and my family during campaigns and throughout the year and providing open, honest, and frank feedback to me and, through me, to my party and our government. They indeed make us better and remind us of why we are all here.

And not to be forgotten, Mr. Speaker, the dedicated staff we have the privilege of working with in these hallowed halls each and every day, ministry and caucus staff, and the many young, smart, and ambitious legislative co-ordinators I've had the privilege of mentoring over the years – I have to admit I've kind of lost count, but they know who they are, and they know how much I've appreciated them – the incredible people in the Speaker's office, not the least, Mr. Speaker, of course, is yourself, and more broadly across the LAO in administration, finance, HR, IT, and security roles, not to mention our delightful pages. Thank you, all, for making our world easier and brighter each and every day and for keeping us grounded by reminding us who we serve: you and millions of other Albertans outside of this building.

Lastly, I would like to thank my legislative colleagues on both sides of the aisle for challenging each and every one of us to keep an open mind, look at things through a broader lens, to embrace good ideas wherever they may come from, and to bring intelligence, honour, humility, and integrity to this Chamber each and every day as we all stand committed to serving Albertans. Yes, we may disagree, and many have strived to do so without being disagreeable – sometimes that doesn't always work – but I have to believe and remind myself that each and every person in these 87 seats of honour and representation believe that they're doing what's best for Albertans. And, Mr. Speaker, what's wrong with a little healthy debate and banter on how best to get there?

Mr. Speaker, in my last few hours in this place of tradition, where we collectively build a bright future for all Albertans, I would implore each and every one of us to do the best that we can to lead

by example, to bring out our best so that we can do our best for Albertans, to reflect on how we can co-operate and collaborate and occasionally compromise for the betterment of all, and to do what we can to bring people together versus fanning the winds of anger, polarization, and division, as there is no doubt in my mind that we can all be better, do better, and deliver our best each and every day to the people that we serve.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this privilege, for the latitude in being able to share my thoughts today, for your patience, and Godspeed to us all. Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**9:20**

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to express my strong support for Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. If passed, this piece of legislation will not only be a testament to this government's commitment to serving the people of this province but also a clear demonstration of its dedication to reducing red tape for Albertans. Bill 9 will address a wide range of concerns identified by Albertans through consultation, from protecting our bee populations to improving municipal taxpayers' rights.

However, what stands out for me as both a representative for Calgary-Fish Creek, a resident of Calgary, is the crucial role that it will play in ensuring public safety through reducing the risk posed by violent offenders. Anybody that knows me well will know I'm a bit of a tough-on-crime guy. I believe in safe communities, I believe in deterrence, and I believe that we need to move forward in ways that will achieve that.

As a resident of Calgary I, as many other Albertans, know first-hand how the federal Liberal government's failed bail polices have led to a growing public disorder and an increasing threat to the safety of our communities and, in particular, to our major cities. That is why I'm proud to see that this government has been tirelessly working to protect Albertans from these dangers. The proposed amendments to the Income and Employment Supports Act included in Bill 9 are a prime example of its commitment to this goal.

Under this bill individuals with outstanding warrants for violent offences will be subject to the suspension of provincial income supports. It sounds pretty simple. While this may seem like a small and straightforward action, it is, in fact, a crucial step that will ensure our tax dollars are not going towards supporting known violent offenders who are actively avoiding justice. Mr. Speaker, I am certain that yourself and many others in this House will agree with me when I say that Albertans should not have to foot the bill for violent offenders avoiding arrest.

The thought that law-abiding citizens in this province should be forced to pay for financial assistance going to individuals who have committed violent offences and are actively evading the law is not only an insult to our taxpayers but also a blatant acceptance of grave danger towards our communities. We will not accept that, Mr. Speaker. By passing Bill 9, this government will be taking a decisive step towards protecting Albertans from violent offenders while improving public safety.

The proposed amendments to the Income and Employment Supports Act included in this bill reflect a necessary and common-sense step in achieving this goal. By targeting violent offenders who decide to evade capture, Bill 9 demonstrates this government's resolve towards tackling social disorder while maintaining a humane approach to doing so.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear in my emphasis on the considered approach that this bill will take in its amendments. While targeting the violent offenders themselves, the amendments will ensure that dependants and families, often victims themselves of wanted violent offenders, continue receiving the government support that

they need. Additionally, we are not targeting nonviolent offenders as there's an understanding that, for some, these supports are critical for them, their dependants, and to continue living healthily and safely and to recover from other issues that they may be facing.

This bill is not just about being tough on crime for the sake of it. It is about protecting our citizens and ensuring that our communities are safe and secure. This by no stretch is a new concept, with adoption of similar policies in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, but without doubt it is a necessary and overdue one. In addition, Bill 9 will act to reduce risk to our law enforcement personnel, near and dear to our hearts due to recent events, in serving risky, costly, time-consuming search warrants for violent offenders. I am confident in the fact that as of the last few weeks the dangers posed to our community law enforcement officers is something at the front of everybody's minds, all Albertans, and in our hearts, indeed.

By cutting wanted violent offenders off from government funds, we may be able to force them to turn themselves in and surrender peacefully rather than continuing to avoid justice through means that put them and the general public at risk. By supporting them, we possibly support them reoffending in the community. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be supporting this bill and encourage everyone in this House to do so as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his service to the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and Official Opposition deputy House leader.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I rise to speak to Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023. Given that today is water day, I'm going to focus on the changes that are being made to the Irrigation Districts Act, and then I'm going to move into talking a little bit about the changes that were also made to the Municipal Government Act. Again, I think, you know, as the minister indicated when he moved third reading of this piece of legislation, that this is now the ninth bill that the government has introduced. As a member of the opposition I know we have repeatedly stood up and spoken to the fact that some of the changes that continuously keep being made throughout these different pieces of legislation are at some point going to create problems down the line as they do start to impact other pieces. I'll get to that in a minute.

First, I just want to talk about the changes that are being made to the Irrigation Districts Act. Obviously, there are no concerns in relation to the act or this specific change, as the Irrigation Districts Act basically disenables all 13 irrigation districts in Alberta and removes the reference to the Taber irrigation district, as it's been amalgamated with others, and obviously clarifies ways waters may be misused, and therefore a delivery of water can also at some times be stopped if it's determined that it's being misused.

Part of the concern that I have around and the part that I want to discuss specific to irrigation is that we've heard repeatedly from the government about the substantial investment that's being made in these specific irrigation districts. I don't disagree that those investments are important to the economic opportunity that will be created in those communities, the opportunities to look at specialized crops and supporting, obviously, some of the issues that have come up through our drought that has happened over the last couple of years. But the one thing that I did want to flag – and I've spoken to the minister about this and was hoping to also flag it with the Minister of Finance – is that we know that when this money was initially promised by the federal government in partnership with the

provincial government and in partnership with the irrigation districts, it was promised a couple of years ago.

These projects have been under planning, have been, you know, looking at putting shovels in the ground. All of that is great work, but the issue that has arisen out of that, that we all are aware of, is that there have been substantial inflationary costs that have been attached to many of these projects. In fact, if you speak to different members of the irrigation districts, part of the other issue is the fact that they can't even get the pipe that they need at this point because of the issues that we're seeing through the supply chain. The direct issue that's going to happen with that is that although these projects are important and we need to be supporting them, there needs to be a recognition by all levels of government that there is going to be a substantial financial increase due to those inflationary costs. I've spoken to some of the districts that are saying that at this point, even though they still don't even have the pipe, they're estimating it's going to be an additional 30 per cent increase on the overall cost of the project.

The concern with that is: where will that money come from? We know that because of the way that the project is being funded and the fact that it is split between the different partnerships, there is a responsibility for each level to contribute to those costs. As we were just debating some other financial bills, there needs to be a recognition that in the next couple of years these projects are going to actually require more financial assistance. If the federal government decides that they're going to be willing to increase their funding contribution, I think that's great.

I think the province also needs to be looking at those projects and determining what their roles and responsibilities are going to be in relation to making sure that those are still financially viable and then, of course, talking with those irrigation districts and consulting to make sure that they're aware that there continue to be some financial costs that are going to increase over time. I know they're aware because they're the ones that are able to tell me that as of today it's potentially 30 per cent more than what was initially estimated. That will, over the 13 different districts and the potential new projects that are being evaluated at this time, have a significant financial cost to the provincial budget and also could potentially delay the ability of these irrigation districts to be able to expand and build.

I just wanted to make sure that that is still something that is live and aware to all members of the government side. It's one thing to talk about the investment, but there also needs to just be an acknowledgement that now the actual investment that is coming forward, the dollars that have been promised are actually going to be short, and it will ultimately impact. There needs to be a conversation and an adjustment made to address that component.

9:30

The other changes that are being made to the act, I think, around the electronic notices, the increase to the appointments to irrigation councils from seven to nine: I mean, that's housekeeping, and that makes sense. Other than that, there really aren't any other substantial changes. You know, I don't particularly have a problem with that.

Now, the other part and going back to my comments when I first started speaking, about the minister speaking about how many of these red tape reduction bills the government has had and the fact that, you know, as opposition we keep continuously flagging that when you change one section of an act, it sometimes will impact other sections of an act: we've had this conversation repeatedly. We now see in this piece of legislation that the MGA, or the Municipal Government Act, is being changed again. What happened, just to walk us down memory lane, was that in 2022 we had a previous red

tape reduction act, and that act actually made it so that municipalities were not able to add additional charges onto property taxes if the property was considered to be unsightly or the property was considered dangerous or there was a deterioration of that property.

Obviously, going back to, you know, conversations around abandoned wells and cleanup and the importance of all of that, municipalities also need to ensure that their properties that are existing within their municipalities are kept to a place where they are not considered a safety risk. Their mechanism to be able to do that was to ensure that they were able to go to property owners and say: we're going to charge you an additional fee on your property taxes unless you clean this up. Well, that was removed in the red tape reduction act of 2022. Who would have thought, Mr. Speaker? I mean, I think the opposition flagging that this was going to be an issue would've been enough to consider that maybe the government shouldn't have done it, but it went ahead. Now we see in this piece of legislation: oops, government made a mistake. We now have to change it again to ensure that municipalities have the mechanisms that they need to make properties safe and be able to have financial penalties for those property owners who are not taking care of their land. I hate to say, "I told you so," but, like, this was one of those things where we said, "You probably shouldn't do it," but it happened anyway.

Again, I think, you know, as much as the government likes to continuously talk about how great these red tape reduction acts are, we continuously – and we've had this conversation on the last debate, on the last red tape bill about the fact that every single time there's one of these bills introduced, it makes a change somewhere, and then we have to see the government coming back and having to do another amendment to the exact same section because they mess it up. This is the problem when you do these big pieces of legislation that impact different statutes through a variety of different pieces of legislation that don't connect. The government, when they do these things, misses the big piece of the legislation, looks at only one piece of the section, and it ends up impacting a variety of other sections. That's a problem because we can't continuously keep coming back into the House, although the government likes to do that, and keep fixing the same mistakes over and over again because the government isn't taking the time to actually review the pieces of legislation and the statutes the way that they should be.

Again, I mean, I'm glad to see that the government fixed the mistake, but it really shouldn't have been an error to begin with. It should have been something where, you know, when it's being brought up by the opposition and recognized that this is probably going to be an issue, it is acknowledged that the mistake is being made.

I think, you know, that brings me to what my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar was speaking about in relation to: the opposition has tried to be helpful in relation to Bill 9. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has identified the fact that there is a piece of the legislation in relation to workers' compensation where there is a gap missing in the way that we support our firefighters and specifically the firefighters in Fort McMurray and is trying to be working in collaboration with the government to say: "Since you are doing this, why don't you fix this section? Make it retroactive. Do the right thing, and make sure that the presumptive cancer coverage is there. The section is already open. This one little piece was missing. Put it in, get it done, and just move on."

Instead, this government is so adamant about not taking any type of suggestion from the opposition that it's almost like it's become so that even if it's a good idea, it's still a bad idea because the opposition brought it up. I think that in relation to something like this, it's a bad idea to use this just to be stubborn, would be my

summary of that. I feel like the government has chosen to be stubborn on it just out of the fact that it's because it's the opposition. Had a member on their side of the House, maybe, flagged this and said, "Uh-oh, this is a problem; why don't we do this?" the government may have been more willing to do it. I think that that's a disservice to Albertans.

You know, I've been listening this evening to the hon. members who are retiring and the great speeches that they've given us this evening in relation to the responsibilities that we have in this House as elected officials. We don't always have to agree. It's clear that we have fundamental differences in how we view things, yet there are opportunities for us to work in collaboration and work together to the betterment of Albertans. I believe that the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and the amendment that was brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods are an opportunity to demonstrate to Albertans that we have the ability to do that. We can get past the partisanship and just do something that is in the good and in the proper way to support the people of this province.

So I'm disappointed that we're at third reading and that we're still having to debate this issue that clearly has been able to be demonstrated across the country. We have other jurisdictions that have been able to adapt and been able to find a legislative mechanism to be able to provide the back pay and expand on the presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters. It can be done, so I don't understand why, while the section is already open and we are already debating it in this Legislature, the government wouldn't just take the opportunity to do it. It's easy. It was already done. The opposition did all the work. The government just needed to say: hmm, sounds good to me; let's get 'er done.

Again, I would caution the government around the use of these red tape reduction bills. I think the hon. minister said this is number nine. I feel like we've done this nine times, and nine times we've learned that every time this happens, something doesn't work, and there's always a mistake somewhere that then needs to be fixed in the next red tape reduction bill. Although the government will be, like, "We got a gold star from an organization about how great we are on red tape reduction," the problem is that every time there's a red tape reduction, they have to come back and undo the red tape reduction because it actually creates problems in relation to other pieces, so it doesn't work.

I would encourage the government to slow down, to take the time to do the proper analysis, and to really look at the legislation that they are amending and make sure that the changes that are happening make sense and – let's be fair – consult with the organizations, whether it's municipalities, whether it's firefighters, whether it's around agriculture. Whatever organizations are impacted by the changes that are going to be made, make sure you ask the question about whether or not it actually is going to do what the government thinks it does because, clearly, there are pieces missing, and there continue to be pieces missing. I am sure that if we come back to this place and we have to do another one of these acts, we're going to be fixing another section that we're talking about this evening.

Again, I just would like to encourage the government to slow down and reconsider their direction.

**The Speaker:** Members, are there others? The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues on this side of the House have spoken to a number of issues relating to this particular bill. I would like to address another one that is of concern.

Now, I understand that the members opposite are tough on crime.

9:40

**Mr. Bilous:** They say they're tough on crime.

**Member Loyola:** Good point. They say they're tough on crime. But my particular concern has to do with their proposing to cut anyone with an outstanding warrant off income support. Of course, when you read the actual bill, it says:

- 15.1 The Director must, subject to the regulations, refuse to provide income support and benefits to an applicant or recipient under Part 2, Division 1 when notified that
- (a) a warrant for the arrest of the applicant or recipient has been issued in respect of a prescribed offence, and
  - (b) the warrant has not been executed.

Now, I understand that members on the other side of the House are selling this particular portion of the bill as for people who have committed violent crimes, but nowhere is that specified in the bill. When you do a crossjurisdictional, there are other jurisdictions that have specifically focused on people who have committed violent crimes and cutting them off any kind of government support. But in this particular bill we don't see that. Then what's the concern, Mr. Speaker? It's that a person could have a warrant out for their arrest for jaywalking, as far as we know, which, of course, is not a violent crime. They jaywalked.

Also a concern that I have with this is that there are many people on the streets of Edmonton and other municipalities across the province who have an issue with addiction. As we all know, addiction and having a drug problem is related to prior trauma that that person has experienced in their life. Now, I understand, as the Member for Edmonton-Manning was saying, there are things that we fundamentally disagree on in this House. When it comes to the issue of addiction and those who have made bad decisions in their life, and I'm not saying that – you know what, Mr. Speaker? I always tell my sons this. I have two beautiful sons, 14 and 18. I always tell them: we're all one bad decision away from our life spiralling down to a point where we could be in a very serious predicament, and we could be facing a dire situation; we're all that one bad decision away. For me, an Albertan who makes a bad decision and has an issue with addiction because of the past trauma that they've had in their life needs our help. An individual like this could be one that has a warrant out for their arrest.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's come to my attention – and I'll take this opportunity to wish all my Muslim brothers and sisters in the province of Alberta, across Canada and the world Ramadan Mubarak, Ramadan Kareem. May Allah grant them many blessings and continue to encourage them to do their good deeds, to continue doing good here in the province of Alberta and contribute to our beautiful province. May they be blessed always.

It has come to my attention, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, we have Muslim brothers and, I assume, sisters as well who are incarcerated both at a federal level and at a provincial level. To me, I think about this, and I say to myself: okay; my Muslim brother who is incarcerated isn't any less Muslim and isn't any less human; my brother or my sister in that kind of predicament, in that situation made a mistake. Now, we're all trying to do our best to live our best lives. It came to my attention that Muslim brothers and sisters in the corrections facilities are not allowed to have a prayer rug, and they're not allowed to have a tasbeeh, prayer beads. I can understand why. I can understand, like, why there would be a situation with this. But then what I found also really disheartening is the fact that Muslim brothers and, I assume, sisters who are incarcerated, because of the not enough space and correctional officers to inmates, can only pray their jum'ah prayer every four or five weeks.

Now, I get it; they're being incarcerated. Someone on the other side might say: "Well, you know what? They don't have the right

to do so." But, again, I would say to them, "It doesn't make them any less Muslim, and it doesn't make them less human." We should be inspiring and encouraging people to make the right decisions and, if they are in a correctional institution, to better their lives, eventually rehabilitate, get out of there, come back out into society, and be contributing members to this society. Help them get back on track.

So my concern with this particular piece of the legislation is that we could be having a very adverse effect on individuals within our society who, again, may have a warrant out for their arrest for something that is not a violent crime because it's not stipulated in the legislation, as I mentioned. It is stipulated in other pieces of legislation across Canada. When you look at the crossjurisdictional, there are other pieces of legislation that do have this, but they specifically focus on people who have committed a violent crime.

I think that there are a lot of factors that members on the other side of the House have actually let themselves get a little bit carried away with when it comes to this piece of legislation. I understand that they want to be tough on crime, but there are individuals that could be caught in this that it may not warrant them being treated in this particular way.

Of course, we have to remember that those individuals are also fathers, are also mothers, we could be adversely impacting the children that are part of that household. I would ask the members to please consider that. Let's get this piece of legislation right. If other jurisdictions across Canada have actually focused on violent offenders and that's what the members on the other side of the House want to do, then do that. But don't leave it so open that individuals in our society who are having a tough time, who perhaps are addicted to substance abuse because of past trauma, are being caught and trapped in this dire situation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore has the call.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a privilege to rise, and for me, I just wanted to say that particularly with red tape reduction I want to thank all my colleagues as well. There's so much that goes into this kind of legislation and so much work and consultation that happens in order to make sure that the legislation that gets passed in here is actually helping and contributes to how business moves forward in this province.

I really appreciate my colleague who just stood up to talk about addiction and mental health, and we all know how difficult legislation is going into these pieces, and how we work with that is very, very hard. I appreciated what he was saying, but I don't think that this legislation is going to cause folks to be arrested for the wrong reasons. In my opinion, I think that that might be a bit misleading, but I certainly appreciate the conversation.

If you permit me, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to speak since this will also be my last day in the Legislature. I wanted to say what an honour it's been to be part of this institution, and it's been one of the biggest privileges of my life. I'm honoured to have served with each and every one of you in this Legislature, and from security to the folks in *Hansard* that are sometimes in this with us – I think, what was our longest day? Was it 82 hours, 84 hours? I can't remember – and the LAO, the pages and the staff, and especially our staff who are the heartbeat of all of our offices, whether here or at home as well.

9:50

To my colleagues who have spoken before me: thank you so much for everything that you've done and for your contributions to my life. In this building – I leave this place full of so much gratitude

in serving this beautiful province. The power of this place comes from the people and the democracy and the right to vote and equality and the power to make meaningful change.

Thank you so much to my family for their sacrifice and for their support during the last eight years.

This place is the House for all Albertans. So many of us bring folks into here, and they don't realize that this is their House. Thank you to all of you who have opened this House to so many people and shown them what democracy actually looks like.

In my time here I think about how tentative and unsure all of us were when we first walked in, and many of you: we've served together over the years, and now we speak with passion and conviction about the things that are important to us. I learn so much from all of you every single time any one of you speaks.

Thank you so much to the constituencies of Chestermere-Rocky View and then Chestermere-Strathmore for allowing me the privilege of representing you.

And to you, Mr. Speaker, as well: thank you so much.

I will be forever grateful for the trust of the people for having been able to serve here. This has been a remarkable experience, and I thank you.

Thank you very much. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your service.

Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate on third reading of Bill 9?

Seeing none, I am prepared to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive standing orders 8(2) and 8(7)(d) in order to proceed immediately to third reading on Bill 204, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

#### Bill 204

#### Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to move third reading of private member's Bill 204, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022.

Private member's Bill 204 was designed to correct the inconsistencies that were discovered between the Missing Persons Act and private member's Bill 210 that was passed in 2017. It may have been passed, but these inconsistencies impeded the proclamation of private member's Bill 210.

Should private member's Bill 204 be passed by this Legislature, it will ensure that all police services across the province of Alberta will have access to a silver alert that will help to safeguard vulnerable and at-risk seniors or other adults with cognitive impairments that have gone missing. Mr. Speaker, by 2031, as the tail end of the baby boomers, my generation, reaches 65 years of age, Alberta's seniors population is projected to reach approximately 1 million people. At the same time, as Albertans age, the risk of dementia doubles every five years after the age of 65. Private member's Bill 204 will enable police services to bring all

citizens and the resources of the media infrastructure to bear on finding and returning a missing senior back to their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I've chosen not to run in the upcoming election, so my opportunity to address this Assembly on behalf of my constituents in Drayton Valley-Devon is rapidly coming to an end. It's been one of the paramount privileges of my life to serve in this Legislature, and private member's Bill 204 will help to save lives and to protect our seniors, and I believe it is a fitting piece of legislation upon which I can retire. This bill has all-party support and, I believe, represents how this Assembly can work best. I want to thank the members of this Chamber for their support, and I want to thank the leadership of both parties for ensuring that we could pass this piece of legislation within the limited time that we have left in this session of the Legislature of Alberta.

But I would be remiss if I did not recognize tonight the many people who have helped make this bill possible. My thanks to the many legislative co-ordinators and United Conservative Party staff who have helped make this bill possible. I would like to especially recognize Ms Karah Folk, Mr. Benjamin Smith, Dr. Bill Bewick, Ms Elina Pachon, Ms Emma Hopper, Mr. Benjamyn McKay, and the many staff of the Ministry of Justice and the ministry of seniors who have helped push this bill forward. I would like to thank Mrs. Maureen Gough, who helped me understand the need for a silver alert, and I would dedicate this bill in the memory of her mother. I would like to thank all of the stakeholders that helped to guide the amendments that have been built into private member's Bill 204.

And I would like to thank my family. None of us in this Chamber can do our job of representing our constituents and the people of Alberta without the many sacrifices that our families make on our behalf. While they will never be able to vote or to speak to this bill tonight, it is my firm belief that this bill would not have made it past the germ of an idea without the support that I have received from my wife and my immediate family. Thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my constituents of Drayton Valley-Devon for the opportunity to serve you over these last two terms. It's been the singular privilege of my life, and I leave this Legislature more convinced than ever in the common sense of the common people. It is you that makes our democracy a vibrant and a viable form of government, and I pray that you will continue to exercise your democratic rights, that you will choose wisely your next MLA in the upcoming general election.

With these thoughts I would ask this Assembly to vote in favour of private member's Bill 204 and provide the people of Alberta with a silver alert tool that will help to find at-risk seniors when they go missing in Alberta. Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** On third reading of Bill 204 are there others?

Proceed. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – I see he's now rising.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I was a little slow to pop up.

I want to start off by thanking the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for moving this bill, but also his words, as others who have spoken this evening, thanking a number of people that we all, I think, feel and think about every day, you know, the people who have supported us to come to this place and do the work that we do. The fact of the matter is that if it wasn't for our families, our friends, and the people around us, none of us could do this job. I echo the words of my colleagues on all sides of the House thanking, you know, their loved ones, their families for supporting them and enabling us to do the job that we do because without them, we couldn't.

10:00

I think about the fact that I am very privileged to have represented a riding here in Edmonton. I think about my colleagues that travel from all corners of the province often, that in addition to serving in this Chamber, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the members, you all spend countless hours on the road, away from your families, travelling to and from this place. You know, I'd be remiss if I didn't say that part of the reason why I decided to pursue provincial politics over federal politics was because I didn't want to spend half my life on an airplane away from my family, even more than we do. I salute all 338 members of our federal Parliament who made that choice and that sacrifice, which implicates their families as well. But to the members here, from Taber-Warner to our northernmost ridings in this province, in east and west and all around, I mean, it's a great distance to travel, sometimes in atrocious weather.

I recall, you know, many people who have served in this place, members from all sides of the House, and I can't help but think about Manmeet Bhullar, who lost his life helping others and made the ultimate sacrifice. Again, had he not had to travel a far distance, then I'm sure the outcome would be much different today. This, I must say, is not what I had planned to say when I rose, but I do want to thank each and every member in this Chamber.

I'll take this opportunity to say my hope is that the 31st Legislature could bring together the 87 MLAs to focus on policy, to focus on making Alberta a better province. I appreciate we all come with our own unique perspectives and we come from different political parties, but I, for one, didn't run for office to try to smear somebody's name or to ruin them or their family. You know, I ran because I love my community and I want to see Alberta grow and prosper and I wanted to serve. I believe that every member in this Chamber and every member before us chose to run because they had that same passion for our communities, our neighbourhoods, our families, our friends, our province.

You know, I've been here long enough to understand how this place has worked and can work, but that's not the only way. We've seen collaboration on all sides of the House. We've seen the political parties set aside their differences, pull off their colours, and work together for better legislation, for better policy, for better debate. I truly hope that our next Legislature will do better than we did, because when I talk to Albertans, that's the part they like the least about politics and politicians: the division, the hate, the anger, the trying to win at all costs. And what is winning? Who wins in the end? We all want to see Alberta prosper and succeed and do well.

Again, I've been very lucky to have been a part of this place when we have all parties voting for unanimous consent to move a bill from first reading to third reading. That's happened fewer than 10 times in the history of our province, but it's been done, and we can do it again. I stand in support of the silver alert bill and – I was not planning to get emotional – want to thank the member for bringing it forward. There's no chance I'm going to be able to get through a personal story of how this would impact me and my family, but through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member, know that it does, and I thank you.

Times when we can stand together in unison and in solidarity: I think that restores the faith that Albertans have in our democratic system, that parties can work together to deliver outcomes for Albertans. In my final words I do also want to thank all of you, members. I want to thank the incredible people that enable us to do the jobs that we do: everybody in this building, from the people who

take care of it and clean it to the people that keep us safe, our security brothers and sisters, to *Hansard* to our table officers to the constituents and the voters that put us here. You know, one of the things that I try to remember is that there are fewer than one thousand Albertans who have ever had the privilege to serve in this Chamber, and it's been an incredible honour.

I'll end by thanking my family, my wife, my daughters, my parents, my friends, and all of you. It has been an incredible 11 years, and it's been an honour and a pleasure to serve.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your remarks, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Know that all members of the Assembly develop friendships and relationships across the aisle. Through me to you: I have appreciated your friendship, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, amongst many of you but in particular yours.

Are there others who are wishing to join in the debate on third reading of Bill 204?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. member to close debate should he choose to do so.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a third time]

10:10                    **Government Bills and Orders**  
                                  **Committee of the Whole**  
                                  *(continued)*

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 11**  
**Appropriation Act, 2023**

**The Deputy Chair:** Any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 12**  
**Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members wishing to make comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 12, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023?

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise and report bills 11 and 12.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Sure. Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 11, Bill 12.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? Ordered and so carried.

The hon. chief government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 23, 2023.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:14 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 23, 2023

Day 24

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, ECA, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., ECA, Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., ECA, Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, ECA, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Hon. Whitney, ECA, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, ECA, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, ECA, KC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Premier, Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC)  
Milliken, Hon. Nicholas, ECA, Calgary-Currie (UC)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC),  
Deputy Premier  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jeremy P., ECA, Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, ECA, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Hon. Brad, ECA, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Government Whip  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, ECA, KC, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North East (UC)  
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Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, ECA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Calgary-Elbow  
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk

Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk

Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary  
Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and  
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees

Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary  
Programs

Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

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Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Lang Bawn, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Kaycee Madu	Deputy Premier, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions
Nathan Neudorf	Deputy Premier, Minister of Infrastructure
Mickey Amery	Minister of Children's Services
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mike Ellis	Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services
Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Pete Guthrie	Minister of Energy
Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Brian Jean	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development
Matt Jones	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Tracy Allard	Parliamentary Secretary for Civil Liberties
Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
R.J. Sigurdson	Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform
Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
Glenn van Dijken	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen  
Gotfried  
Gray  
Hunter  
Issik  
Phillips  
Pon

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Carson  
Feehan  
McIver  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Dang  
Fir  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sabir  
Smith, Mark  
Yao  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Ceci  
Dach  
Hunter  
Loyola  
Orr  
Panda  
Rehn  
Shepherd  
Toor

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Williams

Deol  
Fir  
Goehring  
Gray  
McIver  
Pon  
Rowswell  
Sabir  
van Dijken

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Williams  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Irwin  
Lovely  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jason  
Panda  
Rehn  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Reid  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Aheer  
Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jason  
Rehn  
Renaud  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Hunter  
Lovely  
Pancholi  
Panda  
Renaud  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Stephan  
Toor  
Yaseen

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Feehan

Aheer  
Dach  
Ganley  
Getson  
Issik  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Turton



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 23, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by the hon. the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

### Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,  
Long live our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King!

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Legislative Assembly Office Staff

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, following the 2019 election I don't think anyone could have predicted the challenges that would arise in the coming four years. Through it all the Legislative Assembly Office staff helped to ensure parliamentary continuity as we faced so much uncertainty. We were just mere months into the 30th Legislature, and the Legislative Assembly staff leapt to action and stood the test of time. The LAO staff remained agile and resilient to ensure the Assembly and its committees could continue to operate safely and the business of parliament could continue.

During this time the LAO also launched multiyear enterprise resource systems to enhance and modernize human resource, payroll, finance, and IT systems throughout the organization. Staff worked hard to improve access to a new mobile-friendly website, virtual tours, online education programming, video, social media, and broadcasting. Last year the LAO expanded upon a 2021 pilot project to incorporate American sign language, or ASL, into the broadcast of our daily Routine.

Members, it's my absolute pleasure to serve as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and as the head of the Legislative Assembly Office, and it is the work and the dedication of these knowledgeable professionals that make the LAO an absolutely outstanding and incredible organization, and this year we did that as we marked its 40th anniversary.

Today joining us in the gallery are close to 30 members of the Legislative Assembly Office team that so rarely join us here in the Assembly because they are busy about the work of the people. I invite them to rise and receive the thank you from the members.  
[Standing ovation]

## Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests joining us in the Speaker's gallery today that I would like to introduce. The family of one of our pages, Joy Yang: I'm pleased to introduce Joy's mother, Ms Wu; her aunt Ms Xiang; her uncle Mr. Lin; and her cousin Andrea Lin. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us today are three members of the Speaker's office team. They are a critical support to the Speaker, and certainly the work of your Speaker could not be undertaken without them. I'd like to personally express a sincere and a lifelong debt of gratitude and thank you to each of them for making it happen: Ms Erin Camponi, Mr. Santiago Jimenez Loza, and Ms Katja – they didn't put the phonetics in – Oosthuis. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has an introduction.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this will be my last introduction in this Assembly, I thought I would make it for the most important person to me. My wife, Lora, is joining us up in the gallery. For the last 15 years I've worked a lot of shift work with the Edmonton Police Service and in this term a lot of hours away, a lot of late nights, and she's been incredibly strong and supportive of me throughout my career. I'll be spending a lot more time at home in the next few weeks, which I'm sure she will grow tired of shortly. But for now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so happy to introduce to you and through you to the House my first grandchild, my beautiful granddaughter, Amal Yaseen. Amal is accompanied by her parents, Aamar and Javeria, and my loving wife, Parveen. It is an honour to have my family members here today. I am so blessed to have their full support and love. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services and the Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you. I'm honoured today to be able to introduce to you and through you my daughters Alexis and Elizabeth Nixon. They are the apple of their father's eye and, I think, a bright, shining example of the hope for our future. I also want to introduce their class, who are watching live right now, and their teacher Mrs. Barone. Through you and to you, Mr. Speaker, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a school group.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today and introduce to you and through you the fantastic grade 6 class from High Park school in Stony Plain along with their incredible teachers. I had the pleasure of meeting with them and this group earlier, and they asked some great questions, and I know that they're fantastic representatives of the town of Stony Plain. Students, please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 19 students from John A. McDougall school in the heart of Edmonton-City Centre, a school I very much enjoy visiting

during the year at Read In Week and at other times. They're accompanied today by their teacher Victoria Land. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Chair of Committees.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it's my privilege and my pleasure today to introduce students and families from Rockyview Christian School in Pincher Creek. We talk about rural people doing lots of driving; this is a day trip for them to be in the Legislature. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

**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 two very important people in my life. It is a high calling to be a pastor, and I am so grateful that these gentlemen have faithfully ministered to me and my family. My two pastors, Pastor Kenton Penner and Pastor Joshua Holt, please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Scott Crichton, Artem Litvyak, Olga Lytviak, and Natalie Lytviak. These guests organized a petition, that I'm going to present on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods today, calling on the Legislative Assembly to express support for the people of Ukraine and oppose the Russian occupation. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce the Moore family: LeAnne and her husband, David, as well as their children Olivia, Emmalee, and Samantha. I'd like to recognize Olivia specifically and commend her for her bravery and resilience that she shows every day.

I'd also like to welcome Anu Srivastava, a Canadian, Albertan, and for the last 18 years a passionate singer, an exceptional community leader, philanthropist, and entrepreneur, and a constant champion for women.

Lastly, I'd like to introduce Nandini Debnath, an amazing vocal artist, current mechanical engineering PhD student. Please rise and receive the warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through I'd like to introduce my cousin Dave Morton, who's been involved in the forestry and trucking industries for many years; David Bensmiller, who comes from a great line of rodeo stock; and Marty McSorely, who does lots of charity and fundraising work, who's around here so much in the area he seems like a hometown boy. Thank you very much. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Terry Gibson and Phil Rosenzweig. Terry is the founder of the Condo Owners Forum and Phil the treasurer, and they join us today to witness the tabling of their petition, containing signatures of over

1,000 condo owners. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Patrick M. Haney. I ask that he rise – he's in the member's gallery right now – as he receives the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the following individuals from the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism. Please rise as I say your name: Samantha Steinke, press secretary; Claire Toews, arch co-ordinator; Pam Davidson, ministerial assistant and Senator-elect; and Shannon Fowler, scheduler. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Canada Pension Plan

**Member Ceci:** The Canada pension plan is a pension my parents relied on in part to make up their income into the retirement years. Albertans trust their Canada pension plan. It's been around since the 1960s. Albertans are telling us loud and clear that they do not want their CPP touched, Albertans like the tens of thousands who have signed online petitions. Mr. Speaker, these Albertans are motivated and want the members of the UCP government to hear loud and clear: keep your hands off our CPP.

Later today I'll table a petition. This petition was started by members of the public who wanted more than an online petition. They wanted to put their name to a paper to give directly to this House. These Albertans took this matter into their own hands and took pen to paper to prove to this Premier and the UCP that they don't support an Alberta pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up my final member's statement of the 30th Legislature, I'll leave with this: Albertans trust the Canada pension plan; Albertans want it left alone. The good news is that soon Albertans can do more than sign petitions that for years have fallen on the deaf ears of the UCP government. In 67 days Albertans can vote to protect their futures and their pensions, vote to show this Premier and the UCP the door, and vote to elect an Alberta NDP government.

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's UCP government has focused on making life more affordable, especially for those most in need. A major part of our focus has been to expand access to affordable housing, which provides families and individuals a safe and secure place to call home. Whether they be a senior who has spent their life working hard on contributing to the Alberta we have today, an individual who has gone through Alberta's world-class addiction recovery system, a woman with her children who has fled domestic violence, someone living with a disability on a monthly fixed income, a veteran who has fought for our freedoms as Canadians, or even a low-income family that is struggling to make ends meet, affordable housing serves thousands of Albertans facing a wide range of challenges.

Mr. Speaker, that's why our government recently announced a huge \$120 million to directly support 28 affordable housing projects, creating nearly 1,100 new units for families and individuals in need.

Now, you may probably remember that under an NDP government Alberta lost more than 180,000 jobs, and the wait-list for affordable housing grew by 76 per cent, meaning fewer families were able to afford a place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe in compassionate conservatism. Whether it is my annual veterans food drive for Calgary veterans or raising \$83,000 for the Calgary cancer foundation or \$62,000 for prematurely born babies, it's all about compassionate conservatism, helping people that need help. As Albertans prepare to vote in the upcoming election, I ask you all to think about the track records of both parties and their impact on your community in making life . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

### Adoption Supports

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans desperately want to start or grow their families but simply cannot afford it. Between the expenses, long waits, and the complex process, these Albertans are losing hope of becoming parents through adopting a child. I've listened to their stories, and I've seen the sad look in their eyes when they talk about how long, expensive, and complicated it could be to adopt a child, which forces some of them to walk away from providing a child with a forever home, and it breaks my heart.

That is why I'm so pleased to see that our government is taking decisive action to remove these barriers and provide new funding supports for these families. Yesterday the UCP government announced a \$4 million investment over the next three years to make adoption more affordable to Albertans and help more children find a stable and loving home. We are boosting the adoption tax credit by almost \$4,000 to match the federal credit, which means we are putting more money in parents' pockets.

In addition, the funding package would cover the cost of supplemental health benefits for children adopted here in Alberta through licensed adoption agencies as well as government care. This will help remove medical cost barriers to adoption, especially for children with specialized medical needs. These new supports will benefit up to 5,000 children in the public system and help them find their forever homes.

There are many unknowns when parenting children, Mr. Speaker. Having assurances that there is extra support to manage a child's medical needs, whatever they might be, is going to lift a huge weight from the shoulders of families in our communities. It will allow parents to focus on taking care of their child instead of wondering how they're going to cover costs. By providing these benefits as well as subsidies and higher tax breaks for families looking to adopt, we are securing a strong future for children and families in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### UCP Government Record

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, there are 67 days until the next election, 67 days until Alberta casts its final verdict on this UCP government. I know that concerns the members opposite, who will have to run on their record, their record of hiking utility prices, insurance rates, school fees, income taxes, property taxes, tuition, student loan interest, all the while handing out money to their friends and insiders.

Those members will have to explain why they stood and cheered while the Health minister started a war with doctors and created a generational health care crisis, explain why they whooped it up while the Education minister fired 20,000 education workers via

tweet while the government plotted to tear down the Rocky Mountains to mine for coal. They'll have to answer for the entitlement of Alohagate and the liquor cabinet sky palace patio parties.

They'll have to explain why they remained silent while a record number of children and youth died in their government's care. They will have to explain why they stood behind the current Premier as she justified the Russian invasion into Ukraine, insulted Indigenous communities, meddled in the justice system, blamed cancer patients for their own health conditions, and plotted to give away \$20 billion to pay bad companies to clean up their own messes.

But on this side of the House we have a leader we are proud of, a team that's truly united, and a vision for Alberta that is positive and forward looking. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's future is at stake in this election. That's why I know that on May 29 Albertans are going to elect an Alberta NDP government. We have stood up for all Albertans for four years as the Official Opposition. We are ready, eager, and honoured to have the privilege of serving you as your government.

See you at the polls, Alberta. Let's build a better future together. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Forestry Families and Workers

**Mr. Rehn:** Mr. Speaker, it has been a privilege to serve with fellow Albertans who have worked hard and struggled to see a better tomorrow for our amazing province. It's not the naysayers who count or the people who point out how the strong stumble or who do the deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the people who are actually in the arena, whose faces are marred by dust, sweat, and blood, who at best know the triumph of high achievement and, at worst, if they fail, at least fail while daring greatly so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

1:50

Being from the north, I would like to pay tribute to all the past and present forestry workers and some great Alberta forestry families like the Buchanans, Bissells, and Vanderwells. In 1939 Julian Benson married my aunt Margaret Rehn, and they had three children: Marg, Joan, and Gerry. They started a thriving sawmill and a logging business and had over 100 men and women working for them near MacKay, Alberta. Unfortunately, in 1949 Julian, who was 39, got killed in a sawmilling accident. The people who worked for him had great admiration and respect and wrote this.

There's a pretty spot in Canada  
It's a place they call MacKay,  
A lovely patch to spend the night  
When you're thumbin' on your way.

There's a vibrant, bustling, lumber camp  
Just 13 miles below  
Calling all who think they're a work champ  
To come out and put on an awesome show.

Oh, the boss is Julian Benson,  
And you often heard him mention  
Of another great invention  
George Cooling was his name.

He's brash, and he is lazy  
Good natured, but he's crazy  
In the gummy Jack pine timber,  
That's where he won his fame.

They can talk about their north camps  
 And all their pretty lakes  
 But just take a trip to Julian's camp  
 And I'm sure it'll take the cake!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Are there no rules in this place? Pure anarchy when song breaks out.

Unfortunately, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora will just take a seat for a brief moment, prior to moving to Oral Question Period, I would just like to take another brief opportunity and invite all retiring pages to join me here at the dais.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Page Recognition

**The Speaker:** As hon. members will be aware, at the end of every session – not that I would ever presuppose a decision of the Assembly, and who knows what the future holds? But I do know that the session will come to an end here in the next little while, and I would hate to miss the opportunity to thank the retiring pages. They've prepared a letter for all members of the Assembly, through me, and it goes as follows:

Dear Mr. Speaker,

As the end of this session approaches, many of us [pages] will be moving on from the Page Program. We, the retiring Pages, would like to express our gratitude for the incredible opportunity to serve the Legislative Assembly and participate in Alberta's democratic process.

We would like to extend a special thanks to Kaitlynn Church and all the staff in the Sergeant-at-Arms' office for their support and the excellent work they do overseeing the Program; to the Bills and Journals Clerks in 315 whose procedural knowledge is [critical] to our duties; to the members of the Legislative Assembly Security Service whose humour and stories make the time pass quickly; to the Members for their dedication in serving their constituents, and finally to the Table Officers and the Speaker for their dedication in facilitating democracy in our province and for their Leadership within this Chamber.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to work alongside our fellow Pages. The friendships we have made in the Program will last a lifetime, and we are forever grateful for the opportunity to work on such a dynamic and outstanding team. We will all miss working as Pages.

Yours sincerely,

The retiring Pages

Ayla, Sophie, Alison, Amelia, Angelina, George, Joy,  
 Laura, William

On behalf of all members of the Assembly let me say a very special thank you to each and every one of you for everything that you do. There's a more than likely chance that in a few years you'll have most of our jobs. Thank you so very much. Hon. members, the retiring pages. [Standing ovation]

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has question 1.

#### Pension Plans

**Ms Hoffman:** Your pension is yours: that's the name of our Alberta NDP proposal to protect Albertans' retirement savings which the Leader of the Opposition presented in Calgary earlier today. From the pipeline tech who hits the road in minus 40 to the teacher up all night working on tomorrow's lesson plan, Albertans have a right to

know that their retirement is secure and free from political meddling. With an Alberta NDP government your CPP will be secure and protected in legislation. Why is the UCP so obsessed with gambling away Albertans' pensions?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that members on this side of the House believe Albertans' pensions are secure. What we are doing and we've been tasked to do is taking a look at the opportunity of an Alberta pension plan. The NDP would not give Albertans that opportunity, but this government will. We have done the work. We're completing the work. We will ensure Albertans ultimately can make the choice. It's their pension. It's their choice.

**Ms Hoffman:** Nice words, Mr. Speaker, but one of the first things the UCP government did was seize control of many Albertans' pensions. Teachers, firefighters, county clerks all used to have a voice in the management of their retirement savings until the UCP took it away. An Alberta NDP government will restore joint governance for public-sector pensions, giving employees representation on the AIMCo board, and if those employees decide that they want to leave AIMCo's management, they'll be free to do so. With the Alberta NDP your pension is yours. Why did the UCP seize control of these pensions in the first place and take away Albertans' control of their own retirement?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, something that hasn't changed in four years is the ability and propensity of the members opposite to farmonger unnecessarily. We have worked to secure the pensions of all Albertans and Alberta public-sector workers. We have worked with AIMCo. We have worked with the pension service administrators to position those pensions for maximum growth, for maximum efficiency for the benefit of Alberta workers.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, with our plan we actually want to go further. An Alberta NDP government will work with the private and nonprofit sectors to help establish a voluntary workplace pension plan, with the province covering the administrative costs. This unlocks the potential for so many small businesses and nonprofits to offer their employees a secure, defined contribution pension. That would be transformative. It will help attract global talent to Alberta. I'm proud to have a leader who is fighting for working people and who wants them to have a stable future and a secure retirement. I wish the soon to be opposition could say the same.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at the track record of the NDP when they were in office, what they did was this. They raised taxes. They raised fees. They added regulatory burden. They stood in the way of large projects necessary for our economy. They chased out tens of billions of dollars of capital and, with it, over a hundred thousand jobs. That's their legacy. Our legacy is job creation and a balanced budget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her second set of questions.

#### Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, there's a profound crisis in Alberta health care driven by the UCP's war on health care workers and the Premier's love of conspiracy theories and junk science. Alberta medical students are voting with their feet. New data from the Canadian residency matching system shows that Alberta has 42 residency spaces left open this year but in B.C. only two. Medical students don't see a future launching their careers in Alberta under

the UCP. Does the Premier take any responsibility for chasing these young doctors away from their own province?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work our government is doing in investing and improving our health care system. We are investing \$24.5 billion, the highest amount ever, into our health care system. We are expanding our medical programs at the U of C and the U of A. What you hear on the other side when they're making comments is, quite frankly, fearmongering. Yes, in the first round of matching 42 are unmatched, but let's put that into perspective. That's 42 out of 351 positions unmatched across the entire country. We are investing in health care, we're investing in our doctors, and we're going to keep investing . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** For the past three years we've heard from family doctors who were retiring early, leaving their profession, or leaving the province due to the hostility faced by the UCP. This government tore up their contract and piled a mountain of new paperwork on them just as the pandemic hit Alberta. The former Health minister even visited a doctor at his home, yelling at him in front of his children. Now we know that the med students who should be taking their place in Alberta are looking elsewhere. Those 42 doctors could make a big difference in many Alberta communities. Does the Premier understand that she's causing permanent harm to Alberta families needing doctors?

2:00

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out and make sure that the opposition understands that this is the first round. This is typically done. You have one round in terms of matching. Then there's a second round to be able to fill. Now, historically, even under the previous government, they didn't fill all those spaces, but we're going to actually change the process. I've already asked the department to work with the deans to make sure that if there are any unfilled spaces, and typically they are – just so you know, we've had over the last eight years more than 95 per cent filled, but if there are any unfilled spaces, we'll provide them to IMGs because we need more doctors . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, there are entire cities or regions in our province where you can't find a family doctor who's accepting new patients. Families in Red Deer, Lethbridge, and the entire Bow Valley are left with nowhere to go but an overwhelmed hospital. Alberta's NDP will fix this with family health teams which connect a million Albertans with a family doctor and primary care. We will build buildings that are great places to work and great places for families to get their health care needs met. Will the Premier admit that her chaos is chasing a generation of young doctors out of Alberta? Everyone knows it's true.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the work that our government is doing and will continue to do in bringing more doctors into this province. We have more doctors than there have ever been in this province, and actually, if we compare 2022, as of December 31, to 2021: 254 more doctors into the province to be able to expand services for Albertans. Now, we appreciate there are challenges; we still need more doctors. That's why I'm very pleased in places like Lethbridge, where we're leveraging our international medical graduates. Seventeen more doctors have signed on over the next 10 months. They're going to continue to do the work, and we're not going to stop until everyone here gets access. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and opposition deputy House leader.

### Energy Company Liability

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period yesterday I asked the Energy minister why he's still trying to force onto Alberta the Premier's R-star program. The current Energy minister said that the program doesn't exist, yet the former Energy minister has said that the program will violate the polluter-pay principle, and the current Premier, the former lobbyist, advocated for the program in this very building. I'm also hearing from landowners who say that this is kind of like the henhouse a fox would build. So who should Albertans believe: the former Energy minister, the current minister, the current Premier, or the landowners that the government is clearly ignoring?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, what a woeful group of provocateurs. Let's talk a little bit about the motion that they put forward this week. Our province saw negative oil prices. People's livelihoods were at stake, and the SRP program was created to help stimulate jobs by incentivizing well site closure. SRP closed up to 38,000 sites and employed thousands of Albertans, putting food on the table. The NDP? They say: no; let them eat cake. Say hello to Alberta's anti oil and gas, antibusiness, anti-Alberta . . .

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our record is one pipeline; UCP, zero pipelines.

In Alberta Albertans have benefited from oil and gas revenue for generations, in large part due to royalties that oil companies have had to pay. The Premier's scheme would give these royalties away to bad companies who don't feel they need to clean up after themselves without getting paid. This would reward the bad companies and the lobbyists, who are putting in for this handout while Albertans are losing. It's no wonder the Premier is keeping her plan secret. Will she just admit this was never about cleaning up wells and actually about giving Albertans' money to her friends and . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, the activist mentality of the NDP has a target, to end fossil fuel production. They want to do it by driving up the cost of doing business, raising the carbon tax to \$170 and beyond, introducing windfall taxes, introducing corporate taxes, higher electricity costs, red tape, and confiscating land to curtail development. By doing so, the NDP want to make life more expensive for everyone. On this side of the House we are focused on prosperity and making life more affordable for Alberta families.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear to me and to most Albertans that this government is trying really hard to hide the details about this \$20 billion handout from Albertans, right on the eve of the election. We heard it from the municipal leaders this week, we've heard it from landowners all over the province, and it's clear that the government has no intention of sharing their plans with Albertans or collaborating with them. So I have an offer to the minister: how about you come and join me tonight on my consultation at [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca)? I'll even give you a shout-out. You want to join me?

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to me to see how easy it is for the NDP to run fast and loose with the truth. They were not forthright with Albertans on their secret carbon tax or their ideological imposition against farmers and ranchers with Bill 6, not to mention their social licence alliance with Justin Trudeau. It reminds me of a saying: I'm not upset that you lied to me; I'm upset that from now on I can no longer believe you. That is exactly how Albertans feel about this NDP.

### Calgary's Economy

**Member Ceci:** In the last election the UCP promised to fill the offices in downtown Calgary, but today Calgary has the highest downtown office vacancy rate in the country, and there are fewer head offices in the city than there were when the UCP government formed. Members of the UCP said that it wasn't their job to support downtown Calgary, and in this year's budget there wasn't a single dollar for downtown revitalization, which the Calgary Chamber of commerce CEO said was an insult. Why is the UCP ignoring Calgary as the city continues to struggle under this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're doing anything but ignoring Calgary. Calgary is a critical city in this province. I find it very interesting that the members opposite, who were in government at the time that billions of dollars of wealth left this province, at a time when those towers began emptying out, would have the gall to raise the issue. This government, our government, has positioned Alberta's economy . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Whoa, whoa, whoa.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, our government has positioned this economy for competitiveness, investment attraction, and growth, and it's growth that we're seeing.

**Member Ceci:** The UCP also promised to create jobs for Calgarians in the last election, but today Calgary has the highest unemployment rate in the country among major cities. This comes after the UCP declared economic diversification a luxury and cut several tax credits that were attracting investment and creating jobs. They also delayed vital projects like the green line, that would have created 20,000 jobs, supported economic growth, and reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Why has the UCP spent the last four years holding Calgary back?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP chased out investment and jobs, this government is investing in Calgary, which is resulting in job creation. We've invested hundreds of millions of dollars in critical . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

You could run again if you wanted the job.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we've invested hundreds of millions of dollars in critical infrastructure in Calgary, but moreover we've created an investment climate where we're seeing real true sustainable economic diversification. The tech sector is leading the nation in growth. Financial services are exploding. Film and television, manufacturing – I could go on.

**Member Ceci:** The UCP claims there is no business case to convert empty spaces in downtown Calgary, but their own report says that investment and office conversion is required to revitalize the city's core. Meanwhile the business community is asking for tax credits to be restored in order to attract investment and jobs. The Premier actually promised to do this and then broke her promise. An Alberta NDP government would go a step further and bring a bustling postsecondary campus downtown. When the UCP break their promises and don't even take their own advice, how can Calgarians possibly trust anything this Premier says?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, every time the member opposite rises, I'm afraid of another credit downgrade.

This government is positioning this province for competitiveness and growth. We're seeing economic diversification at rates I've not seen in my lifetime. Financial services, tech, manufacturing, De Havilland announcing their manufacturing plant just outside of Calgary: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is winning.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

2:10

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's UCP government has been hard at work cleaning up the mess of the NDP following their misdirected term of office. This has required improved fiscal management, investment attraction versus divestment, and enhanced support of the broader interests of Albertans. Affordable housing is just one of the countless matters the NDP has failed on as they increased the wait-list by 76 per cent through their four years in office. Can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services tell the House how our government's collaborative approach is different from the failings of the NDP with respect to affordable housing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his hard work over the last eight years. Congratulations on a great career. Part of our success has been because of that member's strong advocacy for affordable housing over the last eight years and his amazing work in the sector before his public life, so thank you to that member.

The biggest difference, I'd say, between what we saw under the NDP and what we see under this government is a focus on collaboration. We're working with municipal governments, we're working with federal governments, but we're also working with the not-for-profit and private community to find innovative solutions for how we can increase the supply.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that affordable housing and housing affordability broadly serves thousands and millions of Albertans, including seniors, low-income families, those living with disabilities, women and children who have fled domestic violence, and given that there is significant need for more access to affordable housing, especially in our two major cities of Calgary and Edmonton, can the hon. minister tell the House what investments are being made specifically to support innovative new projects in affordable housing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Through the innovative, collaborative programs we're taking initiatives to work alongside not-for-profits that work in these sectors, that understand the clients. By working alongside not-for-profits, we're able to build innovative programs, and that's led to success. Just in the last month we've announced almost 1,100 new units of affordable housing, and over the period of this government we have built over 2,500 new units of affordable housing. That's because of those strong, collaborative initiatives. That means more women who are fleeing domestic violence are going to have a place to stay. More people exiting homelessness are going to have a place to stay. More people . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for his answer. Given that Alberta's UCP government is committed to making life more affordable in Alberta, ensuring that those most in need, as mentioned, are able to access the supports they need but given that the previous NDP government is actually the one that made life more expensive as they conspired with their Liberal friends in Ottawa to implement a damaging carbon tax, meaning more and more people are now in need of affordable housing and housing supports, to the hon. minister: how is Budget 2023 securing a bright future for the many vulnerable and hard-working Albertans that rely on affordable housing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the previous government, we're actually building housing. In Budget 2023 we've invested a billion dollars towards improving existing buildings, to funding operations as well as building new housing, again, 1,100 units announced just in the last month. Our stronger foundations plan, which the good member had a great role in developing, is going to be investing in and building out 25,000 additional units of housing over the next 10 years so that more Albertans have a place to call home.

Again, thank you to that member for his long advocacy. I look forward to working with him long into the future.

#### Utility Rebate Programs and Multifamily Buildings

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be joined today by condo owners who represent a large portion of the population that has been overlooked by this government's supposed affordability measures. The Minister of Affordability and Utilities has said that his department is working on changes that will allow more people in submetered and single-metered multifamily homes to apply for electricity rebates available to other Albertans. Minister, when will rebates for condo owners be available, and will it be prior to the election?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we want as many Albertans to benefit from our affordability program as possible. That includes our electricity rebates, which are providing up to \$500 to 1.9 million farms, small businesses, and homes across Alberta. When it comes to Albertans living in units behind a sub-or single meter, there are technical challenges that my department is working to overcome, and we also want to ensure that these payments are nontaxable and that they wouldn't jeopardize the nonprofit status of these condo associations.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that natural gas rebates have been made a permanent part of the affordability action plan, they are potentially even more of an issue for multi-unit buildings because the vast majority share a single meter for natural gas. Given that currently the same Albertans are not eligible for the natural gas rebates because the caps put on the program only allow individual homes, small businesses, and small apartments to qualify, why hasn't the UCP government removed this cap so that residents and all residential multifamily buildings qualify for the natural gas rebates?

**Mr. Jones:** I'd like to thank the COF and the members opposite for their advocacy on this issue. The member opposite did a good job outlining some of the challenges of getting these rebates to those Albertans as we transition the program from what was a temporary price protection program to a permanent feature of Alberta where Albertans will benefit from an owned resource and be protected from natural gas spikes, as seen around the world. As we make that transition, we're looking at this situation, trying to find options, ways to get those rebates to all Albertans.

Thank you.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that this government failed these Albertans with their so-called affordability supports and given that we are approaching an election, with the UCP having failed to address their concerns, why should the hard-working people in Alberta, who have been consistently overlooked and ignored by this UCP government for four years, expect anything new from the UCP? Will the minister apologize for failing these Albertans for so long?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question. We are of course looking at options to expand these rebates to more Albertans. But we also have a number of other supports: our affordability payments, which are going to virtually all seniors in this province 65 and up, the vast majority of households with families with dependent children under 18, and to Albertans on core support programs, \$600 over six months. We've removed the fuel tax, saving everybody on every litre at the pump. Perhaps our greatest affordability measure is that every day we keep the socialists out of government.

#### Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

**Mr. Sabir:** Yesterday Stats Canada reported that hate-motivated crimes are on the rise in Canada and Alberta. Police-reported stats showed that nationally there was a 27 per cent increase in 2021, following a 35 per cent increase in 2020. In Alberta the number of hate-motivated crimes against religious groups tripled to 91 incidents in 2021. No Albertan should ever have to feel unsafe in their communities. These numbers show that action must be taken. Why has the UCP failed to step up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for that question. I have read this report, and I share the concern across the country in the rise of hate-based crimes. That's what's important to point out, the historical, groundbreaking work that the government of Alberta has done in terms of engagement with the community and actually putting steps in place to make sure that we are drafting antiracism legislation and putting more protections in place for cultural communities.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the work the government did is not working and given that, sadly, 2021 saw the total number of reported hate crimes in Alberta increase to over 300 and given that one step that could have helped address incidents of racism is the collection of race-based data – something our caucus proposed, but the UCP refused to debate it – does the minister regret the UCP's refusal to support the collection of race-based data, that would help in fighting racism across this province?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say again that we have undertaken historical and groundbreaking work on the antiracism file. We've done tremendous work in terms of multicultural engagement all across the province, and that includes the collection of data. It's important to do this engagement before you put any legislation in place. The Anti-Racism Advisory Council has also been instrumental in advising us. We have done tremendous engagement, and that engagement will continue.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that on her first day in office the Premier dismissed the discrimination experienced by so many different racialized Albertans and has refused to apologize yet and given that our caucus conducted extensive consultations with racialized Albertans to create recommendations on how to end racism and given that with information showing that incidents of hate crimes are on the rise in Alberta, we need to work together to ensure that we finally end racism in Alberta, will the Premier take this last chance to formally apologize for her deeply insulting comments and inaction?

2:20

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. Everybody in Alberta, whether they're a temporary resident, a refugee, a newcomer, or have been living here for generations, every resident deserves to feel safe, included, and celebrated. This government is committed to making sure that happens. Through the multiculturalism portfolio I'm proud to say that we have actually announced historical funding for ethnocultural communities, \$4 million in next year's budget, to help with antiracism initiatives and social cohesion.

### Federal and Provincial Carbon Pricing

**Mr. Barnes:** This April Fool's Day Ottawa will continue to play us all for suckers with a hike in the inflationary carbon tax of 14 cents per litre on gasoline and 12 cents per cubic metre of natural gas. Given that this tax unfairly burdens rural residents who need to drive for work, for health care, for education, and for recreation and given that this tax directly hammers families and those on fixed incomes and given that this tax unfairly targets Alberta and western Canadian primary sector industries, to the Premier: please tell us when you're going to start fighting for a fair deal, a fair deal for Alberta families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member opposite in his propensity to stand up for Albertans and stand against Ottawa. Number one, we need regime change in Ottawa, and every Canadian should be working to that end over the next two years. I call on the members opposite to stand with the government on this side of the House against the Trudeau-Singh alliance, which is pushing our nation's economy backwards. We're doing everything we can to position Alberta for competitiveness, investment attraction, and growth.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, that's interesting, considering that this government will also be increasing its provincial carbon tax by \$15 per tonne on April 1. Given that on December 15 this government approved an order in council to tie the provincial industrial carbon tax to the federal carbon tax pricing schedule and given that the federal government plans to triple its carbon tax by 2030 and given that the Minister of Energy has publicly stated – and I quote – that this is good news for the province, can the Premier please explain: why are federal carbon taxes devastating but provincial carbon tax is wonderful?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had a carbon levy on heavy industrial emitters for years, for a long, long time. We've worked with the industry on that levy. The funds raised in that levy largely go towards technology improvements. But I want to be clear. We stand against the federal government's carbon tax. We took the federal government to court over that carbon tax, we've opposed the members opposite when they brought in that carbon tax, and we will stand up for Albertans' interests.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying: there's only one taxpayer. Given that provincial carbon taxes on industrial emitters are passed on to consumers, just like all other forms of corporate taxation, and given that the bottom lines of family budgets do not differentiate between provincial or federal taxes and given that rapid inflation means every dollar taken from Albertans' wallets hurts now more than ever, will the Premier please explain to us why she believes this is a good time to hike the provincial carbon tax?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, low taxes are important. In Budget '23, through financial discipline and fiscal discipline, we've been able to keep Alberta's taxes the lowest in the country. In fact, the next lowest tax jurisdiction, which is Ontario: if we applied their structure over Alberta, we would be collecting \$20 billion more. Albertans have a \$20 billion tax advantage compared to any province in the country. We're going to keep it that way.

### Rural Hospital Service Disruptions

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, AHS has just announced the closure of Ponoka's emergency department. Albertans need access to health care, and every day the UCP pushes Alberta's health care system further and further into crisis. It is unacceptable, and I'm tired of waiting to see which community in our province will be harmed next by the UCP's health care crisis. These UCP hospital closures put Albertans' lives at risk, so will the minister stand here today and explain to the people of Ponoka how long they should expect to go without emergency health care services?

**Mr. Copping:** Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, you know, there are challenges that we're seeing here in Alberta and, quite frankly, across the entire country with staff to be able to make sure that we maintain the services, particularly in rural areas. I had the opportunity to tour the province, rural areas, and speak with municipalities and speak with AHS employees, and we are making change. Part of our change is investing in a health workforce strategy so we get more people – and we're doing that across the entire province – additional seats for doctors, for nurses, and other allied health professionals, and we'll . . .

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

**Member Loyola:** Given that the people of Ponoka deserve access to health care, just as expectant mothers in Sundre and Barrhead



deserve access to health care and the people of south Edmonton and of Red Deer and so on and so on and given that across the province AHS is reporting dozens of partial hospital closures and given that AHS reporting alone shows that our health care is in crisis under this UCP government, does the Health minister take any responsibility for the dozens of hospital closures on his watch and for the danger he has exposed all these Alberta families to?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we know this is an issue, and we are working to address it. Part of our health human workforce strategy is to train people in rural areas. A great example is in Wainwright, with the U of C setting up a program where nurses apply to the program, do the initial part of it online, and then work at the Wainwright hospital for on-the-job training. We are going to be expanding that program out. In addition, we are working very hard to attract and retain internationally trained nurses, internationally trained doctors. We know this is a problem, and we're working . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Member Loyola:** Given that Albertans should never have had to deal with these closures and disruptions in the first place and given that the people of Ponoka, just like all Albertans, have a right to health care close to home and given that right now across our province Albertans are suffering because they cannot get the care that they need – let me say it again, Mr. Speaker: they are suffering because of this government – will the minister stand here today and apologize to all the people and their families who have faced hardship and anxiety as a direct result of this government's damage to Alberta's health care?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we are fully aware of the challenges that are being faced in rural Alberta. We hear that every day. I'm very pleased that I was able to speak with members of the RMA earlier this week and talk about all of the things that we're doing as a government to ensure that we can rebuild the services in rural Alberta. This is not a new problem. This problem existed pre-COVID, actually even prior to this government, but we are taking action to fix it. We have a health care workforce strategy to get more people into rural Alberta, and we'll keep getting till it's done.

### Appeals Secretariat

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, it was three years ago when the Appeals Secretariat received a complaint from Bill Day, who was mistreated during his wife's appeal. Bill has a hearing loss, and AISH, an agency that works with disabled people, failed to provide him with the necessary accommodation for the appeal hearing. It's been nearly a year since the Ombudsman report, and the report listed five recommendations to address the lack of accommodation. A year has passed, and not one of these recommendations has been met. To the minister: will you please tell Bill and his wife and all of us here why this government has failed to fix the problem in one year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Obviously, having a good appeal process to make sure that there are checks and balances in the system is very important, something that I am taking very seriously, and I hope to have a better update for you soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that that is not good enough and given that the previous minister said that the recommendations were reasonable and that they would get to work on them right away but the UCP has failed to act and given that the government has treated AISH recipients so poorly over the last four years – I can't say that I'm shocked that this happened at an appeal – will the minister stand here today and apologize to AISH recipients and their families who advocate alongside them for the mistreatment they have been forced to endure during appeal hearings? That's just unfathomable.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of the recommendations have been accepted and been actioned, so we are moving forward to make sure that we have a good appeal process. This is something we are taking very seriously. We're also taking very seriously making sure that there's care for people with disabilities in our community. It's why we indexed AISH. It's why we've added our affordability payments. It's why we've focused on building inclusive housing for individuals across this province. We care about individuals with disabilities, and we're taking real action to improve lives for Albertans.

Thank you.

2:30

**Ms Renaud:** Given that during budget estimates I asked this minister how the government was addressing the problem and all he could say was – this was from the ADM – and I quote: making sure that staff are aware of the problem. Awareness means nothing without action, and given that this government has a responsibility to ensure that AISH recipients have access to fair and equitable treatment during every step of a quasi-judicial process, will the minister please explain to the people like Bill why making sure that people with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect is not a priority for this UCP? Why is basic access and accommodation not happening under your watch?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are taking this very seriously. It's why we have actioned every recommendation, and we are moving forward to make sure that there is better accountability in the system, that individuals accessing the system are getting appropriate care. I'm going to continue to keep my thumb on this and make sure that Albertans with disabilities that are going through the appeal process are getting adequate access to supports through that system. We're taking this very seriously. This is very important to me, and I thank the member for the question.

### Bail System

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, Premiers across Canada are calling on Ottawa to reform the bail system, a call that Ottawa has been refusing to take any action on. The leniency of the current federal catch-and-release protocols are making Alberta's communities unsafe. I'm personally appalled that our NDP opposition has refused to speak up to their bosses, Trudeau and Singh, in Ottawa on behalf of Albertans about this issue. Can the minister tell the House how we plan to make our rural communities safer and what programs we will implement to help off-set the dangers of the federal bail system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, our government takes the safety and well-being of Albertans seriously. Albertans deserve to feel safe and secure in their communities no matter where they choose to call home. We will continue to invest significantly in policing and in the justice system. Budget '23 has significant increases in both the Justice and the public safety budgets, increases in a budget that the NDP chose to vote against. But while we take that safety of Albertans seriously, we'll continue to invest in policing and the justice system, and we will continue to look for innovative ways to make sure people stay safe.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that reports from my communities typically involve the same offenders and given that a woman with 19 arrest warrants recently was released back into a West Yellowhead community and only given an order to appear in court, to the minister: what can our government do to encourage our police officers in their daily duties to know their efforts are not in vain?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, the difficulty, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal government has the purview in whether you committed a crime, how long your sentence is going to be, and whether you get bail. The difficulty is that in 2019 the Trudeau government chose, through Bill C-75, to make massive reforms to the bail regime here in Canada, which has led to our communities being less safe. And it's not just Alberta saying that; it is every province and every territory bringing that to the table and demanding that the federal government take this seriously and have serious and significant bail reforms that are going to be focused on keeping our communities safe. That's what we're advocating for as a province and what we hope to continue to advocate for.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that my communities are still facing crime issues, particularly by prolific offenders, and given that an offender with 41 previous criminal convictions was recently arrested for stabbing a man and then released just hours later, can the minister share how we will reduce the risk to my community members from repeat offenders?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As we continue to invest in the justice system, making it more efficient, investing in policing, we can't spend our way out of a problem that Justin Trudeau created with C-75. That's why, when we went to an emergency meeting in Ottawa, the minister of public safety and I, just a couple of weeks ago, we did thankfully hear from the federal government that they are proposing soon some changes, and hopefully it will include a reverse onus for those who are a repeat offender as someone accused of a serious crime. Bail is appropriate for many situations, but we do need pretrial custody for repeat offenders.

### Edmonton Downtown Revitalization

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, Edmonton's downtown needs help. Like my fellow residents here in the heart of our city, I've seen the deep impacts of the pandemic on our neighbours, local businesses, and economy. One thing that could help are the recommendations in the report from this government's Edmonton Metro Region Economic Recovery Working Group. Five months ago they delivered their report, but it's yet to be released. Perhaps it's because it recommended a tax credit for AI, matching grants for improvements and beautification, support for new housing: all things absent from Budget 2023. For the Minister of Jobs, Economy

and Northern Development: when will they finally release this report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question by the member. It's been a hard couple of years for small businesses as a result of the pandemic. So many businesses, particularly in the hospitality and accommodation sectors, were really hard hit. That's why our government supported our businesses at degrees higher than any other province. We recognize it didn't off-set all the losses, but we knew that this government needed to underpin small businesses that were struggling. That's what we did.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we also need help to ensure everyone who lives in and visits downtown feels safe and welcome and to support our friends, neighbours, and family in need and given that after years of inaction this government's eventual response was to form a task force to address addiction, homelessness, and public safety with a mandate until March 2023 and given that that's one week away and their only action so far has been to deploy 12 sheriffs to help patrol downtown but there's much, much more that needs to be done and given that we're five weeks away from the writ, why haven't we seen specific plans for further concrete steps, investments in increasing capacity in day shelters, housing, harm reduction? Why is this not a priority for this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, first of all, I want to address one of the questions from the first, around housing. We are investing in housing. We've made a number of significant announcements just in the recent past about significant investments in increasing affordable housing in Edmonton and the Edmonton area as well, and there are more announcements to come. We are building housing, so we are listening. In addition to that, we are working very closely with our not-for-profit partners to address the challenges that we're seeing around homelessness in our downtown core. We've increased funding for Homeward Trust. We've also increased funding for day shelters and our service hub model to provide people with more access into services.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's clear this government is clueless about Edmonton's downtown – their Budget 2023, in fact, failed to put forward any plan for revitalization of downtown in Edmonton or Calgary; indeed, they can't even release the plan from their working group – and given that this is after years of advocacy from businesses, community, and city governments and given that our caucus has released a full plan to renew vibrancy in downtown Calgary, and I'm proud to say we'll soon be releasing our plan for downtown Edmonton, will the minister just admit it's going to take an Alberta NDP government to actually collaborate with communities, businesses, and municipal partners to invest in downtown vibrancy in Edmonton?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that COVID was hard on our downtown cores of all our cities. One thing I hear from business owners is the importance of additional public safety. That's one reason why we've increased public safety's budget by over 13 per cent, an additional 235 sheriffs right across the

province, including many in downtown Edmonton, to ensure that there is an acceptable level of public safety. Moreover, we continue to position the province for investment attraction, economic diversification, and growth.

### **Kearl Oil Sands Project Tailings Leak**

**Mr. Feehan:** The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation released details gathered from their time at the site of the spill of the Kearl tailings pond. They are concerned about the impact that this leak has had on drinking water and wildlife in the area. Their investigation found uncontained toxic water and animal tracks leading out of the spill, directly contradicting the Premier, who earlier called such concerns, quote, misreporting. Does the Premier stand by her claim that the concerns of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations are misreporting, or will she apologize for dismissing their very real concerns about food and water?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety and environmental protection are our number one concerns, and I'm pleased to report that we've been doing continuous water monitoring and water testing downstream of the site. Just yesterday we had some results back from 12 water samples over six locations testing over 575 different metrics. They've been sent to six different labs, and there have been no concerns raised whatsoever about the water quality.

2:40

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the Premier and this minister have chosen to ignore the concerns of First Nations who are rightfully concerned about the impact of a long-running leak that they were not informed of for many months and given that trust is essential between the government and the communities they serve to ensure that crises like these are appropriately addressed but given that only yesterday ACFN cited the comments of the Premier as examples of the government not being accurate in their statements, does the Premier know that her words and actions are destroying trust with the people of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to deploy continuous monitoring downstream of Imperial's Kearl site. That includes water samples taken from the Fort Chip drinking water intake. Nothing has shown that there's been any harm to the drinking water. We continue to do daily testing. That's on top of seasonal monitoring that continues. There are rush results from the daily testing being done, and if we find something, we do have the potential to adapt monitoring to include more.

**Mr. Feehan:** Given that the office of the Privacy Commissioner has opened an investigation into this incident and given that we owe it to the people of Alberta that this never happens again and given that this Premier has lost the trust of the people, which will make the work of reconciliation more difficult, will the Premier stand and admit that the Kearl incident is more than a communications mistake but one that is impacting both the treaty rights and the safety of First Nations and Métis people? Minister, stand up and look directly at the people from the ACFN and tell them that they're wrong again, and they will respond with the anger that they've been showing throughout the last three weeks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We actually welcome the report and the investigation from the commissioner. We see this as something we've asked for. We've said right from the beginning that we would like to take a step back, look at what the processes are around communications, understand if they were followed, and commit to improve them if there are changes that need to be made. We see that this will be an important insight into whether there should be some improvement in processes.

### **Flood and Drought Mitigation on the Bow River**

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, it has now been 10 years since the floods of 2013. There's a flood mitigation project under construction on the Elbow River but not yet on the Bow. Currently, according to government's timeline, the potential start of flood and drought mitigation on the Bow could be 10 more years away. Let's remember: this project will provide economic development for our First Nations neighbours. Since it's the job of the minister of environment to decide where the dam will be built, what's being done to speed up your work so that a site can be selected for flood and drought mitigation on the Bow?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. We've been looking at three different on-stream reservoir options for new flood and drought storage to protect downtown Calgary and other communities along the Bow. Those three sites include a new reservoir located near Morley, an expansion of the Ghost reservoir, and a new reservoir located between the Ghost reservoir and the Bears paw dam. Also, in the spring of 2021 we extended our modified operations agreement with TransAlta for another five-year term. This will allow the government to modify operations at several facilities to help protect communities along the Bow River.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to hear that the minister talked about the flood mitigation agreements with the dams further upstream. That is a good thing. But what if 2013 happens again between now and when the dam gets built? What other measures can be put in place to protect southern Alberta and Calgary from further damage? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this very important question. Flood mitigation for Calgary and communities in Alberta is very important, and that's why Budget '23 actually has \$282 million over three years for the Springbank dam. Just an update on the construction work that's there this week: there's about 20,000 cubic metres of concrete that's been placed at this dam. That's about 2,500 truckloads. Also, about 420,000 cubic metres of dirt work. That's about 32,000 truckloads. We're also working with the city of Calgary for the Glenmore reservoir to expand about another 4,000 Olympic-sized . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Stoney Nakoda Nation has already passed a band council resolution . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. McIver:** A band council resolution has already been passed by the Stoney Nakoda allowing Alberta Environment to do the work, and given the fact that the elders and chiefs have even blessed the site of the future dam, which means our First Nations partners are doing their part, I would ask the Environment minister: please tell the House how your ministry will shorten the time until we can get an agreement with the Stoney people on where the dam will go. It matters to the Stoney people. It matters to everyone in southern Alberta.

**An Hon. Member:** Preamble.

**The Speaker:** If the member had never used a preamble before, perhaps the intervention would be more warranted.

The hon. the minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's advocacy and passion about this issue. As you know, projects of this size, with the added complexity of an on-stream reservoir, require time for careful analysis and engagement to make sure that we get this right and it's safe. We need to get this right. In the meantime the city of Calgary, with \$69 million in funding from the Alberta community resilience program, has initiated 13 mitigation projects, 11 of which are along the Bow River. This includes the west Eau Claire and downtown flood protection barriers as well as the upper plateau stormwater separation project in Sunnyside.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

#### Ramadan

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Remarks in Arabic] I am honoured as a member of this House and as a member of the Islamic faith to rise today and acknowledge the holy month of Ramadan, which began last evening, on March 22. As Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, we enrich our faith through spiritual reflection and introspection. Fasting is one of the five key pillars of Islam. It teaches us patience, generosity, discipline, and unity. During this most holiest and solemn month we focus on personal growth and renewal and reflect upon ourselves, our values, and our actions.

Although participating in family and communal gatherings is important in my culture, it is especially valuable during Ramadan. I'm happy that we can resume traditions post-COVID and that we can further promote strong communities through participation, giving, sharing, caring, and praying.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of one's faith or religious background all Albertans can join those marking Ramadan this year. We can all take time this month to be thankful for our family, for our friends, and the many things that make this province a great province. We can remember and raise empathy for the less fortunate and celebrate with acts of kindness and charity.

Alberta has a profound history with Muslim faith. Canada's first and oldest mosque, the Al Rashid mosque, is located here in Edmonton, and it was built in 1938 with the support of Christian and Jewish communities.

For everyone here in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world I wish a blessed and peaceful Ramadan. May you experience renewal during this time of reflection and prayer. Ramadan Mubarak.

#### NDP Retiring Members and Election Candidates

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and thank four members of our caucus who won't be returning to the next Legislature. Each of them has served their community and changed Alberta for the better, each in their own way.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview sat in this Chamber when our caucus only had four members. After the 2015 election he served as our minister of Municipal Affairs, service Alberta, and economic development and trade. He drove innovation and diversification in our economy and continues to be an advocate for advancing technology in Alberta and the opportunities that it unlocks.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was our Indigenous Relations minister, and during that time he visited every single First Nations community and Métis settlement in Alberta in person. His commitment to truth and reconciliation is absolute. We wish him all the best in his well-earned retirement.

2:50

The Member for Edmonton-Decore is a fearless advocate for working people and for the labour movement. He's been a loyal and hard-working member of our movement to lift up working families and make sure that everyone gets home safely and everyone takes home an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

The Member for Edmonton-West Henday, one of our youngest ever MLAs, is a great example of how young people can succeed in public life and make our communities stronger. Even today he's standing up for schools in west Edmonton to make sure that kids get what they need to be successful close to home. I know that he has many more adventures ahead of him with his growing family.

We're going to miss our friends, but we're also very excited by the many new Alberta NDP MLAs who we hope to see elected in just 67 days. Alberta's NDP candidates, volunteers, and staff are working hard to fill this Chamber with NDP MLAs who will end the chaos, cruelty, and conflict filled by the UCP government and replace it with a stable, competent, and caring Alberta NDP government, with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona as our Premier.

If you'll forgive me, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a heartfelt thank you on behalf of our entire movement to Deron, Richard, Chris, and Jon. We love you guys, and we wish you all the best. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Complete lawlessness; between the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake and now you with the use of names. How can we ever proceed?

#### Presenting Petitions

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly to express its support for the people of Ukraine and to express its opposition to the Russian occupation of Ukraine and the unprovoked Russian attack on the Ukrainian people.

## Introduction of Bills

### Bill 208

#### Municipal Government (Tourism Community Designation) Amendment Act, 2023

**Ms Rosin:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 208, the Municipal Government (Tourism Community Designation) Amendment Act, 2023.

Recognizing that communities with tourism-based economies face unique challenges with regard to supporting visitation beyond the resident populations and market demands to be unique as a destination, this bill sets the framework to give communities committed to tourism-based economies tools to increase capacity, enhance their unique character, facilitate destination marketing, and support other related initiatives to remain globally competitive.

[Motion carried; Bill 208 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain on behalf of the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Bill 209

#### Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Neglect) Amendment Act, 2023

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the MLA for Sherwood Park to request leave to introduce Bill 209, the Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Neglect) Amendment Act, 2023.

Animals should not be subject to unnecessary harm or cruelty, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they are properly cared for and protected. This private member's bill will ensure that animals are treated with compassion and care by raising penalties for animal abuse, especially for repeat offenders.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20 of the Auditor General Act it is my pleasure as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the report of the Auditor General, March 2023. A copy of the report will also be provided to members.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I have the five requisite copies of petitions organized by the Condo Owners Forum Society of Alberta containing 378 signatures of condo owners from all over Alberta, including Calgary and Medicine Hat, calling on the government to include condo owners in the affordability action plan, specifically the rebates on electricity and caps on natural gas.

The second one is also from the Condo Owners Forum Society of Alberta, containing 639 signatories from condo owners from all over Alberta, again calling on the Alberta government to include condo owners in the affordability action plan, specifically the rebates on electricity and caps on natural gas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has a tabling.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of yet another petition calling on the government to keep Alberta in the Canadian pension plan, this one containing approximately 900 signatures of motivated Albertans who want their government to leave their pension alone.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Jeremy Nixon, Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services, pursuant to the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities annual report 2021-22.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were no points of order today during Oral Question Period. [interjections] Perhaps there should have been.

Prior to calling the hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board, I believe there may be a unanimous consent request coming from the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to briefly revert to introductions.

**Mr. Barnes:** Yes, there is. Please, Speaker, with the House's consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, all. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the entire House someone that a lot of us know very, very well. For over six years she has worked effectively and diligently. For the last six months she's worked effectively and diligently for me, and for a year and a half before that she worked effectively and diligently for myself and the MLA for Central Peace-Notley. Could I please ask Rebecca Lees to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** For the benefit of members, I also understand that there may be an additional request for unanimous consent following the remarks of the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, but we will take that as it comes.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

#### Bill 11

#### Appropriation Act, 2023

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to rise and move third reading of Bill 11, the Appropriation Act, 2023.

The funding amounts in Bill 11 will ensure the province has the resources to address Albertans' needs, deliver programs critical to Albertans as well as pave the way for prosperity. Mr. Speaker, Budget '23 is securing Alberta's future, securing the future for our children, grandchildren, and communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members in this House support this bill.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** You don't give me much time, hon. member.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved third reading of Bill 11. Are there any others looking to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has the floor.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government claims that the funding amount in Bill 11 will address Albertans' needs and their priorities. Let me tell you, from the standpoint of my constituents that I hear from every single day, that it will not address their needs; rather, it will again ignore their needs.

Just talk about health care. They are struggling to find family doctors. They have been made to wait in emergency waiting rooms for 10 to 15 hours. There's complete chaos in health care, and this bill will not address that. In fact, this bill, if we talk about inflation and population growth, is cutting funding to our health care system.

3:00

The second thing I would say is that, like, parents across this province, in my riding also care about schools. For the last four years people in the northeast have been asking for a new school in the northeast communities, in particular Redstone, and this bill will only fund one school for the entire city of Calgary, not a new school in northeast Calgary. It's not in Redstone. Again, it's not addressing the needs of my constituents and many Albertans across this province.

The third thing. The UCP created a cost-of-living crisis. When they came into power, they removed the cap from insurance premiums, and insurance premiums went through the roof. They have not done anything about that. People are forced to pay a 30 per cent, 40 per cent, in some cases 100 per cent increase in their premiums. They removed the cap from the utilities, and people are forced to pay double the utilities that they were paying a couple of years ago. It's not addressing the high grocery prices, which are rising way above the rate of inflation, and instead of investigating, the government still stands with those who are using this crisis to line their pockets. Clearly, this bill is not addressing the crisis facing my constituents and facing communities across this province.

I urge all members of this House and my colleagues to vote against this piece of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Others wishing to add to debate?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

Does the hon. minister want to close debate?

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do. I would like to close debate. I think the last word here is important because the last word, in fact, will bear truth to Bill 11, the Appropriation Act, 2023. Bill 11, this Appropriation Act, 2023, will strengthen health care in this province. It supports enrolment growth in our K to 12 education system. It improves public safety. It will support a fair and efficient justice system. It supports Albertans directly who are struggling with inflation, and it continues to ensure that Albertans have a massive tax advantage over every other province. Moreover, it will ensure future prosperity for Albertans. This will ensure that we are on a sustainable fiscal trajectory, that we have an economy that's growing and diversifying, generating opportunities for Albertans, and generating wealth for future governments.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 11 secures the future for this province, and I encourage every member to support it today in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. minister. And my apologies; last day on the job for me.

I am now prepared to ask the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

## Bill 12

### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again it's a privilege to rise and move third reading of Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023.

Bill 12 will provide authority for government to pay from the general fund for additional costs that are not already covered or otherwise provided for during the current fiscal year. It includes \$2.7 billion in expense, \$500,000 in capital investment, and \$292 million in financial transactions. The funding in Bill 12 will cover costs reflecting the government's commitment to save for the future, strengthen our health care system, and adapt to the changing global economy.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to point out that included in Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023, is an investment of \$753 million, which will make a total investment of \$2 billion in the heritage savings trust fund. This is an investment in future generations of Albertans, and it's a privilege to serve with colleagues in the government that have the foresight to make this kind of investment.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, again I ask the hon. members to support this bill to help government move forward with funding Albertans' priorities. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance has moved third reading of Bill 12, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker, to speak to Bill 12 at third reading. I'd like to say that the West Edmonton Mall roller coaster is now retired, the Mindbender roller coaster, and the Conservative Party's boom-bust roller coaster, that is the hallmark of Tories' rule, under the UCP is still operational.

All we're getting offered by the UCP is more of the same, as reflected in the appropriation bill and all of the budget items that were brought forward before this House. More of the same is all they offer: more reliance on oil windfalls to bail them out of their economic mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, we've been pumping oil out of the ground in this province for over 70 years, and what have we got for it? The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has admitted in estimates that even he regrets that we failed to have a sovereign wealth fund in this province that rivals that of Norway so that we would actually have the benefit of the resource revenue that we've been pulling out of the ground for decades and decades, yet more of the same is all we get from this government, more of the same, the mind-bending roller coaster that Conservative governments are intent on offering once again to Albertans.

This NDP opposition is going to shift into drive, Mr. Speaker, shift into overdrive, guiding Alberta, as the new government, confidently into the future, a better future, a future under a new majority NDP government that will definitely end that roller coaster and smooth things out for the benefit of all.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Getson:** Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely proud and privileged to rise probably on what may be our last day to be in full support of this budget. I heard the member opposite talking about roller coaster rides. Well, I think the only thing that Albertans can remember is that when they ran the bus, when they were in charge of the budget, the only ride the Albertans went on was the Drop of Doom, and we sure as heck aren't going back there. So I strongly encourage everybody to support this budget, because this is the thing that sets the path for the future, not the scary, freaky-deaky Friday rides that they gave us four years ago.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

I am prepared to call on the hon. the Minister of Finance to close debate should he wish to do so.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** Just prior to calling the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I believe that there may be a request for unanimous consent coming from the chief government whip.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, it is just that request, exactly, I guess; I really got that sentence out quite well. I would like to move for unanimous consent that we revert back to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**The Speaker:** The chief government whip is rising.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to introduce caucus staff who are joining us here in the gallery from the United Conservative Party and just extend to them on behalf of all of caucus a huge thank you for all the work that you have done over the last four years, if you have been with us for that long, or if it's been a bit shorter. Thank you for being here and everything that you have done. Our MLAs are very much appreciative of the work that you do, enhancing the work that we do here in the Chamber. I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that we can't do it without you, so thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board to move third reading of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

3:10

### Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise to move third reading of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

Mr. Speaker, this act introduces a fiscal framework to this province. We've heard a bit about the roller coaster ride, heard a bit about the Drop of Doom here in this short afternoon. We know that we have a resource-based economy. We do have a volatile revenue structure in this province, and when we take a look historically, during times of great prosperity there has been a propensity, a tendency, to increase spending during those times of great prosperity, spending levels that simply aren't sustainable. This fiscal framework will ensure that governments have guardrails in the future to ensure that spending remains sustainable so that we can continue to deliver necessary government programs such as health care and education into the future and ensure that the next generation has the ability to receive those deliverables.

Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, also will require that all income earned by the heritage savings trust fund stays in the heritage savings trust fund. Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting again – and the member across noted it earlier – that had we as a province from day one reinvested all of the earnings from the heritage savings trust fund into the fund, instead of an \$18 billion fund today we would have a \$300 billion fund, a fund generating \$20 billion of investment income for Albertans every year. While we all wish we had started earlier, the best day to start is today. Bill 10 creates that start.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 also includes the agriculture processing tax credit. This is a nonrefundable corporate tax credit that will ensure our agriculture industry and the value-added industry is incredibly competitive. We've already seen the results of that with McCain announcing a record-setting investment in southern Alberta. This is only the first announcement of many to come.

Bill 10 includes a number of other amendments that directly support Albertans and their families. Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 reflects this government's commitment to secure Alberta's future, and I encourage all members on both sides of the House to support Bill 10.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you. [interjections] Oh, it's so kind of you to clap for me. I hope you're all comfortable because I do have a long speech that I've prepared. No. I kid. I will keep it short.

I do want to just get on the record for third reading of Bill 10. I said this in second reading, in fact, that this government had such an opportunity. It is a little bit of a broken record, I think, me saying that they had such an opportunity with their session to offer some sort of, you know, tangible hope for Albertans through their legislation. And, again, what did we get? We got not a whole lot with their bills, and Bill 10 is just one example of a government really squandering their opportunity to do some transformational work.

You know, I reflected the other day. A number of my colleagues talked about the work that this government could be doing; strengthening health care, investing in housing, to name a few. The list certainly goes on. This is, of course, probably the least robust legislative agenda we've seen from this government. No surprise, of course, from a Premier with no mandate, so I do understand why we end up with bills like this one.

I do need to highlight the most troubling part of Bill 10 once more to get this on the record for all those watching. This creates the Alberta fund, which is a \$1.4 billion campaign slush fund to essentially buy votes, right? What's so interesting about this is that this government's own Premier has spoken against this sort of thing in the past. It's quite interesting to all of us on this side of the House that this Premier and this Finance minister are seemingly going against their own past values and principles.

**Ms Hoffman:** If they had any.

**Member Irwin:** That could be true.

And I want Albertans watching – I'm sure there are at least two or three – to understand that the fine print in this bill, Bill 10, the fine print on the fund in particular, allows this UCP government to spend their projected surplus for the re-election before the bills come due at the end of the fiscal year. This is bad, bad fiscal management, and it's exactly how you end up squandering a resource boom.

Now – no surprise – we shouldn't be shocked from a government that's been an absolute train wreck when it comes to fiscal management. They speak a big game about fiscal management,

about being fiscal conservatives, but their record shows absolutely otherwise. [interjections] In addition, as my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora points out, huge deficits.

In addition to that, this is the same UCP government – let's just maybe share a few of their highlights as we close the session. They gambled away \$1.3 billion on Trump's re-election. They couldn't account for \$4 billion in COVID spending, \$1.6 billion in accounting errors in their first year in office. Oh, but wait, it doesn't stop there. Let's add a couple more highlights or lowlights, I perhaps should say. This is that same government, fiscal conservatives, who planned to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a provincial police force, a provincial police force that, in fact, no one's asking for. They planned to gamble away Albertans' retirement security again, pulling out of the Canada pension plan, something that a whole lot of Albertans certainly aren't asking for. Our leader, in fact, is down in Calgary right now with a whole bunch of seniors who would argue that . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order

**Member Irwin:** Oh, that's right. Good point.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Schow:** What kind of a last day would it be without a point of order? Mentioning a member's presence or absence: we know that that's a no-no in this Chamber. It's not novice hour. The member should apologize and retract.

**The Speaker:** Such lawlessness, as I mentioned earlier.

**Member Irwin:** I retract. I apologize.

**The Speaker:** I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Debate Continued

**Member Irwin:** Thank you so much.

I'm just so grateful that those members opposite are listening to my every word today because that is a change. That is a change. But I really do appreciate it.

Okay. I'll just end with one more lowlight, and that is the incredibly troubling development from this government in that they plan to spend \$20 billion to give to already profitable oil and gas corporations, friends of the Premier. In fact, for those watching, please do join our consultation at 6 p.m. tonight, [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca), for all the details.

With that, you know, I just want to remind Albertans that you absolutely have a choice. In just – what, 67 days? – 67 days you can vote for a government that is going to continually squander away your hard-earned tax dollars, or you can vote for competent, stable leadership in the Alberta NDP.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? I am prepared to call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to make the bells one minute for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

I am prepared to call on the hon. Minister of Finance to close debate. The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again and close debate on Bill 10 because I just simply have to respond to the member's false assertions, the assertion that the NDP somehow brought responsible fiscal management. Nothing could be further from the truth. We inherited, back in 2019, a government that was spending \$10 billion more than comparator provinces, but what was really tragic is that we were not getting better results.

This government worked over four years, compassionately, thoughtfully, and surgically, to bring our spending in line with other provinces, to ensure our spending was sustainable. Mr. Speaker, promise made, promise kept. This fiscal year we've arrived at that level. We've eliminated the \$10 billion deficit. My department provided some analysis. Had we continued on the spending trajectory of the members opposite when they were in office, we would not be projecting a \$2.4 billion deficit in this upcoming fiscal year. It would be a \$4 billion deficit instead of a \$2.4 billion surplus. The members opposite simply did not bring responsible fiscal management.

3:20

But, Mr. Speaker, in this bill is a series of fiscal rules that will provide guardrails for future governments. With respect to surplus management the fiscal rules will prioritize debt repayment. The fiscal rules will prioritize further investment in the heritage savings trust fund. The fiscal rules will strengthen – strengthen – any further use of surplus funds.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege – it is a great privilege – to rise in this House and close debate on Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, and I call on every member of this House to support this bill.

[The voice vote indicated that motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:21 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rosin
Allard	Issik	Rowswell
Amery	LaGrange	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Savage
Dreeshen	Long	Schow
Fir	Lovely	Smith, Mark
Getson	Madu	Stephan
Glubish	McIver	Toews
Gotfried	Nally	Turton
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Wilson
Hanson	Rehn	Yao
Horner	Reid	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dach	Irwin	Pancholi
Hoffman	Nielsen	Sabir

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 6
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[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

### Statement by the Speaker

#### 30th Legislature

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, prior to calling on the hon. the Government House Leader, let me provide some brief closing



remarks. There have been significant changes around the legislative precinct in the 30th Legislature. The Annex building was torn down after 71 years, and the scaffolding was finally removed off the Legislature thanks to the hon. the Minister of Infrastructure. The Federal Building was renamed the Queen Elizabeth II Building to honour Her late Majesty. Violet King Henry Plaza was named to celebrate the legacy of this pioneer of the Alberta Black community.

On a more sombre note, the constituency of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall was changed from just Calgary-McCall in honour of the former member, Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar, after his tragic death. [some applause] Sure. Let's give the former Government House Leader. . . [applause] This is the only occurrence in Alberta's history of an electoral division name being changed mid-Legislature.

In the 30th Legislature there were 252 sessional days, 471 individual sittings, and 47 evening sittings that went past midnight. The Assembly sat for a total of 1,748 hours and counting, and the number of words that have been spilled on the Legislature floor is over 14,200,000. For someone reading along, the average reader, it would have taken them 40 full days to read what we had been up to. Two hundred and fifty-two sessional days have been the third most of any Legislature in Alberta's history, and there have been 5,676 sessional days in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta since its first day on March 15, 1906.

Over the span of the 30th Legislature a total of nearly 3,525 questions were asked during Oral Question Period. I understand that there were approximately a dozen answers. There were no less than 1,854 sessional papers tabled, and there were 198 bills introduced.

Hon. members, serving as the 14th Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is one of the greatest privileges of my life, and I say thank you to each and every one of you for your hard work, for your dedication to our community. If there's one thing I know about members of this Assembly, it's that each and every day every one of you, whether you're a member of the opposition or you're a member of the government: you wake up and come to work to try to do your best to make Alberta a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Now, there's one big difference between all of us, and that's that some members believe there's one path to accomplish that, and other members believe in an entirely different path. But we all share so much in common, and that's that we have an intrinsic desire to make Alberta the best place in the entire world. I couldn't be more grateful to have served with 89 individuals who share that passion, that goal, and that desire.

From the very bottom of my heart, let me say thank you. May God bless you. May God bless Alberta. [Standing ovation]

The Government House Leader.

3:30

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you for those very kind words, Mr. Speaker. It's been an honour to serve in this Chamber with you as Speaker. Thank you for your service.

There is something to be said about having the last word, and I have that distinct pleasure. As we conclude the 2023 spring sitting today, I want to thank all of you, all of you members, for your time and your service to your communities, to the constituents of Alberta, and for your hard work. I also want to thank your families. I know as a husband and a father I could not do this job without the support of my family, and I know many members in this Chamber are in the exact same position. I'm grateful for them. Please pass along my gratitude.

I know that there is a campaign that will be taking our attention over the next couple of months, and it will no doubt be a very tired summer. But I want to wish everyone here the best. For those of you who are retiring, I want to thank you for your service from the bottom of my heart and for the hard work and dedication you provided to this House and to your constituents. It's not every day you get to spend your time here at the Alberta Legislature, though it may seem like we are here every day, making things for Alberta better.

I also want to thank the Official Opposition, in particular the Opposition House Leader, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods – it has been an honour to work with her and continue the service of Albertans – for their work and all your work in this session. We may not agree on a lot, but we can all agree that when we come here, we're here in the best interest of Albertans and our constituents.

Another group that needs to be thanked is the tireless LAO staff who work around the clock, literally in some cases, to support MLAs both in and out of the House. I want to thank the security staff, the sheriffs, Parliamentary Counsel, broadcast services, *Hansard* staff, and there are many, many others. I wouldn't be able to mention all in this statement. I am very grateful for you, and on behalf of the government we express our gratitude for helping us in this part of democracy.

Finally, I want to end by saying that it has been an honour to serve as the House leader in my capacity on the government side. With that, I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 25 the business of the 2023 spring sitting is now concluded.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until October 2023.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:32 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 25]



## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 4th Session (2022-2023)**

**Activity to Thursday, March 23, 2023**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1\* — Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act (Danielle Smith)**

First Reading — 4-5 (*Nov. 29, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 22-31 (*Nov. 30, 2022 aft.*), 43-52 (*Nov. 30, 2022 eve.*), 65-73 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft.*), 105-36 (*Dec. 5, 2022 eve.*), 172-77 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 177-96 (*Dec. 6, 2022 eve.*), 231-38 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 238-45 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed with amendments on division*)

Third Reading — 245-50 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve.*), 251-57 (*Dec. 7, 2022 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 cA-33.8 ]

### **Bill 2 — Inflation Relief Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (\$) (Jones)**

First Reading — 208 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 270-75 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft.*), 342-49 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 361-72 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve.*), 421-25 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 430-31 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 446-50 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c19 ]

### **Bill 3 — Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (Shandro)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 148-55 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 224-30 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 276 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 325-29 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 375-78 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c23 ]

### **Bill 4 — Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 2022 (Copping)**

First Reading — 86 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 155-70 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft.*), 220-24 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 321-25 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 372-75 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 392 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 426-29 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c17 ]

### **Bill 5 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No. 2) (Shandro)**

First Reading — 147 (*Dec. 6, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 211-20 (*Dec. 7, 2022 aft.*), 314-21 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 392-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 429-30 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022, with exceptions; SA 2022 c20 ]

**Bill 6 — Police Amendment Act, 2022 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 309-14 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve.*), 349-54 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 399-408 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft.*), 409-21 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 431 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve.*), 450-51 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2022 c22 ]

**Bill 7 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2022 (No.2) (Schow)**

First Reading — 329 (*Dec. 12, 2022 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 378-79 (*Dec. 13, 2022 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 398-99 (*Dec. 14, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 425-26 (*Dec. 14, 2022 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on December 15, 2022; SA 2022 c21 ]

**Bill 8 — Alberta Firearms Act (Shandro)**

First Reading — 503 (*Mar. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 536-43 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 708 (*Mar. 21, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 747 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

**Bill 9 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Nally)**

First Reading — 523 (*Mar. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 676-86 (*Mar. 21, 2023 aft.*), 695-701 (*Mar. 21, 2023 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 720-33 (*Mar. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 747-754 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed*)

**Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 536 (*Mar. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 686-94 (*Mar. 21, 2023 aft.*), 701-8 (*Mar. 21, 2023 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 733-39 (*Mar. 22, 2023 aft.*), 741-47 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 771-72 (*Mar. 23, 2023 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 11 — Appropriation Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 617 (*Mar. 16, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 674-75 (*Mar. 21, 2023 aft.*), 708 (*Mar. 21, 2023 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 720 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve.*), 755 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 769-70 (*Mar. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 12 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2023 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 661 (*Mar. 20, 2023 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 675-76 (*Mar. 21, 2023 aft.*), 708 (*Mar. 21, 2023 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 720 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve.*), 755-56 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 770-71 (*Mar. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Public Health Care Delivery Standards Act (Notley)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 88-91 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft.*), 354-60 (*Dec. 13, 2022 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Personal Income Tax (Charitable and Other Gifts) Amendment Act, 2022 (Williams)**

First Reading — 64 (*Dec. 1, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 91-98 (*Dec. 5, 2022 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 289-97 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 445-46 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 452 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft.*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2022 c18 ]

**Bill 203\* — Traffic Safety (Excessive Speeding Penalties) Amendment Act, 2022 (Toor)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-303 (*Dec. 12, 2022 aft., adjourned*), 480-87 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 630-35 (*Mar. 20, 2023 aft., passed with amendments*)

**Bill 204 — Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2022 (Mark Smith)**

First Reading — 270 (*Dec. 8, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 487-92 (*Mar. 6, 2023 aft.*), 557-64 (*Mar. 13, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 635-43 (*Mar. 20, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 754-55 (*Mar. 22, 2023 eve., passed*)

**Bill 205 — Official Sport of Alberta Act (Lovely)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 564-71 (*Mar. 13, 2023 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 206 — Insurance (Private Passenger Vehicle Premium) Amendment Act, 2022 (Sabir)**

First Reading — 444 (*Dec. 15, 2022 aft., passed*)

**Bill 207 — Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act (Eggen)**

First Reading — 601 (*Mar. 15, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Municipal Government (Tourism Community Designation) Amendment Act, 2023 (Rosin)**

First Reading — 769 (*Mar. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)

**Bill 209 — Animal Protection (Prevention of Animal Neglect) Amendment Act, 2023 (Walker)**

First Reading — 769 (*Mar. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)



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**Alberta Hansard 2022-2023  
(30th Legislature, Fourth Session)  
Index**

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**Abbreviations**

*Political parties*

Ind.	Independent
NDP	New Democratic Party
UCP	United Conservative Party

Abbreviations not included in the above list are in the subject index in alphabetical order.

**NOTE:** *Tabled documents are listed in the [Sessional Papers](#) for this session.*

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**Spring 2023 sitting: 13 afternoons, 3 evenings**

## Main Estimates 2023-2024

Below is a list of ministries, the schedule of debate, and links to posted transcripts, listed by date.

Committee estimates debates are scheduled for three hours except for Executive Council, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, Technology and Innovation, and Transportation and Economic Corridors, which are scheduled for two hours. The ministries of Affordability and Utilities, Education, Health, and Treasury Board and Finance each have two meetings scheduled for a total of six hours of debate for each ministry. Except where noted, morning meetings start at 9 a.m., afternoon meetings at 3:30 p.m., and evening meetings at 7 p.m.

The vote on the budget in the Legislative Assembly is scheduled for the afternoon of March 16.

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>
Justice	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 6 evening</a> (3 hours)
Municipal Affairs	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 6 evening</a> (3 hours)
Culture	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 7 morning</a> (3 hours)
Education	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 7 morning</a> (3 hours)
Education	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 7 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Indigenous Relations	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 7 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Health	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 8 morning</a> (3 hours)
Technology and Innovation	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 8 morning</a> (2 hours; 8 a.m. start)
Transportation and Economic Corridors	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 8 morning</a> (2 hours; 10:15 a.m. start)
Agriculture and Irrigation	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 8 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Health	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 8 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Advanced Education	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 9 morning</a> (3 hours)
Environment and Protected Areas	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 9 morning</a> (3 hours)
Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 13 evening</a> (2 hours)
Skilled Trades and Professions	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 13 evening</a> (3 hours)
Jobs, Economy and Northern Development	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 14 morning</a> (3 hours)
Mental Health and Addiction	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 14 morning</a> (3 hours)
Affordability and Utilities	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 14 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Executive Council	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 14 afternoon</a> (2 hours)
Affordability and Utilities	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 14 evening</a> (3 hours)
Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 14 evening</a> (3 hours)
Seniors, Community and Social Services	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 15 morning</a> (3 hours)
Treasury Board and Finance	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 15 morning</a> (3 hours)
Forestry, Parks and Tourism	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 15 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Treasury Board and Finance	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 15 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Energy	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">March 15 evening</a> (3 hours)
Public Safety and Emergency Services	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 15 evening</a> (3 hours)
Children's Services	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">March 16 morning</a> (3 hours)
Infrastructure	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">March 16 morning</a> (3 hours)



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**Aboriginal consultation**

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Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in *Resource Stewardship Committee*, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>

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Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in *Resource Stewardship Committee*, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>

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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee,*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee,*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee,*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>

Main estimates 2023-2024, clarification ... *Acting Speaker (Reid)* 617; *Pitt* 617  
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**Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas**

*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>

Main estimates 2023-2024 vote ... *Chair* 616  
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**Ministry of Executive Council**

[See also **Executive Council**]

*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>

Main estimates 2023-2024 vote ... *Chair* 616  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>

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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee,*  
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**Ministry of Indigenous Relations**

*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>

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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee,*  
<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>

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**Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development**

*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee,*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/FC>*  
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**Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction**

*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/FC>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/FC>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>*  
 Main estimates 2023-2024 vote ... *Chair* 616  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Families and Communities Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/FC>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Alberta's Economic Future Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/EF>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>*  
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*Note: Main estimates for 2023-2024 were considered in Resource Stewardship Committee, <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/assembly-business/committees/RS>*  
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