



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 24, 2019

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

First Session

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

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

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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
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Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

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

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 24, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her 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 prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by R.J. Chambers. I invite you all 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:** A stirring rendition. Well done, everyone.  
Good afternoon. You may be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of visitors joining us today. In the Speaker's gallery I see the former member for the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo, Harvey Cenaiko, and his son Justin Cenaiko is also here. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Also, members, joining us today are two groups of hard-working public servants, one from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and another from the Legislative Assembly Office. We'd all like to say thank you for all the work you do. Please feel free to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us are family members of one of our team in the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, Kaitlynn Church: her partner, Mike Kaczmarek, and his parents, Brenda and Richard Kaczmarek.

Also joining us today: a guest of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, Desiree Clarke; and a guest of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Bob Cocking. I'd invite you to all rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

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

### La Francophonie Albertaine

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to wish all French Canadians a joyful celebration of their historic national day of la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. I have a statement I'm going to give primarily in French, and I understand that English translations are being circulated.

Je tiens à souhaiter également une bonne Fête nationale à tous les Québécois. Le Canada a été fondé en français. C'est donc à dire que les canadiens célèbrent la Saint-Jean-Baptiste depuis 360 ans. L'Alberta aussi a été fondée en français. Cette langue a été la première langue européenne parlée dans ce territoire. De nombreux franco-albertains peuvent retracer leurs racines dans notre province depuis plus de deux siècles.

La plupart des premiers commerçants de fourrures, des coureurs des bois, des premiers missionnaires, et de nombreux fermiers étaient francophone. La carte du nord de l'Alberta reflète particulièrement ce patrimoine, pensant aux villes de St. Albert, Beaumont, Lac Ste. Anne, Lac La Biche, et Bonnyville, pour nommer que celles-là.

De nos jours les personnes d'origine française qui vivent en Alberta y sont venues par hasard ou par choix. Elles sont nées ici ou au Québec mais aussi d'ailleurs au Canada, en Europe, en Afrique, en Amérique latine, dans les Caraïbes, et en Asie. La communauté francophone de notre province est l'une des celles dont la croissance est la plus rapide au pays. Plus d'un quart de million d'Albertains parlent couramment le français, et près d'un élève sur trois suivent un programme d'études en français.

Mars est le Mois de la Francophonie en Alberta, et le drapeau franco-albertain et un symbole officiel de distinction en vertu de la loi sur les emblèmes de l'Alberta. Le patrimoine francophone de l'Alberta et sa communauté florissante attire des francophones du monde entier. Ses gens savent qu'ils seront les bienvenues chez nous, qu'ils rencontreront de nombreux francophones, qu'ils pourront obtenir des services en français, qu'ils y trouveront des institutions francophones, et que leurs enfants auront l'occasion de fréquenter des écoles francophones. Et, bien sûr, comme tous les nouveaux arrivants en Alberta, peu importe leur origine ethnique ou leur langue, ils auront de nombreuses possibilités d'emplois, pourront créer leurs propres entreprises, élever une famille, et profiter de tout ce que l'Alberta a à offrir.

M. le Président, notre communauté franco-albertaine forte renforce notre province en nous lions à d'autres communautés francophones du Canada, dont celles de l'Ontario, du Nouveau-Brunswick, et bien sûr de la belle province du Québec. Et une communauté franco-albertaine forte nous aide aussi à nous rapprocher de la Francophonie partout dans le monde.

Une étude récente du Conference Board du Canada a révélé des retombées économiques positives découlant du fait français au Canada. Ces retombées se reflètent dans la diversification du commerce, dans les exportations et les importations, de même que dans les emplois et la croissance économique.

Our government recognizes all these economic, social, and cultural contributions of French-speaking Albertans.

C'est pourquoi nous appuyons pleinement la politique et le plan d'action du gouvernement de l'Alberta en matière de la Francophonie, y compris l'accès accru à des programmes et des services en français.

Let me pause to commend the former government for its action and its plans in this regard, which this government is proud to renew and commit ourselves to.

Nous nous engageons à réaliser ces initiatives en utilisant des moyens tangibles et durables qui renforceront nos communautés et feront croître notre économie.

M. le Président, je suis également ravi d'annoncer la nomination de la Députée de Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche au poste de secrétaire parlementaire responsable de la Francophonie en Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to announce as well the appointment of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche as parliamentary secretary for la Francophonie in Alberta.

Maintenant les franco-albertains auront une défenseur dévouée qui travaillera avec notre cabinet pour faire avancer la politique et

le plan d'action en matière de la Francophonie, une défenseur qui, soit dit en passant, parle couramment le français et qui représente une région du nord de l'Alberta peuplée de nombreux francophones et qui possède une riche histoire et culture francophone.

1:40

In her new role the parliamentary secretary will work closely with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, who will continue to be the minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat, and have access to the resources of that department.

Cette nomination nous permet de reconnaître et d'honorer la richesse du passé, du présent, et de l'avenir de la Francophonie albertaine, et elle vient à point en ce jour où nous célébrons la fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste au Canada. Happy Saint-Jean-Baptiste to all of our francophone Alberta friends. Bonne fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish all Franco-Albertans a bonne fête for Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, a day of celebration for francophones across Canada for four centuries. Let me also wish our friends in Quebec une bonne fête nationale.

Canada was founded in French, so for more than 360 years Canadians have been celebrating the feast day of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Alberta was founded in French, too. It was the first European language spoken in our province.

Many Franco-Albertans can trace their roots in our province back more than two centuries. The early fur traders, the coureurs de bois, the first missionaries, and many farmers were largely French. The map of northern Alberta especially reflects that heritage, with towns and cities like St. Albert, Beaumont, Lac Ste. Anne, Lac La Biche, Bonnyville, and so many more.

Today people of French heritage are Albertans by chance and by choice, born here and coming here from Quebec, other parts of Canada, from Europe, and from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. The francophone community in our province is among the fastest growing in the country. More than a quarter-million Albertans are fluent in French, and nearly 1 in 3 students are in a French-language education program.

March is Francophonie Month in Alberta, and the Franco-Albertan flag is an official symbol of distinction under the Emblems of Alberta Act.

Alberta's francophone heritage and thriving community attracts French-speaking peoples from around the globe. They know they will be welcomed here, that they will find many other francophones here as well as services and institutions in French, and that their children will have opportunities to attend francophone schools. And, of course, like all newcomers to Alberta, regardless of their ethnicity or language, they will find many opportunities for jobs, for creating businesses, raising families, and enjoying all the wonderful things Alberta has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, a strong Franco-Albertan community strengthens our province by helping connect us to other francophone communities across Canada, including Ontario, New Brunswick, and, of course, la belle province, Quebec. And a strong Franco-Albertan community also helps connect us to the Francophonie around the world.

A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada found positive economic impacts arising from the French fact in Canada, reflected in the diversification of trade, exports and imports, and jobs and economic growth. Our new government recognizes all these economic, social, and cultural contributions of French-speaking Albertans. That's why we fully support the government of Alberta French policy and action plan, including the provision of increased access to programs and services in French, and we are

committed to building on these initiatives in tangible and sustainable ways that will help strengthen our communities and grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am also delighted to announce the appointment of the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche as parliamentary secretary responsible for the Alberta Francophonie. Now Franco-Albertans will have a dedicated advocate who will work with our cabinet to move the French policy and action plan forward, an advocate who is fluent in French, by the way, and who represents a region in northern Alberta with a large francophone population and a rich francophone history and culture.

In her new role the parliamentary secretary will work closely with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, who will continue to be the minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat, and have access to the resources of her department. This appointment recognizes and honours Alberta's rich francophone past, present, and future and is a fitting way to mark Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in Canada. [As submitted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert to respond.

**Ms Renaud:** Merci, M. le Président. Je me lève aujourd'hui pour célébrer la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Aussi, le 24 juin c'est la Fête nationale du Québec. Je m'excuse à tout le monde; je n'ai pas eu le temps de traduire. Je vais lire en anglais.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in honour of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, an important celebration for thousands of French-speaking Albertans in our province. On this day we honour and recognize the proud history of francophones in Alberta and the contributions they have made to the economic, social, cultural, and political fabric of Alberta. The French-speaking population of Alberta can trace its roots back almost 200 years. Today more than 268,000 Albertans speak French, 1 in 3 students are enrolled in a French-language program, and our French-speaking population is projected to lead the country, increasing between 25 and 50 per cent by 2036.

In 1982 the Franco-Albertan flag was created, and in June 2017 our government adopted it as its first symbol of distinction under the Emblems of Alberta Act. As a government we are strongly committed to upholding the language rights of Franco-Albertans and working closely with French-speaking Albertans to support greater opportunity and recognition. We were proud to create the first-ever French language policy to support the vitality and development of francophones in Alberta. We released a three-year action plan to enhance French-language services, support francophone organizations, and promote French language and culture. We increased funding for the Francophone Secretariat to enhance access to services in French for Albertans in health, employment services, and early childhood supports. In March 2018 we officially proclaimed March as the annual Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. As a French-speaking Albertan myself I am honoured to have been part of this important work. Now as the francophone critic I am honoured to hold this government to account and advocate on behalf of the thousands of Franco-Albertans.

During a time of celebration it is disturbing to see troubling attacks on French-speaking communities, including the cancellation of the francophone university and the French-language services commissioner under the Ford government in Ontario. I urge this government to condemn these actions and resist the paths taken by their allies in Ontario. We must remember that our diversity is what makes our province strong and such a great place to live. I urge all members of this House to get to know the francophone communities in their constituencies and participate in celebrations happening

across our province in support of the wonderful contributions of Franco-Albertans.

Merci, M. le Président, et joyeuse fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just as a way of clarity for everyone, when members are speaking French inside the Chamber, they are welcome to do so without translation. However, should they choose to provide a translation for the benefit of the non-French speakers, that, of course, is always appreciated by us but certainly not a requirement as it is a significant tradition now in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to allow those who speak French to do so freely.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

#### National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-four years ago yesterday 329 innocent people, many of them Canadians, died in the murderous bombing of Air India flight 182 over the Atlantic Ocean. This heartbreaking incident is why I rise here today to pay tribute and to honour every Canadian whose life has been cut short or forever changed by an act of terrorism. In the decades since, tragically, many Canadians have been lost in other terrorist atrocities at home and abroad. As we reflect on the lives lost from Air India to 9/11 to the murders of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent in 2014 and countless others, we pay tribute to those around the world who have lost their lives to acts of terrorism, and we stand firm in the values we hold dear: freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

As Albertans we condemn all forms of terrorism. We stand in solidarity with our allies who fight terrorism at home and abroad, and we thank the men and women who risk their lives every day to stand up against these radical acts. Terrorists believe that through violent and cowardly acts they can make us doubt not only our safety but the very institutions that keep us safe. They are wrong. We are a society that believes in compassion, justice, inclusion, and equality, and these acts of terror only strengthen our resolve for unity. We must always strive to eradicate the evil of terrorism both here in Canada and around the world.

Our government remains unwavering in our commitment to the safety and security of Albertans, and on this sombre anniversary we stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all those who have been affected by terrorist attacks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Government Members' Actions during Bill 9 Debate

**Mr. Dang:** Last week the Premier, a man who occupies the most honourable office in our province, handed out earplugs to silence the opposition during critical debate on Bill 9. As he handed them out, he giggled and said: this is so that you don't have to listen to him and the others over there. He was clearly tired of hearing about how his illegal bill would hurt 180,000 workers, including nurses, teachers, and social workers.

But Albertans have shown that they aren't having it. They're outraged and angry at the stunning show of disrespect. Here are some of the comments that they've sent to the MLAs and to the Premier.

I was appalled to learn that the Premier of our province was displaying such behaviour as it demonstrates a total disregard for the democratic process . . .

. . . You are teaching supporters that a person holding an opinion that is different from yours can be mocked publicly and blatantly ignored. This kind of intolerance is closed-minded, disrespectful and dangerous.

Also:

The arrogance and blatant disrespect by the UCP to the principles of democracy, the official opposition and to the 180,000 Albertans who this bill will directly impact is unacceptable.

And:

Ignoring anyone who opposes your own views is a dangerous road to travel and a threat to a fair, democratic process, to which all Albertans are entitled. To read and see the elected Premier of Alberta laughing and telling his party members to ignore the opposition and to watch his party members join in on the fun clearly conveyed his and his party's feelings toward public-sector workers like myself, my wife, my sister, my sister-in-law, my brothers-in-law . . .

and so forth.

And:

I am frankly livid that the government has decided to put in earplugs while the opposition was fighting for my spouse's and family's income. The member that was supplying the earplugs should resign immediately.

Now, unfortunately, the Premier once again has put in his earplugs and is refusing to listen. Instead of taking responsibility and apologizing, he has chosen to mislead Albertans and cover up the true story. First he said that it didn't happen. Then he said that it was to boost morale. Now he says that he was helping a member with tinnitus. Mr. Speaker, Albertans aren't buying these preposterous excuses. Our caucus stands with Albertans in condemning this outrageous behaviour and will continue to fight for working people in our province, whether the government listens or not.

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

#### La Francophonie Albertaine

**Ms Goodridge:** Merci, M. le Président. Je me lève aujourd'hui, le jour de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, pour souligner la vitalité de la Francophonie canadienne et le dynamisme de la langue et de la culture françaises en Alberta. De Plamondon à Grande Prairie, de Fort McMurray à Lethbridge, des communautés à travers l'Alberta ont souligné cette fête importante cette fin de semaine.

Le français était la première langue européenne parlée en Alberta, et elle demeure la langue la plus parlée après l'anglais. Bien qu'historiquement, une bonne partie de la population francophone albertaine pouvait retracer ses origines au Québec et à la France, mais aujourd'hui les francophones en Alberta proviennent de partout au pays et de partout au monde.

En effet, la population francophone de l'Alberta a doublé depuis 1996, et c'est la population francophone du Canada à l'extérieur du Québec qui croît le plus rapidement. De plus, il y a plus de 200 000 étudiants albertaines qui font le choix de suivre des programmes de langue française, soit près d'un étudiant sur trois.

La vitalité de cette population d'expression française est un atout pour l'Alberta.

Finalement, je profite de cette occasion pour remercier le premier ministre de m'avoir nommée secrétaire parlementaire pour la Francophonie albertaine.

1:50

Je suis ravie de pouvoir appuyer la ministre de la Culture, du Multiculturalisme et de la Condition féminine et ministre responsable du Secrétariat francophone dans la mise en oeuvre continue de la

politique en matière de francophonie, visant à améliorer les services gouvernementaux en français selon les ressources disponibles.

Merci à tous les membres de l'Assemblée pour leur appui, joyeuse fête de la Saint-Jean Baptiste, et merci, M. le Président.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Government Members' Actions during Bill 9 Debate

**Ms Notley:** Here we go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this Premier lowered the bar once again in his display of disrespect for the people of Alberta. First they introduced legislation to gut the constitutional rights of 180,000 Albertans, then they literally plugged their ears when opposition members raised the concerns of these 180,000 Albertans, and then they changed their story about it repeatedly. To the Premier: will he rise and apologize for both this display of disrespect as well as the series of contradictory statements by him and his House leader?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the only apology in this place should be coming from the NDP for their constant vicious harassment of ministers verbally, their bullying tactics, their name calling, and their disrespectful comportment in this place. But the Leader of the Opposition instead – she's too busy taking credit for Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. Today in an interview in the *National Post* the Leader of the Opposition was proudly taking credit for the federal government's carbon tax and so-called climate leadership plan action. They might take credit for it; we're glad to be fighting it.

**Ms Notley:** Thursday morning the Premier's office put out a statement around the earplug use that said, quote: this is a harmless and light-hearted attempt to boost caucus morale. Thursday afternoon the House leader told the House that "nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate." Friday afternoon the Premier described a member with a hearing problem and said, quote: I gave him earplugs to reduce the volume. Thirty-six hours, three statements, three different stories. Albertans don't deserve pivots. They deserve honesty. Why won't you give it to them? Why won't you apologize?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be here for 18 hours listening to that debate and members of this caucus for three straight nights listening to that debate. I can't say that for all the leaders in this place.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** It's interesting to lead a filibuster not in this place. But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this much. We are getting the job done for Albertans. We committed to manage the province's finances responsibly. That requires a bit of time to get advice from the MacKinnon panel, expert advice on how to bring Alberta back to balance. That's exactly what we're going to do.

**Ms Notley:** Here's the real story, Mr. Speaker. The Premier displayed bad judgment that disrespected 180,000 Albertans when he encouraged his caucus to put in earplugs not to hear debate. The answer to this mistake is to honestly acknowledge it, apologize to Albertans, and move on. Instead, he's got a new story every time he opens his mouth. Why won't he just learn from, oh, Ralph Klein, admit his mistake, apologize for it, and instead not make Albertans endure days of ducking and diving and running away?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it tells you all you need to know about today's NDP that they think this is the most important issue in the province. I'll tell you what. You know, we'll apologize for that the moment that members of the opposition apologize for using earbuds in this place. But you know what they really need to apologize for? They need to apologize to 4.3 million Albertans for foisting a job-killing carbon tax that they didn't talk about in the last election campaign. They need to apologize to nearly 200,000 unemployed Albertans, so many of whom were driven out of work by the high-tax, high red tape policies of the NDP. We're proud to be undoing the damaging economic policies of the NDP.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order was noted at 1:54. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Bill 9

**Ms Notley:** The real issue is 180,000 Alberta public servants who are having their constitutional rights trampled by this Premier, Mr. Speaker. Today we're hearing, not surprisingly, that we'll be all headed to court as these workers seek to defend their most basic rights from attack by this Premier. We know this legislation is illegal. The government knows it's illegal. Why does the Premier believe that the rule of law applies to everyone but to him?

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, we believe in the rule of law, which is why this Assembly adopted, after 24, 25 hours of debate, a law to allow for a temporary deferral in wage-reopener arbitration so that the government is fully informed in sitting down and negotiating those in good faith, Mr. Speaker. The real question is: why did the NDP take a \$13 billion debt, drive it to a \$60 billion debt, run the largest per capita deficit in Canada, oversee five credit downgrades, and have us headed towards \$100 billion in debt? That's a record that we're going to clean up.

**Ms Notley:** I believe what the Premier tried to claim there is that his bad-faith bargaining bill does not roll over the rights of working people. But given the earplug fiasco and the associated multiple different versions of the facts offered up by the Premier and his House leader just so comfortably, Albertans can be forgiven if they don't believe him. Will the Premier table all of the legal opinions received by the Premier that suggest his legislation is not a violation of the Constitution or the Charter?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well as a former Premier that legal advice from officials to the government is cabinet confidence. I can assure the leader of the NDP that we proceeded on this matter on the advice of the senior public service, who indicated that this is fully constitutionally compliant. Of course, it is. What the NDP is really up about is this: they're just angry with Albertans for firing them. They wish that they were still in power and driving us towards a \$100 billion debt. Thank goodness Alberta voters stopped them.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier fights to steal the hard-won, fundamental, constitutional and Charter rights of nurses, of teachers, of paramedics, of firefighters, of many, many other dedicated public servants, he appears only to be making progress on his one unheralded and myopic job-creation plan for lawyers. Can the Premier once again please tell this House exactly how much money this attack on working people is going to cost the Minister of Justice?

**Mr. Kenney:** Isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP wouldn't sue Ottawa to protect our taxpayers from their carbon tax. They



wouldn't sue Ottawa for intruding in our jurisdiction through these outrageous bills C-48 and C-69, but they will support a lawsuit against Alberta taxpayers. That tells you all you need to know about the NDP: always and only defending the bosses who have formal affiliate membership in the NDP. We're talking about people who actually help to run the NDP. We're here to defend all Alberta taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I got an earful about the bad-faith bargaining bill from teachers and support staff in Lethbridge on the weekend. Almost a month ago the chair of the Lethbridge public school division warned the Minister of Finance that the bill would result in harm to future bargaining. I will table that letter. To the minister: given that Lethbridge already negotiated zero per cent increases for support staff in the fall school year, won't the minister just admit that this is actually about a massive rollback for teachers and support staff?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the intent of Bill 9 is clear. We've been clear with Albertans and all stakeholders. It is simply procedural delay so that we can make informed, responsible decisions on behalf of Albertans. We don't have an outcome in mind. The goal and the outcome we have in mind is to be fully informed and responsible to all Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, here we hear the same talking points, but in fact the letter calls attention to the fact that there has been a lack of transparency on purpose, Minister. The trustee chair of the Lethbridge public school board wrote, "There does not appear to be a genuine openness to 'discussing' the direction or exploring potential alternatives." To the minister: is this really a level of consultation that you think will hold up in the courts?

2:00

**Mr. Toews:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this government is taking the responsible tack forward. We're a government who believes in being fully informed. We're a government who believes in being responsible to Albertans. Albertans elected this government to bring this province to balance and ensure that we can deliver high-quality services for Albertans for this generation and the next. We intend to do that.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this letter lays bare that Bill 9 interfered with bargaining in good faith, that it actually did achieve a zero per cent increase for support staff this fall in Lethbridge. In other words, Bill 9 is about rollbacks. It's not about a wage freeze. Was the minister briefed on the contents of this letter and the very clear interference in good-faith bargaining by his deputy minister, or did he have his earplugs in?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say this. This government has been listening intently to Albertans and to Albertans' concerns to ensure that we can balance the budget and deliver high-quality services. The members opposite, when they were in government, had us on a track to \$100 billion in accumulated debt. With that kind of debt, we would not be able to provide, first, front-line services to Albertans in the long term and to the next generation. We're about being a responsible government.

## Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Numbers and this Minister of Education just don't jibe. She has tried to tell the parents of the more than 120,000 students attending Calgary public schools that her government will support classrooms, but we know that CBE expects 1,800 more students this fall and that they're cutting \$22 million from their school budgets. More students, less funding equals crowded classrooms, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: is this the type of math that you plan on teaching our kids, that you can cut and you can cram kids into classrooms and it's not going to make a difference? I call tell you that that math doesn't pass grade 1.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I had the pleasure of meeting with the board chair and the superintendent of CBE last week. They assured me that they are maintaining the current staffing levels. We have been perfectly clear on our commitment to fund education, and we will be continuing to fund it. We are funding enrolment growth, and we are going to build schools.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** If you actually looked at their budget or if you actually listened to any of their board meetings, you'd know that there are \$22 million being cut from schools. Twenty-two million dollars is 220 teachers, Mr. Speaker. The math is pretty simple. This minister keeps denying the reality that \$22 million is going to mean that there are less supports for schools, on average, the CBE has said, three fewer high school teachers in every single high school. Isn't the minister embarrassed? Enough with the talking points. Why won't you fund education properly?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I trust our local school boards to make those decisions. I have been assured by CBE that they will be maintaining their current staffing levels.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, it is totally unreasonable for the Minister of Education to stand in this place, when she knows there are \$22 million being cut from Calgary schools, and to continue to espouse talking points instead of admitting the facts. The facts are that there will be less supports in our schools this fall because of this minister's dithering. The facts are that the government isn't planning on bringing a budget forward until the fall, which means that we could be waiting until Christmas to find out if there are going to be enough teachers when kids are showing up in September. Why won't this minister admit that she's in over her head? Enough is enough. This is an embarrassment.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government and I are very committed to keeping teachers in front of students. We have already stated that we are funding enrolment growth – we've accounted for it – and we also will be building schools. It's time for the opposition to stop speculating on this topic. Enrolment growth, as I said, will be funded. I can actually give you a quote from a Lloydminster Catholic school division trustee, Chris Carnell, who recently said that he's extremely confident in our government – and I quote – that we will protect parental choice in education and fair student funding, and he feels that, quote, Alberta students are . . .

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

### St. Mary's University

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. St. Mary's University in Calgary-Fish Creek has been one of Alberta's fastest growing postsecondaries over the past five years. With over a thousand students in their parkside campus and a graduate placement rate of over 85 per cent of their education faculty, the people of my constituency are proud to have them as a valuable and history-laden member of the community. To the Minister of Advanced Education: could you please share with us the important role that independent academic institutions like St. Mary's play in ensuring choice and value for Alberta's postsecondary students?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course thank you to the hon. member for the very important question. The member is bang on. Independent academic institutions like St. Mary's play a vital role in providing our students with a wide variety of learning opportunities, which allows them to choose the institution that will best prepare them for success in their future endeavours. St. Mary's plays a key part in driving the economic engine of this province but also, more importantly, of south Calgary. The member is incredibly honoured, I believe, to have St. Mary's as part of his riding.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, given that St. Mary's University receives no infrastructure or capital funding from the province for its campus facilities and given this government's commitment to barrier-free living and learning for all Albertans, again to the minister: will you elaborate on your department's strategy around deploying targeted funding to assist in providing greater accessibility at accredited postsecondary institutions?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are indeed, of course, committed to fiscal responsibility and ensuring that we get the best value for our taxpayer dollars. Postsecondary education, as the member knows and recognizes, is critical to Alberta's future economy, and managing our resources responsibly is also equally important. By continuing to support our postsecondary system and institutions like St. Mary's, we are delivering on our mandate to ensure that Alberta students can choose from a wide variety of high-quality educational programs to build rewarding careers and find good jobs.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that independent academic institutions are a vital part of postsecondary offerings in this province and given the challenges and regional inconsistencies in funding, noting that St. Mary's is among the lowest funded postsecondary institutions in Alberta by full-load equivalent, again to the Minister of Advanced Education: will you assure the students and faculty at south Calgary's only postsecondary campus that you will engage with them to discuss sustainability and their commitment to being an accessible and affordable institution, open to all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, yes. The answer to the member's question, quite clearly and directly, is yes. I'm committed to meeting with all of our postsecondary stakeholder groups to build collegial and collaborative relationships that are important to helping us move forward and renew and strengthen the postsecondary education system. I've recently had an opportunity to meet with all of the board chairs, all of the presidents, and student organizations, including the Council of Alberta University Students. Just later on this afternoon I'll be meeting with more students so that we can build a stronger postsecondary system together.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a question.

### Education Funding

*(continued)*

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I revealed that because of this government's refusal to be up front about their cuts, three schools in my riding of Edmonton-Manning will be losing mental health therapists, that the parents and students have come to rely on. Students deserve every resource to ensure that they can learn, grow, and thrive while in school. This government has made a commitment to mental health supports, but talk is cheap. To the Minister of Education: will you immediately commit funding to restore the mental health therapists and any others that have been let go due to your mishandling of this Education file?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We will restore order to Alberta's economy and return our province to balance, all while ensuring that students and their families receive the supports they need. To the hon. member opposite: we have provided for our schools, and I know that they will be able to continue on.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that this government made a commitment to mental health and addictions – this would be related to mental health – and given that I received a letter from a concerned parent that said that

all of our children are important. They need to feel that they are safe mentally, physically and emotionally while they attend classes. This particular cut to the budget will remove two of those three [needed areas] from our children and our community,

and given the loss of mental health therapist positions and given that many of these ministers continue to stall on giving school boards the funding that they need, to the minister: will you commit to reaching out to every school board and offering to provide . . .

2:10

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. I've been in contact with many school boards, and they know that as a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to the boards following approval by the Legislature. There will be funding for enrolment growth. Again, we respect the autonomy of boards to make the decisions that are best for their boards and their divisions.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, given that the Education minister's preference is to pass the buck to school boards rather than to stand up for our teachers, our students, and our parents and given that the minister's press secretary actually accused me of, quote, creating fear because I stood with a brave group of parents last Friday about the impact

that will come from the loss of their mental health therapists and given that it is the minister and her office who have been creating fear by failing to give students the resources they need to take care of our children, again to the minister: will you take out your earbuds and listen to the parents concerned about your cuts and commit to mental health funding for our school system?

**Member LaGrange:** As a rehabilitative practitioner working with the mentally, physically challenged, a former trustee for 11-plus years, a mother of seven, a grandmother of four, I totally understand the supports that are needed in schools, and we will communicate the information as soon as possible. We respect school boards' autonomy to make those decisions that are best for their boards.

Thank you.

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

### Oil Transportation by Rail

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oil-by-rail contracts would have seen 120,000 barrels of oil a day moving at the end of this week and generating \$2.2 billion in revenue. That's the advice we received from our public service. This government is disputing that, disrespecting the public service and making fun of their advice. Instead, we were told they will create capacity in the private sector. To the minister again: how many barrels of capacity have you secured so far? How many barrels?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question because it allows us to highlight once again how bad these contracts were that the previous government negotiated. This contract, had it been fulfilled, would have resulted in a \$1.5 billion loss to Alberta taxpayers. We are taking our time to get this right and find a private-sector solution.

**Mr. Sabir:** That was a pretty simple question, Minister. You are embarrassing yourself.

Given that Albertans deserve to know clearly what you are doing to move oil to markets and given that all we have heard from you and the Premier is heated rhetoric and given that our oil remains in the ground and that Albertans continue to lose their jobs in the sector, again to the minister: can you please come clean on how many barrels per day, and where is the legislation on this matter that the Premier promised?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, every single barrel of oil that would have been moved by the NDP's crude-by-rail contract would have been run at a loss to Alberta taxpayers, a loss of a total of \$1.5 billion. We are doing everything we can to stand up for Alberta, to get pipelines built, to find a private-sector solution to crude by rail, but every single barrel that would have been moved in their contracts would cost Alberta taxpayers.

**Mr. Sabir:** The question actually is: how many barrels have you moved, have you secured in the private sector, and will you just admit that you have not moved any barrels and certainly not 120,000 barrels?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the former NDP government, were moving our province towards a \$100 billion deficit. That crude-by-rail contract would move that another \$1.5 billion. It would be irresponsible to Alberta taxpayers to continue running up a debt for the NDP mismanagement of the oil and gas sector over four years.

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

### Transportation Infrastructure in Leduc

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton International Airport is an economic driver for both the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont and the entire capital region, with \$3.2 billion in economic output, moving more cargo and over 8 million passengers annually, attracting over \$750 million in private-sector investment in the last seven years, and creating over 13,000 jobs over the last three years. To the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to ensure that the Edmonton International Airport has the infrastructure needed to accommodate such growth?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. The winning of highway 19 is under way. Between highway 2 and range road 253: substantially complete and should be done this summer. The land acquisition and utility relocation for the west portion is under way, and we continue to work with the Edmonton International Airport on planning for the middle portion of highway 19. I thank the hon. member. It's an important issue.

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

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that having three major transportation networks – the Edmonton International Airport, highway 2, and the Canadian Pacific Railway – right beside Leduc has made the city a transportation hub for central and northern Alberta and given that Leduc continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the country, with one of the youngest populations, how does the Minister of Transportation intend on providing Leduc with the infrastructure investment it so desperately needs to meet the needs of a growing population and growing economic activity?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is moving ahead with improvements to highway 19. We've recently completed major improvements on the QE II between Edmonton and highway 19, including a new southbound lane, and we continue to work with the county of Leduc and the international airport on other improvements in the area. Our government will focus on infrastructure investments that support the economy and support Leduc and support the Edmonton International Airport.

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

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents have been advocating alongside the airport for the 65th Avenue interchange for nearly a decade and given that this interchange is seen as a way to boost economic development in both Leduc and at the airport while greatly reducing traffic congestion and connecting to a larger trade corridor and given that the former government, the city of Leduc, and the airport have contributed \$1.2 million to engineering designs and given that the estimated private-sector investment in the airport alone will be over \$600 million when the interchange is completed, can the Minister of Transportation please update my constituents on the status . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, our government and its partners are supporting the planning for the interchange between the QE II and 65th Avenue. That project would include a new bridge over the QE

II, on- and off-ramps connecting 65th Avenue, and other improvements at 65th Avenue and 50th Street in Leduc. The project would help reduce congestion on the QE II, provide a new connection to commercial development in Leduc in the area of the airport, and will be given serious consideration as we move towards a new budget and capital plan. Thank you to the hon. member. This issue matters.

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

#### **Family Support for Children with Disabilities**

**Ms Renaud:** Merci, M. le Président. Last year it came to our attention that parents of children with disabilities who access the family support for children with disabilities program, or FSCD, were being directed to training for themselves rather than to supports for kids from professionals. Our government was working with those families to make sure that they were no longer being asked to be parent, therapist, coach, and aid to their children. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: will you commit on behalf of your government that children and families in the FSCD program will be spared any cuts you have planned for disability programs?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, we are working within our department to review every single program, not just the FSCD program, to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is stretched to the maximum so that vulnerable Albertans get the supports that they need.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that all parents work around the clock to provide the best for their children and given that parents of children with disabilities must work even harder to care for and provide the resources that their kids need and given that children with disabilities who are provided proper supports are so much more likely to lead happy, fulfilled lives as adults, to the minister: have you met with parents of children with disabilities yet, and if not, will you commit to meeting with them before you implement cuts to their programs or stretching their dollars?

Thank you.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, I have been very diligent about meeting with a variety of stakeholders, including parents of children with disabilities, to understand exactly what their needs are. I've received tremendous feedback, and we are going to do the best for these families to make sure that we get them the supports that they need.

2:20

**Ms Renaud:** Given that the FSCD program supports around 10,000 families in Alberta and given that in Doug Ford's Ontario funding for supports for children with disabilities has been decimated and given that we know that this Premier and Premier Ford like to, quote, finish each other's sentences, to the same minister: what does the end of that sentence look like for children with disabilities in Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, actually, there are more than 10,000 children who are being supported by this program. Certainly, I will reiterate the message that we are working very, very hard to make sure that all of our taxpayer dollars reach those children who need those supports, and we will do it efficiently, effectively, and with compassion.

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

#### **Minimum Wage for Youth**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stood in this House and clearly stated that youth wage differentials are a bad idea for a number of reasons. Now, that wasn't today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity, mind you, but, rather, the minister from 1998. He knew that youth wage differentials hurt young workers saving for their education, so he ended that bad policy. To the current minister of labour. We know this policy won't create more jobs. Why can't you and the Premier come up with a better idea than paying young people less than they're worth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth. We have a job crisis in Alberta right now. According to Stats Canada, in the first quarter of 2019, for youth under 18 the unemployment rate was 21.5 per cent. That is three times the regular unemployment rate. We committed – we committed in our platform, and we committed to Albertans – that we would get Albertans working. We need to get our Alberta youth working, and we will do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that in 1998 the then minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stated that most students are also working and contributing towards their postsecondary education and that they should be paid the same rate as workers with comparable skills and given that young people still work to save for postsecondary education and that everyone deserves equal pay for equal work regardless of the year they were born, to today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity: why don't you agree with your predecessor and the principles of equal pay for equal work?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, we have a youth job crisis in this province right now. We need to get our youth working. This is as a result of the policies of the previous government, which raised the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent in four short years in the face of one of Alberta's greatest economic downturns. We need to address that. We need to get our youth working, and \$13 an hour is far better than zero dollars an hour if they don't have a job.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that in 1998 the then minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity stated, "We had evidence where that training wage was being abused by employers, abused to the point where it had to be eliminated," to today's minister of labour and Member for Calgary-Varsity: since you're ignoring Albertans in 2019, will you at least take out your earplugs, listen to your Conservative predecessor from '98, who already told this Chamber that a youth wage differential is a deeply flawed policy prone to abuse?

**Mr. Copping:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the student job-creation wage is about creating jobs for Alberta's youth who don't have them. When the minimum wage was increased by the previous government, employers were forced to lay off workers, and unfortunately it was the most inexperienced workers, the youth, who lost opportunities. By reducing costs to employers, we can help students get their first job, develop skills, and gain the experience that they need for the future.

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

### Dementia Strategy

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of 2016 over 42,000 Albertans have been diagnosed and are living with dementia. Dementia is a category of neurological disease that causes long-term gradual loss of ability to think or remember in those that it affects. It is not only an immense stress to those who have it but also to their families and their caregivers. Will the Minister of Health please highlight Alberta's own plan to tackle this devastating condition and improve the quality of life for those who are afflicted by it?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dementia is devastating for patients and their families, and it's a major burden on the health system. More than 42,000 Albertans are living with dementia today, and our action plan is focused on raising awareness, diagnosing dementia early, improving quality of life, supporting families and their caregivers, and promoting research, but we do need to do more. As our population ages, we need a health system which is optimized in every way to deal with faster demand growth than we've ever seen before.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dementia is having a growing and significant national impact and given that there are more than 419,000 Canadians aged 65 and older diagnosed with dementia and given that there are Canadians living with dementia in both rural and urban communities, will the Minister of Health please advise how the new dementia strategy will be incorporated into our own provincial strategy to make our communities more dementia inclusive?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new national strategy is a good contribution to the discussion around dementia. We're reviewing it, and we'll continue to work with the federal government. Services are, of course, a provincial responsibility. The national strategy supports our services by promoting awareness, reducing stigma, supporting evaluation, guidelines, and best practices. The key point is the same as our provincial action plan. We can't cure dementia, but we can do more to identify it early, help people adjust, and improve quality of life.

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

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is once again to the Minister of Health. Given that the number of 419,000 Canadians diagnosed with dementia does not include those under the age of 65 and given that the number does not include the number of people who remain undiagnosed, possibly due, like you mentioned, to the stigma or other barriers, will the Minister of Health elaborate on what is being done to reduce the stigma of the disease and work towards early diagnosis to maximize quality of life for those with dementia?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, dementia is terrifying to seniors and their families. There's no cure, so people feel helpless, and it's a word they don't want to hear. The result is that people live with

undiagnosed dementia, and they don't get the support that would help them and reduce the burden on their families. It's important for us to end the stigma around dementia because, once again, once there's a diagnosis, there's actually a great deal that the health care providers can do to improve the quality of life and reduce the burden on the families.

### Flood Mitigation on the Bow River

**Member Loyola:** This spring our leader announced a bold and forward-looking commitment of \$1 billion towards upstream flood mitigation for the Bow River. It took this UCP government the better part of a year to determine whether they would support upstream mitigation on the Elbow River despite years of study and validation. I know that Calgarians hope that they will show much better leadership when it comes to the Bow River. To the minister: have you and your caucus sorted out whether or not you plan to protect families and businesses along the Bow River?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation is rising.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A platform promise that we made was to put flood mitigation in place for the city of Calgary, and we have every intention of fulfilling that commitment. The last government left questions unanswered, about 700, that we gave answers to last week, 8,000 pages' worth of work left undone by the previous government that we put in place already. We've done more in four weeks than they did over the four years, and we're not finished yet.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the city of Calgary is working hard to reinforce the river banks of the Bow and given that these efforts are important but don't address upstream mitigation, which will require funding and leadership from this government, and given that the Bow River working group has made a series of recommendations to government in partnership with the city of Calgary, to the minister: have you reviewed the recommendations made by the working group, and when will you conduct the necessary feasibility studies and consultations to proceed with Bow River flood mitigation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have every intention of talking to this group as well as to the city of Calgary, Rocky View, the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Stoney Nation. It's an ongoing process. We're committed to keeping the communication up. Let me say that we can't build anything until we get through the approval process. We hired an expert to help us with that on our third day on the job, and we are committed to not being the delay. We can't force the approval to be faster, but we are determined to not let it go any slower as a result of our efforts.

2:30

**Member Loyola:** Given that our changing climate means that Albertans will continue to endure more frequent and more severe extreme weather events and given that funding for future flood mitigation projects along the Bow River was to come from our government's climate leadership plan and given that finding a billion dollars isn't easy, especially when you're handing out \$4.5 billion over to wealthy corporations, will you consider holding back at least \$1 billion of the \$4.5 billion you plan on giving away and saving it for rainy days, or are the earplugs in way too tight?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the previous government was big on making promises, but after four years they did next to nothing, so I

guess they didn't actually spend any money. We are not going to do it that way. We have already started. We already hired an expert. We've already put out 8,000 pages' worth of research on it. We're going to commit to actually making sure that the consultation is done right. They had four years; they sat on their hands. This government will not do that.

### Freedom of Expression on Postsecondary Campuses

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government just doesn't like consulting, and this Advanced Education minister's plan to force deeply troubling speech rules on our postsecondary institutions is causing lots of concern. The University of Alberta Students' Union said last week that they're in the dark and worried about the minister's plan to push these policies in time for September. To the minister: will you pull out the earplugs and actually start listening to student unions?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education is rising.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely am listening to student organizations and to student leaders. As I mentioned, I think about a week ago I had a meeting with the Council of Alberta University Students to discuss their concerns. The other day as well I had an interview with the *Gateway*, which, if memory serves me correctly, is actually the student newspaper for the University of Alberta. I was able to provide them more information about our plans to adopt the Chicago principles of free expression to make sure that our academic institutions remain bastions of critical thinking and academic dialogue.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Muslim Students' Association at the University of Calgary said that they worry that these policies, the Chicago principles, will simply embolden racists and given that the minister has done nothing to reach out to this group or many others and given that he alone has decided that September will be the implementation date, to the minister: are you deliberately trying to allow racism to flourish in our campuses, or are you in over your head and unaware of the harm that the Chicago principles cause?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the assertion is quite ridiculous. The Criminal Code of Canada and the Canadian Human Rights Act have very strong provisions in place to ensure that hate speech is not permitted. As well, as it relates to the Chicago principles, they are also very clear in ensuring that hateful language is not permitted on campus. I haven't heard from the Muslim Students' Association, but I am very happy to meet with them and discuss their concerns. As I said, I have met already with the Council of Alberta University Students, and this afternoon I will be meeting with many more student leaders.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Glynnis Lieb, the executive director for the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta, said that she's already observed some with negative and hateful views feeling emboldened by the UCP's assertion of the Chicago principles and given that she was among the hundreds who came here to the Legislature last week to protest this government's hateful attack on gay-straight alliances, to the minister: will you actually listen to your stakeholders and shelve your plans, please, and get rid of this dangerous speech policy on campuses?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do in fact listen to our stakeholders. In fact, on Friday, when I was meeting with the board of governors of all of our institutions, they all expressed their commitment to adopting the Chicago principles. So we're looking forward to implementing the principles. Let me be quite clear as well. When it comes to hate speech, that will not be tolerated in any way, shape, or form. There are already strong protections in the Criminal Code and in the Human Rights Act that protect against hate speech. The NDP is clearly so out of touch.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Chuckegg Creek Wildfire Update

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this House is aware, fire season is fraught with anxiety for residents of my constituency of Peace River. After the emotional roller coaster of alerts, evacuations, and returns, last Monday Mackenzie county was evacuated in the middle of the night, including my own home, due to a resurgent Chuckegg Creek wildfire. Happily, today we are allowed re-entry as of 2 p.m. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry please provide an update on the recent wildfire behaviour?

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

**Mr. Dreshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River, who has done an incredible job in his constituency, talking to all the volunteers and firefighters, and has just done an amazing, exemplary job. As the Member for Peace River mentioned, as of 36 minutes ago the mandatory evacuation order has been lifted, so residents from Mackenzie county may return home. But this is still a high-risk area, and it is an active wildfire that is in and around the area. The favourable weather over the weekend allowed for resources from across the province to add support to this fire, and we're doing everything we can to fight it.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you to the minister.

To the Minister of Community and Social Services: given that many of these individuals have been evacuated twice and given that thousands have been unable to work at the mill, stores, and other businesses that animate our local economy and support our families, can the minister please advise this House if these recently returned evacuees, who have not yet received one-time financial support, will be eligible for the \$1,250 one-time payment?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to support all Albertans who have been impacted by the wildfires. I want to assure the Member for Peace River, his constituents, and all Albertans who have been evacuated due to the wildfires that they are all eligible for the one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. Those who are eligible but have yet to receive a payment can do so online. I encourage those with questions or those who may need further support to call 310.4455.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. My constituents greatly appreciate the answer.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that this emergency is ongoing and given that it continues to threaten so many of my constituents' homes and their places of work and given that an evacuation alert remains in effect for the residents of Mackenzie county, including my own home, and given that many

are travelling back from long distances to return, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs please inform this House if another mandatory evacuation is possible or likely for these communities surrounding the Chuckegg Creek wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River for that question. Last night I received a briefing about the Chuckegg Creek fire from emergency management experts at the Provincial Operations Centre. I am happy to say that conditions are improving for our first responders up north, and more than 8,000 Albertans from La Crête and Mackenzie county are returning home this afternoon. As always, we remind Albertans in at-risk areas to remain vigilant and ready to evacuate and get further updates at [emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://emergencyalert.alberta.ca).

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

### Foreign Qualification and Credential Recognition

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Foreign professionals are a valuable part of Alberta's economy, and our province has a history of unnecessarily delaying the recognition of professional and university credentials. As a result, many immigrants to our province have been denied proper access to the positions they were trained for. Can the minister please assure my constituents that this government will make the professional needs of Albertan newcomers a priority?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Klein for the question. Earlier this week I was pleased to introduce Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. We've heard from many newcomers who are underemployed and unable to contribute to our economy at their skill level. It is a travesty that we have so many skilled newcomers in our province who are not reaching their full personal, professional, and economic potential. All too often this is because they are waiting for months or even years for their credentials to be recognized. This delay impacts newcomers to our province, and we will correct this.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that a lot of new Canadians in my riding are going to be happy to hear that. Thank you to the minister as well for the response.

Given that Alberta newcomers who encounter issues in verifying their credentials are forced to work in positions far below their skill level and given that many families who immigrated to our province are still struggling to break through the red tape between them and the positions they were trained for, can the minister elaborate about the ways that this government plans to accelerate the verification of foreign credentials?

2:40

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again to the member for the question. Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, enables the government to work collaboratively with regulatory bodies to ensure that best practices are followed and that organizations fulfill requirements as laid out in the act. The act will remove unfair barriers while maintaining the high professional standards all Albertans have come to know and expect. One of the ways we aim to accelerate the verification process is by ensuring that regulatory bodies will

deliver an interim decision to newcomers within six months. This gives the applicants a road map forward so they can quickly get their credentials recognized.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that according to the Conference Board of Canada, Canadians would earn up to \$17 billion more annually if their learning credentials were fully recognized and given the sharp increase in over 300,000 additional Canadians that are facing challenges in having their credentials recognized since 2001, can the minister provide my constituents with a time frame for regulatory changes regarding the verification of foreign credentials?

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you again for the question. We recognize that lengthy delays in having foreign credentials recognized lead to underemployment and to a loss of critical skill sets for newcomers and Canadian citizens who are trained abroad. The legislation will come into effect upon proclamation, and we intend to work collaboratively with our professional regulatory organizations to develop reasonable timelines without jeopardizing high-quality standards. Bill 11 will speed up the process where possible, maintain high professional standards, and increase fairness and transparency.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements. I would remind all members, if you're leaving the Chamber for other meetings, to do so as quickly as possible.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Lemonade Day

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, across northern Alberta, Lemonade Day took place. Lemonade Day is a free, fun program that teaches youth how to start, own, and operate their own business. The main objective of Lemonade Day is to empower youth to take ownership of their lives and become productive members of society: the business leaders, social advocates, volunteers, and forward-thinking citizens of tomorrow. The program provides all the youth who register with a workbook that teaches them essential business lessons like creating budgets, setting profit-making goals, serving customers, repaying investors, and giving back to the community. Through their learning they acquire goal-setting and problem-solving skills and gain self-esteem, which is essential for future success.

I was fortunate enough on Saturday to visit lemonade stands in my constituency in the towns of Hinton and Whitecourt and was encouraged to see that the future of entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in our province. My most memorable stop of the day was at the stand of Isaac Richards. At just five years old he has been planning for months, with help from the program and his parents, to launch a successful business. All of Isaac's research, time, sacrifice, and strategy paid great dividends as he set up his stand and sold his lemonade with great success.

As inspiring as it was to see all of the youth pour their hearts and souls into this very special business venture and learn extremely valuable life lessons that will undoubtedly serve them well moving forward, I couldn't help but think of some of the conversations which have taken place in this Chamber in the last few weeks. That made me realize just how amazing it is that five-year-old Isaac

already has such a great understanding and respect for the effort and sacrifice it takes to run a business, and I'm hoping he is willing to come here and teach what it takes to run a business to the entire Assembly.

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

### School Nutrition Programs

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most shocking and disturbing elements of the UCP's season of repeal is the threat to Alberta's school nutrition programs. Today more than 37,000 children receive a healthy snack or meal as well as important lessons about making healthy food choices. The program's strength is in its simplicity. Schools must teach about healthy eating habits and follow the health and safety code. Other than that, school boards are free to make choices to suit the local needs.

For example, in one program in a town a local supermarket supplies healthy food to a school and then features these same healthy food choices in a display in their store. In another school district the local high school foods program prepares meals, and they're sent down the road to feed more than 300 students at the elementary school. Some schools are even growing some of the food that they serve.

There is ample evidence, Mr. Speaker, that school nutrition programs increase attendance, contribute to physical and mental well-being, and improve academic performance. Teachers report that the school nutrition program helps to promote good behaviour in the classroom as well since students will have more positive relationships when they sit down and share a meal or a snack with their peers. School nutrition programs are an important tool to help children and their families to thrive.

In these last four years, during difficult economic times, I'm very proud to say that under our government child poverty rates were cut in half. Part of the strategy that we employed to achieve this goal was the school nutrition program. It is unconscionable to cut school nutrition programs to pay for a big corporate tax cut. For the sake of our children, let's take the school nutrition program off the UCP chopping block.

### Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, you don't have to spend much time in my riding of Calgary-Currie to get a glimpse into opioid addiction challenges. Once you start seeing used and discarded needles throughout the community, you can't stop finding more. You will find them in shopping mall parking lots. You'll find them in alleys behind buildings. You'll even find them in the parks where I take my two-year-old child to play.

While communities have rallied together to try to clean up these used and dangerous needles, it is vital to address the reason why they are littered throughout my constituency. While this crisis hits so close to many who are in Calgary-Currie, I know that we are not the only area facing this challenge. Across the province Albertans are battling the effects of this epidemic.

People who are suffering from addiction need to be treated with compassion, respect, and free from judgment. This disease is just that; it is a disease. Its victims cross socioeconomic lines and touch every aspect of Albertan communities.

Today I am proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, with a real plan to combat this crisis. The appointment of the first-ever Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions marks a big step to giving this crisis the attention it deserves.

Also, this government was elected on a mandate to invest \$140 million over four years to expand support for mental health and addiction treatment, promote recovery, reduce wait times, and increase access to treatment, including more detox beds and more mobile detox programs. We need to ensure that those who are asking for help get the help they need. Addiction and mental health challenges can be life-or-death issues, and I am proud to be a member of a government that is fighting for these vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it's an honour to table the annual report covering the committee's activities for 2018. This report fulfills the requirements of Standing Order 55 and section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. This report will also be made available through the Assembly website.

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, sponsored by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I'll rise to discuss the breach of privilege that occurred on June 20 in the House. I have the appropriate number of copies of a letter that was provided to your office this morning.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've two tablings today, both a very similar letter in support of Bill 201. Asher is a 12-year-old boy who lives in Airdrie. A good friend of his family is writing a letter in support as well as the mother of Asher.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 16(2) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act and as chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it is my pleasure to table copies of the 2018-2019 annual report of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. A copy of this report will be provided to all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others that wish to rise? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate copies of a letter that was received from an individual. He was very



disturbed about the whole earplug incident and said, you know, that this is disrespectful and an insult to Albertans.

**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 letter to the Deputy Minister of Finance from Lethbridge school division No. 51 outlining how Bill 9 undid settled bargained contracts that were executed in good faith for the '19-20 year.

Mr. Speaker, I also have five copies of a letter from a constituent who's a probation officer in Lethbridge, who has grave concerns about losing bargaining rights under Bill 9.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with two tablings. The first is from a constituent who is a teacher. It's an e-mail titled UCP Behaviours in Alberta. They express concern "about the atrocious behaviour [of the Premier] with the ear plugs." They also express concern about budget cuts and the impact on education.

The second one is an e-mail from a constituent expressing concern about Bill 9 and their displeasure about "the disrespectful and undemocratic actions of the Premier and his party members."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Morinville-St. Albert.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table A Celebration of Life for Raymond Johnston. You might remember him as Nicky Fordinski. He was the face of City Ford throughout the '80s and part of the '90s. He was a supporter, a friend, and, most importantly, a good man. I will table the requisite five copies.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of a letter, a very well-written letter, from an outraged constituent about a couple of things: one, the infringement of the Charter-protected rights to participate in collective bargaining and, as well, the frustration that the constituent has with the arrogance of handing out and using earplugs during debate.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you. I have the requisite number of copies of several e-mails my office has received around Earpluggate, one that even copied your office, too, Mr. Speaker, demanding apologies, very disgusted with the behaviour as well as even calling for a public apology or asking the member to resign.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta annual report 2018.

**The Speaker:** Points of order. The Official Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of a Member

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j). At approximately 1:54 this afternoon during question period the Premier – now, again, I will endeavour to quote him as closely as possible; I don't have the Blues in front of me, which likely you will – talked about how he was in the House for 18 hours and then made a reference that not all leaders were in the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is referencing a member's absence, which, of course, is in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 619:

Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable. Speakers have upheld this prohibition on the ground that "there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office."

Now, Mr. Speaker, as well, it's very interesting. Some members definitely are living in glass houses. This was a comment coming from the Premier, who missed almost two weeks in a row in this House. A little rich.

**The Speaker:** I'll address my comments to the Official Opposition House Leader after I hear the interjections from the Government House Leader.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, a backdoor attempt to do the exact same thing that the hon. Opposition House Leader is complaining about.

With that said, I would agree that the Premier did refer to the Leader of the Opposition's absence from this place and the fact that she did not participate in debate on Bill 9, that she was travelling and did not participate at all. I would recognize that that's unparliamentary and would withdraw it on behalf of the Premier.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate you withdrawing the remarks. I would have much preferred you doing so without potentially creating another point of order by referring, perhaps, to the presence or the absence of a member. And I might just remind the Official Opposition House Leader of the same, that we can't do indirectly what we can't do directly, which would be to refer to the absence or the presence of a member. As such, I consider this point of order concluded.

Points of privilege. I believe that the Official Opposition House Leader would like to rise on a point of privilege.

### Privilege

#### Misleading the House

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of privilege. To open my remarks, I'd like to quote the hon. Government House Leader from when he was in opposition.

As you know, points of privilege should not be taken or entered into lightly. Points of privilege are a serious matter, and it's unfortunate that we have to address this issue today in this Chamber. But it needs to be addressed, as do many other serious matters that we address inside this Chamber on a daily basis.

I don't take this lightly, Mr. Speaker. I don't do so frivolously, nor will I without a full disclosure of the facts on this matter, and those facts, including a statement made by the Premier on June 21, are what have led to the belief that during Oral Question Period on June 20, 2019, the Minister of Environment and Parks and

Government House Leader misled the House and made misleading remarks.

As you well know, regarding privilege and the issues of contempt, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, speaks to breaches of privilege and issues of contempt in chapter 3. On page 82 it clearly states that one of these breaches is “deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).” Mr. Speaker, I bring this to you today because, again, “the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which . . . tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions . . . or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.” In *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 254, section 15, under misconduct of officers we find that “the Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I’ve provided the appropriate notice, and, as promised, I will provide you with a fulsome explanation for what I believe to be a breach of privilege undertaken by the Minister of Environment and Parks and esteemed Government House Leader during Oral Question Period on June 20, this being the first possible opportunity for me to do so. On that day the Government House Leader, answering on behalf of the Premier, when asked to apologize to the House by the deputy Leader of the Opposition on the disrespect shown to the House during debate of Bill 9 the previous evening in regard to the Premier handing out earplugs to members of government caucus, responded, “Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition.”

Later, in response to a further question from the deputy House leader, the Government House Leader replied, “Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate.” In that, the Government House Leader clearly denied the presence of earplugs, which would be used to reduce sound and input into the ears of the members of the House in the House during debate of Bill 9.

3:00

Now, we have in this House the benefit of multiple forms of recording. I admit that I was hamstrung a bit by the lack of a full *Hansard* for the debate on Bill 9, that the government insisted take place into the wee hours of June 20. I appreciate the work that *Hansard* does for us. Believe me, they are amazing. But, Mr. Speaker, you’ll be happy to know that I persisted. While *Hansard* doesn’t know the movement of members through the House, Assembly Online does, so please indulge me for a moment.

On June 20, during Oral Question Period the Government House Leader denied that there were earplugs distributed the evening of June 19 during the debate on Bill 9. However, that same day a statement was released from the Premier’s office stating, quote: this was a harmless and lighthearted attempt to boost government caucus morale after being forced to listen to the NDP’s insults, lies, and over-the-top rhetoric for hours on end. End quote. We have a dilemma here.

This is further confused by the statement our Premier made on *Power & Politics* on June 21, and I quote: yeah, we had a member with tinnitus who was sitting next to an opposition member who was shouting repeatedly, clocked at nearly 100 decibels, so, yeah, I gave him a pair of earplugs to reduce the volume that was coming from – and, you know, when we face that kind of out-of-control shouting in the Legislature, I don’t begrudge our MLAs trying to reduce, turn down the volume a notch. End quote. It would appear that the Premier is in fact admitting that at least one member of his caucus was wearing earplugs supplied by the Premier himself.

I could belabour the many issues I have with this, like the fact that recording devices are not allowed in the Chamber, so I wonder

how they were able to determine the decibel level of a member of the opposition’s speaking voice, which may or may not have been given at any time, or the fact that the member he’s referring to wasn’t speaking at the time that the earplugs in question were handed out. I had some free time this weekend, not much, Mr. Speaker, but in that time – and I can tell you that he stopped speaking at 10:45 at night – I isolated the video from the evening. At approximately 11:23:43 we can actually see the Premier walking behind the member for Leduc-Beaumont with what appears to be a package of earplugs on the government side of the House. But I digress.

Back to my point of privilege. I would again, in regard to this matter, continue to quote the Government House Leader, while he was a member of the opposition, in regard to a point of privilege.

As *Erskine May’s Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, page 254, states with respect to the United Kingdom, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.” It is a three-part test for that to happen. First, as articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House of the Assembly, David McGee – for those following along at home, it can be found in the third edition of this book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are as follows: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

Let us put this to a test, Mr. Speaker. For the first test, that it must be proven that the statement was misleading: clearly, given that on June 21 the Premier admitted on *Power & Politics* that earplugs were distributed and used in the House, for the Government House Leader to state, on June 20, that nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate on June 19 was misleading. To the second point: given that the Premier’s office admitted – twice, I might add – to the distribution of the earplugs and given that the House leader was present the evening of June 19, the Government House Leader knew his statement was misleading. And to the third point: given that the Government House Leader knew of the existence and the distribution of said earplugs, the Government House Leader therefore intentionally misled the House.

Mr. Speaker, what is most concerning about this incident is that the deputy Leader of the Opposition was just asking for an apology, an apology for an action that – let’s be clear here – was in poor taste. Instead of taking the high road, the Government House Leader intentionally misled the House. He intentionally misled Albertans. In fact, given that we have two different versions of events from the Premier and his office, it could be argued that recently there have been multiple instances where government members of this Assembly have been intentionally misleading.

We, the members of the Assembly, and the Albertans we represent have been given three scenarios: that it didn’t occur, that it was a joke, or that it was necessary to protect the hearing of a government member from the voice of a member who wasn’t even speaking at the time. All three can’t be true, Mr. Speaker. Someone was being misleading.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll close with this, again quoting the Government House Leader from his time as Opposition House Leader.

It’s very clear to me and I hope it is clear to you that the minister of environment, a minister of the Crown, misled this Assembly while attempting to deflect a question in question period. By misleading this Assembly, [he] has misled Albertans. As such, it is my hope that you, too, will find the same, that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

As a point of privilege is a serious question, it is traditional that the Speaker would give the government or whoever is responding to the point of privilege 24 hours. I see the hon. Government House Leader. He can provide some direction, or he can respond immediately.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** We're good to argue today. First of all, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I find it, again, disappointing that the Opposition House Leader, instead of focusing his attention on ways we can work together to get Albertans back to work, restore the economy, and help the oil and gas industry build pipelines, is arguing once again on a frivolous point of privilege in this place. I do appreciate that he spent so much time reading about me in *Hansard*. It is quite flattering.

Where to start, Mr. Speaker? Well, first of all, I will note that the letter from the Official Opposition House Leader was intentionally vague about the nature of the remarks – sorry; his so-called fulsome remarks – he was going to be making. While I'm prepared to speak on this matter today, I don't see how the opposition can expect any kind of response from the government when they intentionally withhold the nature of their point of privilege.

I will state right at the outset that this does not rise to the level of a point of privilege, and in fact I believe the Opposition House Leader knows this full well. I think he's achieved his strategic objective by abusing the ability of members to call a point of privilege so that he can redebate an issue from last week; namely, that the Official Opposition does not approve of Bill 9. Mr. Speaker, I certainly got that from listening to close to 25 hours of debate from the member opposite. I would note for the record that all members of the Official Opposition spoke on that debate except for the Leader of the Official Opposition. It sounds like her priorities could be found out east. The Premier even made himself available to participate in that debate. But I digress.

My understanding from the opposition is that they are concerned about my usage of the term “nobody” in the quote “nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate,” from Thursday, June 20. That can be found on page 1080 of *Hansard*. The Premier, speaking on television, confirmed that a private member with a medical issue may have felt the need to wear an earplug due to the rising wall of noise that was coming from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, both statements are factual and not contradictory or misleading at all. Members of the opposition should be aware of the distinction between members of Executive Council, also known as cabinet ministers, who may also be referred to as the government, and private members who may choose to sit in the government caucus in support of the government. In fact, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 35, “Functionally, the House is divided into three groups: the Ministry and its Parliamentary Secretaries, Members who support the government, and Members who oppose the government.” Note that those who support the government are a distinct entity from a parliamentary standpoint. While I'm not surprised that the NDP doesn't appreciate that because, quite frankly, I haven't seen them show a lot of respect or understanding for the institution of parliament or parliamentary democracy during my time in this Chamber, that is, in fact, the reality.

The question you will see, Mr. Speaker, when you refer to *Hansard* is a clear question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition at the time stating nothing to do with earplugs but stating that this government was not listening during debate to the hon. members' arguments. Nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth. The government participated in over 25 hours of debate, 18 hours of it alone for the Premier. The Minister of Finance was up quite often

in debate, as were I and other members of the government. I made sure it was clear that was ludicrous.

Now, let's also turn to the fact that my statement on June 20 doesn't refer at all to earplugs. The question I was asked by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was: “We'll plug our ears, literally, and we'll fail to listen.” The link between my remarks and the Premier's remarks is drawn entirely at the opposition's conclusion, and while they are certainly permitted to draw whatever conclusion they want, it doesn't raise the conclusion to the level of a point of privilege.

My final point, Mr. Speaker, is that on the issue of points of privilege about misleading the Assembly, time and time again we turn to the advice given by David McGee in his book *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, second edition, where the Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives states, at page 491, that there are two ingredients to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt on this ground: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; and it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was made that it was incorrect and that, in making it, the member intended to mislead the House.

I think we provided evidence from the government that we do not see this as being a misleading statement. I think that once again the Opposition House Leader might have to do his homework and a little more, and while he's at that, I will refer him once again to *Beauchesne's* 494, where it says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted . . . On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

Accordingly, I hope that you'll find that this does not rise to being a *prima facie* case of a question of privilege.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the opposition, having the privilege of being able to go back home to our home county this weekend, that I really stress that it's time for them to get focused back on what Albertans want them focused on because it's pretty clear when we're back home that nobody is listening to what the opposition is doing, and they're very disappointed in their behaviour in this Assembly.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you to both House leaders for your interventions this afternoon. While I'm inclined to rule today on whether or not this is, in fact, a breach of privilege, I think I will allow caution to prevail and rule tomorrow. My sense is that the ruling will be around whether or not the member intentionally intended to mislead the House. I'll spend some time in quiet reflection on that particular matter. As such, I consider this matter concluded until I rule.

Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

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

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

#### Bill 202

#### Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned June 17: Ms Sweet speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has one more minute.

Are there any other members? We have the hon. Member for Airdrie-East standing to speak.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I would like to start off by thanking my hon. colleague the MLA for Calgary-West for bringing this bill forward for essentially the second time in our two terms now in this Legislature.

This is an extremely important bill. One should take note that, as I've already mentioned, this is the second time this piece of legislation has ended up in this House, but that's for a very important reason. Mr. Speaker, in 2015, when the terrible report of Serenity was tabled in this House and what had happened to her and the government's complete negligence at the time, the government of the day, their complete negligence in taking any action on the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate was one that the public took pause and notice of because what had happened to Serenity was such a terrible act. The fact that the government of the day at that time took no action – so a private member, a member of the opposition of that time, the MLA for Calgary-West, came forward with his first private member's bill in an effort to protect children, to put some parameters around reporting of child abuse in our society.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 is very simple. It ensures and makes it very clear that if anyone is aware of a child being abused, they must, they will be compelled to report it to the authorities, the authorities being simply: pick up the phone, you call 911, and you will report this act to a police officer, and if you do not, you will face a hefty fine and, not only that, a very, very guilty conscience. This is a good piece of legislation. Why is this a good piece of legislation? Because it protects those who are most vulnerable. It does what it can very simply to ensure and to compel those who suspect one of abusing a child to be reporting it, and I hope that no one takes that lightly.

I want to share with my colleagues an article that came out in the CBC in 2017. I'll table it later. It pointed out that the existing part of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act dealing with the failure to report a child in need of intervention was added in 2003 and that the president of the Alberta College of Social Workers, Richard Gregory, said that it is a great piece of legislation and that the downside of it is that people don't know about it. Well, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are going to know about this piece of legislation. I hope that members in this House will all agree that this is a good piece of legislation, that we will all vote in favour of it, and this will be the law of the land.

There's also a great quote by former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy, who said that the reality is that other people a lot of times have gut feelings that something is not right, but they don't do anything about it. Somehow we need to enforce an act or empower people with the confidence and knowledge to make them act, those who have gut feelings. If hockey coaches, parents who supervise the lunchroom, teachers who supervise the playground have a gut feeling – and these are people who have generally had multiple interactions with children; these are good gut feelings – they have to report this to the authorities. This Bill 202 will compel them, and there will be penalties if they choose to ignore that gut feeling.

If a child shows up with bruising, if a child's behaviour starts to change, they will be compelled to alert the authorities, and an investigation will take place. The fact of the matter is that it is shocking that this doesn't currently exist. Prior to this legislation being brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-West, it was confusing even for the previous government to understand who

to report to. How is that even a possibility in this day and age, that it's confusing to figure out who to pick up the phone and call if you suspect that a child is being abused? This bill needs to be passed as quickly as possible and come into force in just the same way. By increasing the consequences of not reporting, this bill sends a very clear message to all adults about the gravity of our shared responsibility for vulnerable children, and ignoring even once a child who may be a victim of abuse, Mr. Speaker, is one time too many. Our hope is that through this bill all adults will be compelled, will be driven to act, driven to report this matter.

Bill 202 addresses the gaps in the existing legislation. I've already identified who to report to. How serious is this? Well, it's going to be \$10,000 serious for negligent adults. It increases the clarity and the consequences. That is good legislation that I know all members of this House can agree with. As MLAs we have a responsibility to support legislation that protects the most vulnerable, especially children. We have a responsibility to leave a positive and profound legacy for the children of our province, and Bill 202 does just that.

3:20

We as MLAs will be judged by our actions in this House and the legislation that we support and the legislation that we don't. We do not want our legacy to be one of failure, especially failure to protect vulnerable children and, especially because it appears to be complicated or ambiguous legislation, the failure to report child abuse. I urge all members of this House to not repeat the mistakes of the past, to create clarity around child abuse and reporting, implement hefty fines, create good-news headlines, create awareness around the duty to report child abuse so that we can make a difference for those kids who are currently suffering and all those gut feelings out there that no one is taking action on. Let it be known, Mr. Speaker, that there's a \$10,000 fine for those who fail vulnerable children in our province.

I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of Bill 202. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud standing.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today to Bill 202. I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Calgary-West for bringing this private member's bill forward. I think we are all in agreement in this House about the need to address any situation where a child, particularly a vulnerable child, is at risk and about increasing the opportunities for individuals who are aware of situations where a child may be at risk, bringing those reports forward. We know it's very critical to these kids' safety. I don't think there's anybody in this House that would disagree with the idea that we need to increase those opportunities for people to come forward, to make sure that people understand their obligation as members of this society to speak up and to come forward, particularly for vulnerable children.

We have seen a number of instances, of course, very tragically, where adults have not come forward and children have been injured or lost their lives as a result. Any steps forward that we can take to prevent that from happening are very critical for us to do.

I support this bill; however, I do want to note a couple of cautions. I first of all want to speak a little bit to the record of the previous government, the NDP government, on child intervention, primarily because it speaks to the complexity of the issues around child intervention. It's not a matter that we can address with a quick change. We know that this is a very complicated issue that brings up issues of poverty, of trust of the police, of government, and of

the complicated reasons why children end up in care in this province. Those situations require a complex assessment. They require clear communication channels with those who are affected – stakeholders, indigenous communities, experts in the field – to come up with solutions, and there's not going to be one solution. Of course, if there was one easy solution, then governments would have done it decades ago.

We know this is a complicated problem, and this is why I want to highlight a little bit of the track record of the previous government, the NDP government, in this area. In particular, under the NDP the government increased funding for child intervention by \$57.8 million to ensure stable front-line services and meet caseload growth. This included funding for foster and kinship caregivers and those with supports for permanency agreements by \$1.9 million so that caregivers have the resources to support the children in care.

Under the NDP government there was also an increase in funding for early intervention services of \$5.1 million, for a total of \$107.6 million to support front-line programming for culturally appropriate, community-based services. That includes parent link centres, parenting programs, and those are necessary to prevent the need for intervention at a later date. It also included \$1 million to develop an indigenous youth society plan.

Under the NDP government there was also the Alberta child benefit that was created, and it invested \$175 million in 2018 alone to put money right in the pockets of families who most need it, helping parents buy winter clothes for their kids and enrol them in extracurriculars for the first time.

Under the NDP government 59 additional child intervention staff were hired to manage caseloads and ensure children and youth get the care they need. Of course, I've spoken a few times already to the all-party Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, that was established under the NDP government, which was an unprecedented process that brought in stakeholders. It had transparent engagement with the communities that needed it most. As part of that process the NDP government passed Bill 18, the Child Protection and Accountability Act, which has really changed the way that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate operated. It provided a stronger, more effective office of the Child and Youth Advocate, it enhanced accountability and transparency, it improved the timeline in death reviews, it increased cultural competence, and it increased clarity and information sharing across the system.

Following phase 2 of that ministerial panel, the NDP government worked very closely with indigenous families and communities as well as stakeholders and community partners to co-create a public action plan that puts all the panel's recommendations in place. I've spoken about that a little bit. The action plan, which was A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow, created 39 recommendations and actions that the government should take to improve services for indigenous families, increase supports for children, youth, and all caregivers, and address the funding gap on-reserve.

That action plan contained 39 specific actions that were both short-term, intermediate, and long-term actions. Under the NDP government we've seen that a lot of the immediate actions have already taken place, in particular to address some of the most urgent needs. Under that panel the action plan they implemented is a first-of-its-kind agreement to fully implement Jordan's principle, which is to ensure that indigenous families don't have to go through red tape and bureaucracy to determine who should be providing services. But the services are provided first to the children, and then the federal and provincial governments can negotiate and discuss who should be responsible for paying for that.

Under the action plan an indigenous cultural understanding framework was developed and a provincial action plan for youth

suicide prevention. There were specific measures in place for each element of this action plan, and progress on these actions has been shared to date. I am confident that the government and the Minister of Children's Services will continue to update us on the implementation of that action plan.

I do also want to highlight that as part of the work that was done under that action plan, the NDP government brought forward An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, which was passed by this Legislature in December 2018. It was intended to improve supports for children inside and outside of care. The UCP, as the opposition at that time, voted against that bill. I only want to bring all of this up because it is a complicated issue. Developing strategies to reduce the number of children in care but also to ensure that those children who are in care or any child is safe and protected requires a comprehensive approach.

I appreciate, obviously, that the intention of this bill is one that we can all get behind. However, I do want to highlight that there were some concerns that were raised by the opposition caucus during the consideration of this bill at the private members' bills committee. In particular, we felt that because of the potential impact of this bill on both Children's Services staff as well as on the police, there was some value that stakeholders should be consulted. We needed to hear from them as to how the implementation of the changes that were being put forward in the bill would affect their workload, how it would affect what they, as the experts who deal with these situations all the time, believed would best address the needs of kids who were in vulnerable situations.

You know, we believed it was important to get a technical briefing from the ministry on this issue because, again, as it currently stands under the Child, Youth, and Family Enhancement Act, it is an employee, the director of the association or of Children's Services, who is notified if there is a child in need of intervention. They would have the best information in terms of what kinds of calls they were getting: should they be going to the police first, or would that help? How would that affect the transfer of information to effect the most immediate way to address the concerns?

Again, this is only about: let's speak to the people who implement the changes, who would be responsible for the changes, to find out their feedback. Simply put, when we are developing laws, it's really important to speak to the people who are most directly affected and have the most knowledge about it. We felt it was important that that stakeholder consultation and ministry technical briefing was done at that stage. It would not have delayed consideration of this bill in this House. It simply would have provided a more fulsome understanding of the implications of the proposed legislation. We felt it would have helped the discussion in the House. It's something we could have talked about: what was the feedback from various police organizations, from the front-line workers who receive these calls? It only would have added to the quality of the debate as well as our understanding of the implications of the bill. As I mentioned, again, it was never intended to be any kind of delay on it, because we all agree with the intention of this bill.

3:30

I do want to highlight as well that it is our understanding from previous work that there have been very few charges laid under the current Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which currently puts a duty to report to a director of Children's Services. There have been very few charges or offences laid under this provision. It's not clear whether changing the ability to report to a police officer would actually increase the number of offences or penalties that are given out. That simply is not clear. I understand that that is one of the intentions, to send a clear message to the

communities, to parents, to everybody to say that we all have a personal obligation when a child is in need to report that.

I'm just concerned that actually changing the penalty provisions doesn't actually achieve that outcome. It doesn't actually increase the number of people who will report. I don't know the answer to that. Again, that's one of the things where I think it would have been valuable to hear from our stakeholders and hear from the experts in the area to see how they think that would affect that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Other members looking to speak to second reading of Bill 202? I believe I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to point out to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – and I know that she's new here and wasn't present when the panel was struck – that the NDP only acted and set up that panel after demands from all parties on the opposition side. It took a long time for them to finally, after embarrassment in the public eye, set up the child intervention panel. The results of that were quite disappointing, to say the least, but I digress.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today and speak in favour of this Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-West again for proposing this bill and for his service as a police officer on the front lines, where he protected Albertans both young and old.

The hon. member and I care deeply for our constituents, but there's a special place for the children and others who are prone to being victimized. Our children are the future, and protecting them is protecting our future. I'm glad to see this bill tabled after it was unsuccessful in the previous Legislature. This bill strengthens our ability to protect children in Alberta. It increases the penalties for failing to protect our little ones. It provides common-sense clarification to Albertans as to who they can contact when they observe a child in abusive situations. These are simple changes that can have an enormous impact on the lives of children, up to and including saving their lives.

We have seen cases in recent years of horrible abuse of children in this province. We have all been shocked to our core by each one: children starved, beaten, bruised, and broken; children suffering terrible physical or sexual abuse; children murdered; children taking their own lives because they are unable to cope with the toll. We can only feel extreme disgust and repulsion at these cases when they become public. As a member of the opposition in the previous government I attended on numerous occasions the child intervention panel as a stand-in. Some of the stories that we heard from people that have been through the child intervention system were shocking and very dismaying.

Unfortunately, all too often there were adults that were aware of the horrible conditions being endured by these children and did nothing, said nothing, apparently not disgusted or repulsed enough to pick up the phone and call someone to intervene. I think we can all agree that this is completely unacceptable. Increasing the penalties for wilfully turning a blind eye to this kind of evil is a common-sense response. If people cannot be motivated by the moral imperative to protect the vulnerable, especially children, perhaps greater legal consequences can provide some more incentive.

It's sad to think that some people might need any persuasion to protect children at all, but clearly some do. For those that still won't, hopefully the penalty forces them to reconsider what they will tolerate when some behaviour is so far outside the bounds of decent society. It's a tragedy that those who victimize children are often related to them. With that being the case, abuse of children can be

harder to spot. We should be willing to look a little bit closer, shouldn't we? We should be looking for kids that are in trouble.

It can be overwhelming being a child. Everything is a new experience, and in many cases a child does not know any better when they are being taken advantage of. Children learn what is right and wrong as they grow up. In tragic circumstances, their abuse can be seen as the normal course of life. That's why children need others to stand up for them when they're being taken advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, adding police officers to the list of authorities that may be contacted to report children who are at risk, in danger, or in need of intervention is a common-sense change that provides clarity to all Albertans. Many who will report would probably turn to our police officers first anyway, so this codifies what Albertans would do anyway because it is the common-sense thing to do. If you see a criminal activity taking place, you call the police. Why would that be different when seeing a child being abused or starved or gravely mistreated? That's what is expected and makes sense to most Albertans.

If a case needs child intervention authorities but not police intervention, Albertans can trust that the matter will be handed over and dealt with appropriately. They don't need to know the bureaucratic details of the intervention. All they care about is that if they see a child in need, they can report it and that child will be protected.

I understand that our neighbours in Saskatchewan require the reporting of information to an officer or peace officer, and the Prince Edward Island Child Protection Act states that a person must report "to the Director, or to a peace officer who shall report the information to the Director." This makes sense. The increased penalty proposed by this bill for failing to report a child in need is also already the penalty elsewhere. In British Columbia the penalty is a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to six months or both.

If we pass this bill, Mr. Speaker, Alberta won't be alone in having provisions like this. There's nothing inherently problematic about being the first province to pass a piece of legislation, but I do think that knowing policies are already in place elsewhere can provide some comfort to legislators who are committed to doing their due diligence.

For all these reasons I have shared, I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote in support of this bill. We all care deeply about this province and its future, and our children are, without question, that future. Protecting them with common-sense improvements to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act should be something that we can all agree on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein standing to speak.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak in support of Bill 202, brought forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-West.

Last week the Member for Edmonton-Manning made the point that issues facing at-risk children are not black and white. I, like her, have an intimate understanding that there are a variety of issues facing young people and their families. However, I do not feel that this is a very good reason to advise caution on this bill. Frankly speaking, I believe that that completely misses the point. When I think through the many stories I've heard from the youth who recount their personal stories to me, it is hard to think of examples where there were not adults in their lives that could have spoken up for them, as has been stated a few times today in reference to child advocate Sheldon Kennedy.

I also can appreciate that people currently do call the police and acknowledge the many examples of responsible citizens doing just that, which is a good thing. However, there are some people that don't, and that is why we are here. The Member for Edmonton-Manning said it herself that if it is urgent, automatically police and Children's Services are deployed, which speaks to the importance of this bill.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning also cited her concern that people are scared to report. I will argue that this is not a sufficient reason, and there should be consequences, as highlighted by the initial intent of this law. To clarify, this change is about closing a loophole. This bill is not necessarily designed to prevent but to add some teeth to an already existing law. This law was put in initially to protect children and to provide a consequence for people who would turn a blind eye to children in crisis.

Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, proposes straightforward and meaningful changes to the existing act. There are several key changes that I will discuss in detail throughout this speech, but before I begin, I want to contextualize Bill 202 for us and highlight why it matters to the people of Alberta and, consequently, to the members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Calgary-West has already emphasized, the impetus behind this bill was the heartbreaking story of little Serenity. In September 2014 Serenity was admitted into hospital with an injury to the head. At just over four years old she reportedly weighed a mere 18 pounds. Now, to put that into perspective, the typical weight for a four-year-old girl can be anywhere between 28 and 45 pounds. This means that Serenity was well below the normal weight of a child her age. In addition to being extremely underweight, doctors found significant bruising, and she was actually hypothermic. Ultimately, little Serenity passed away on September 27, 2014. Serenity's story was a call to action for all members of this Assembly.

3:40

This bill proposes to make three key changes to the existing legislation currently under the act. Individuals who suspect that a child needs intervention must immediately make a report to "a director." Now, I would suggest that members of this Assembly who are well versed with government legislation cannot immediately think of who in their local community would qualify as a director under this act, and I imagine this inability to immediately identify a director is shared by many other concerned members of the public. Bill 202 directly addresses this critical gap by including the option of reporting to a police officer. To state the obvious, Mr. Speaker, everybody knows where and how to contact a police officer.

This seemingly simple change will have a profound impact on the children of this province. In fact, a recent case from 2017 shows the decisive role it can play in suspected situations of abuse. A woman who was babysitting five children in Edmonton noticed that three of the children appeared malnourished. Going down to the basement, she found two other children who were being kept in furniture boxes. This babysitter contacted emergency services. Though the trauma of their experience will certainly take time to heal, their lives were saved because of her decisive action. This is exactly the kind of responsible action that Albertans should be expected to take, and it is what this bill will help facilitate. The obligation to notify a police officer sets a very clear and unambiguous expectation.

The second element of this bill is that once a police officer has been notified, they must immediately report the matter to a director. Immediately. We know that our men and women in uniform have

the knowledge and resources necessary to reach out to a director as specified by this legislation. This bill allows police officers to act as the bridge between citizens and the relevant officials within child services, all in the best interests of our children.

The third element of Bill 202 that I want to highlight is how it increases the consequences of failing to report. Under the existing legislation an individual who does not report an instance of suspected abuse can be fined up to \$2,000. Keeping in mind the grave nature of these abuses facing vulnerable children, I'm sure all members of this Assembly will agree that this punishment is far too lenient. To address this, Bill 202 will increase the possible penalty for not reporting to \$10,000. It will also include the option of sentencing someone to a maximum of six months' imprisonment. This bill further proposes that individuals who fail to report can be subject to both the fine and the prison sentence. Tragically, the incident involving Serenity has not been the only one of its kind in our province. Some of us may recall the tragic death of John Clark, who was just over a year old and whose death was partially caused by malnutrition. There were adults in his life who may have suspected he was not receiving the appropriate level of care, yet they did not act. Ryan Lovett died in 2013 at the tender age of seven due to various health issues, including pneumonia and multiple organ failure. Again, there were reports of individuals who knew about his deteriorating health and did not act.

I bring up these stories, Mr. Speaker, to draw attention to the real faces, the individual human beings whose lives have been tragically affected by abuse and neglect. These are not abstract stories. They are not hypotheticals. They are reality, a deeply unjust and sad reality. Given this reality I urge us all to take action.

I want to reiterate the three key changes that Bill 202 makes. The first is that it will allow individuals to contact either a director or, critically, a police officer if they suspect a child is in need of intervention. The second is that if they do report to a police officer, the officer would then be required to report the case to a director. And the third and final point is that individuals who decide not to report would face tougher penalties than they do under the present legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that Bill 202 will allow us to live up to our obligation to be a voice for the vulnerable and will ensure that every member of this province takes their responsibility to our children seriously. I hope that every member of this Assembly votes in favour of Bill 202 and that our action will allow Serenity's legacy to be one of hope for the vulnerable children of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill, and I'd like to start by thanking the Member for Calgary-West for bringing it forward. I know that he has done incredibly good work for the Calgary Police Service and therefore has some personal experience in this area and is bringing a bill to the House that reflects some of the knowledge that he brought into the Legislature. I always appreciate it when people do that. As for all the members on the opposition side we would like to start by saying that we will support this bill. I would also like to use it as an opportunity to talk about some of the issues that I think are very important.

While I do support the bill because perhaps it will provide some clarity to people that they can and should speak to a police officer in the event that they know something about child abuse or neglect, I just want to point out that in many ways this actually does not

change the reality. I graduated with my first social work degree in 1982 and worked as a child welfare worker for the province of Alberta, here in the city of Edmonton, for three years subsequently. I can tell you that both in my training from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work and in my training from the department of child welfare here in the province we learned that it was indeed a requirement for people who were aware of child abuse and neglect to report to the director of Children's Services. That could be done, of course, through any number of vehicles – individuals such as a front-line child welfare worker or even through the hospital system or the police system – but if the clarity is necessary, why would I object to it?

I'm happy to speak to that. I subsequently, of course, worked as a social worker in the area of child sexual abuse for many years. I ran a private practice in the city of Edmonton where I was a counsellor for children who had been sexually abused. I have seen, unfortunately, I hate to say, over 1,200 children that had been sexually abused over the period of time that I worked in that area, so I had a very close relationship with the police force, who worked very well with us to ensure that we appropriately investigated situations of child sexual abuse and responded to them. Again, I want to commend that relationship. They're a very important structural piece that's put in place right now with the CARRT team, for example, the child abuse response team, in the city of Edmonton and other relationships that ensure that we do the right things.

I do want to address some concerns I have about the legislation being proposed here, though, not because I oppose where we're going, but I want to express a caution. The caution is that the problem is big and clearly needs to be addressed, and I think that everyone agrees with that, but the emphasis of how you respond to the problem is one that can be problematic. Because of the limited scope of a private member's bill, in this case, the choice perhaps has led to an emphasis on punishment in the event that someone does not report. I have some very serious concerns about that because that's not my experience, in my reading of the literature around it, that punishment is typically a really effective way of getting people to buy into something. Now, of course, many people here might say: well, I don't want to lose \$10,000, so I'm going to make the report. But that isn't the determining thought for many people in the community.

I particularly want to speak about many of the vulnerable people that I've had an opportunity to work with over the years as a social worker and how their experience is that working with authorities such as social workers, myself and my colleagues, or police officers is a scary proposition that they're experiencing. For example, in the First Nations and Métis communities, the indigenous peoples of this province, when they do engage with those authorities, they feel that they often lose control over the situation and that the consequences come down on them rather than on the incidents that they're concerned about. That is, if you're concerned that perhaps someone in your community is not properly caring for their child and you report that child to the authorities, too often in the past what happened is that child was simply removed and taken away from the community, and the child was lost to the First Nations community or to the Métis community, so the punishment was to the community. I think that that's an issue that we have to address.

We know that when fines are levied against people, it's very often vulnerable people who end up paying those fines more often than nonvulnerable people, that it's not just your average person who ends up with the fines, but people from indigenous communities somehow always end up with more fines more often than nonindigenous people. They've expressed that concern to me a number of times.

3:50

I guess I want to make a few suggestions about things that could be done to make this bill more fulsome and to address the issue of nonreporting in a more complex way. I, first of all, want to acknowledge that there's some incredibly important work that's been done by Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who is the executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, which has been in the press quite a bit over the last few years because of their challenging of the child welfare response to indigenous communities across this country for the last number of years. In fact, she's gone to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and has received three judgments from them that child welfare systems across the country and those paid for by the federal government have been consistently, dramatically underfunding services to people on First Nations reserves and communities across this province.

As long as we don't tend to those kind of structural problems, as long as they don't have the resources to pay for social workers and other support people to go in and to deal with these issues as they arise in a supportive, healing, change-oriented manner, then we're going to end up with a system that goes back to punishment when somebody doesn't report rather than a resolution of the underlying problems to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place or deal with it at its early stages. It's that emphasis, that difference between waiting for the bad thing to happen and then punishing people or actually responding early on and preventing the abuse from happening in the first place that I think is the difference here between what we would like to see on this side of the House and what is being proffered here on the government side of the House.

I think that we should take caution here not because I'm against the desire to make sure that people are aware of the requirement to report but – as I said, that's always, actually, been a requirement. If we need clarity to make sure that involves police officers as well, great. I mean, I'm happy to support that, but we cannot do simply one small piece and expect that the work has been done when there are so many much larger, more significant pieces that are undone. As the Human Rights Commission has reported, you simply cannot continue to act in the way you've always acted and expect to have a different result. So you cannot underfund child welfare services on-reserve and expect there not to be a problem.

They have a number of suggestions that I think are really important, and I think we should speak a little bit about those kinds of suggestions. They talk about, first of all, bringing the funding level up on-reserve so it's equal to the funding off-reserve. It's a pretty simple request. That could've been added into this bill.

They talk about making sure that you recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over children on-reserve. That could have been included in this bill, and I would have liked to have seen it.

They talk about other issues that are associated with it, about the lack of housing, the high levels of poverty, dealing with the underlying structural reasons why people find themselves in a vulnerable place and become disenfranchised from larger society and therefore may not wish to engage in the programs such as reporting to police and social services because they're so disenfranchised through everything else that they also don't feel like they can enter into the system when it comes to child abuse and neglect, fear that they themselves may get into trouble, fear that their community may be angry at them because they're about to lose another child to the system, fear that the people who they may be related to or who they clearly know if they live in the same community will be very upset with them.

There are lots of underlying issues. I would love to see some of those underlying issues addressed here in this bill, where we work



on issues like housing, as the previous Minister for Seniors and Housing did with her First Nations housing authority money, \$110 million I believe it was, and we work on issues like poverty such as we had done in our government, where we reduced child poverty by 50 per cent, thereby increasing the likelihood that we don't need police intervention.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members? I see the hon. Minister of Children's Services standing to speak.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to speak to Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019, put forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-West.

This is a piece of legislation for which I am pleased to show my support. I want to sincerely thank the Member for Calgary-West for his continued work and advocacy on this bill. It's very clear that this is something he has been incredibly passionate about, and I am enormously grateful to have so many colleagues like the Member for Calgary-West who care so deeply about vulnerable children in our province and want to continually strive to do better and be better for our kids. The impetus for this legislation comes from the tragic story of a young girl named Serenity, whose horrific abuse was the catalyst for the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention.

I, first, want to thank members from both sides of the House for taking part in this important work. Hearing from researchers, First Nations and Métis communities, and people with lived experience identified many important changes to the child intervention practices and supports for families that needed to take place. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud noted, this is a complex issue.

Many of the reforms that came out of the work done by the panel have already been implemented or are actively being worked on. Our government is committed to continuing this work alongside our stakeholders. The advice received during the panel consultations is now also informing front-line practice in care of vulnerable children. The death of this little girl was tragic, but her legacy lives on in the work that this government continues to undertake and through the tireless efforts of many of my colleagues and by members on both sides of this Assembly, and it certainly lives on in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 is a common-sense piece of legislation, and common-sense legislation is part of what our government ran on. We need to find practical responses to real-world problems, and this bill does exactly that. This bill will amend the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, also known as CYFEA, to the following. In section 4(1): "Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to (a) a director, or (b) a police officer." This may seem like a small change, but it is a common-sense change that will provide important clarity for Albertans on where they can turn should they have concerns about the safety of a child. The current legislation stipulates that an Albertan who believes that a child may be in danger can report the matter to a director.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Children's Services, in one of my first briefings, one of the questions that I asked was: who is the director? Director of what, exactly? Now I am fortunate to have access to experts in the public service who are very familiar with CYFEA and could answer my question about the act. The current definition of a director under CYFEA is

a person designated by the Minister as a director for the purposes of this Act and the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act and without limiting the generality of the foregoing includes a

person designated as a director in accordance with an agreement under section 122(2) of this Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is complex, and when we are talking about a matter as important as the safety of children and how to report, we'd like to be crystal clear.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans do report when they see a child in danger, and our amazing police officers are already working with Children's Services to assess risk and keep kids safe, but this is a best practice that is not enshrined in legislation currently, and I'm told that it becomes problematic when trying to address those people who choose not to report a child in danger.

I understand that, as it stands right now, in practice there has never been a charge or prosecution under CYFEA for failing to report. I'm also told that it is extremely difficult to convict someone for failing to report because of the need to establish that the individual had knowledge giving rise to that duty and that there are people who, when faced with jail times and fines, could have a plausible defence that they did not know how to contact a director. Our current legislation lacks the clarity and could allow people to walk away unpunished for turning their backs on vulnerable children in need. There have been several high-profile cases, many of which we've heard about today, of child abuse and neglect in our province, where it was discovered in the aftermath that there were adults who either had concerns for the safety of a child but didn't report or who purposefully turned a blind eye.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, that breaks my heart. As a mom and as the Minister of Children's Services, these cases break my heart. This bill reminds us that being complicit is not okay. Being a complicit bystander is not okay. We hope that it sends a message that this government, our province, and the people of Alberta will not tolerate abuse or apathy when it comes to our children. It reminds the public, Mr. Speaker, that each of us has a responsibility to report concerns of abuse or neglect to the appropriate law enforcement officials. This bill will also increase penalties for those who do not report.

4:00

Currently our legislation stipulates:

4(6) Any person who fails to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$2000 and in default of payment to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months.

This bill will amend this subsection to read:

4(6) Any person who fails to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months, or to both a fine and imprisonment.

As has been raised by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, these changes will bring Alberta in line with several other jurisdictions in Canada and are a common-sense way to communicate to all Albertans that they, too, can and, in fact, must play a role in keeping children safe. Mr. Speaker, again, while it seems like a small change, if it saves one child, this bill will absolutely be worth it. Every child deserves to be cared for and raised in a safe, supportive home. Our government will continue to work to provide the supports that parents and caregivers sometimes need to build strong families in strong communities.

If I can send a message to Albertans across the province today, it is this. Each of us has an obligation to report a child in need or a child at risk of danger or harm. Please do not sit back and hope that you are wrong. When in doubt, speak up and reach out. Contact a Children's Services office, a delegated First Nation authority, or the child abuse hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS. Call law enforcement. Call 911.

I am happy to put my support behind Bill 202, and I would encourage all members of this House to do the same. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to this matter?

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister and all those in the Chamber who supported and had very kind words to say about this bill. You know, as I sat in this Chamber before and I spoke about Bill 205, which pertained to the opioid crisis that we are still facing but faced a few years ago, Bill 205 was never meant to be a solution to the opioid crisis, as Bill 202 is not meant to be a solution to fix everything within the child welfare system. This is, quite simply, a loophole that has been discovered, and we're trying to fix this loophole to let everybody in Alberta know that you cannot turn a blind eye to a child in need of intervention. It's just not acceptable.

It's not acceptable as it still stands under the act. As the minister pointed out, there have never been any charges laid in regard to this current piece of legislation. It is very challenging, as I've stated in this House already, to lay a charge as it pertains to simply reporting to a director. I won't belabour it. It's certainly been explained a number of times already here.

This is not about anyone else, Mr. Speaker, other than the children, the children of Alberta. I could not agree more with the minister. If this can save the life of one child, just one child, then I think every one of us has done our job as legislators to do our part for the children of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as previously stated by my colleague and friend from Calgary-Klein, who mentioned Mr. Sheldon Kennedy, who is a children's advocate who brought to light sex crimes by former junior hockey coach Graham James: "There are usually people who know what is happening and don't report it. If the law is there, it should be used." The reality is that other people a lot of the times have gut feelings that something is not right but don't do anything about it. Somehow we need to enforce an act or empower people with the confidence and knowledge to make them act.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a common-sense bill. It is very straightforward. This is about the children of Alberta. This is something I've been advocating for a long time. I have done my homework on this. I have talked to stakeholders, and this is something that, although it is a very small change, would have enormous – enormous – benefits for the children of Alberta, especially those who are currently suffering as we speak.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank everyone for supporting this bill, and I will yield the floor. Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:07 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rutherford
Allard	Loewen	Sabir
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Savage
Ceci	Loyola	Sawhney
Dreeschen	Luan	Schmidt
Eggen	Madu	Schow
Ellis	McIver	Schulz

Feehan	Milliken	Sigurdson, L.
Fir	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ganley	Nielsen	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Glubish	Pancholi	Stephan
Gray	Pitt	Sweet
Guthrie	Rehn	Walker
Hanson	Rosin	Wilson
Hoffman	Rowswell	Yao
Horner		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 0
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[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a second time]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat standing.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to actually propose an amendment to Bill 201. I have the copies here. Would you like me to wait until they're passed out to the House?

**The Deputy Chair:** Sure.

Hon. member, if you would be so kind as to read it into the record.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There are three parts, and they read as follows. Section 1(f) is struck out. Section 2(2) is amended by striking out clause (d) and substituting the following:

- (d) a requirement that the board ensures that
  - (i) a risk reduction plan that meets the requirements set out in section 3 is in place in each school,
  - (ii) upon enrollment, parents and students are asked to supply information on life-threatening allergies, if any, and
  - (iii) each school operated by the board maintains a file for every student who has an anaphylactic allergy including any current treatments, copies of any prescriptions, any instructions from health professionals and a current emergency contact list.

Section 3 is struck out and the following is substituted:

#### Risk reduction plan

- 3 A risk reduction plan for a school shall include
  - (a) information about each student who has an anaphylactic allergy,
  - (b) information for employees and others who on a regular basis are in direct contact with a student who has an anaphylactic allergy regarding the type of allergy, monitoring and avoidance strategies and appropriate treatments,
  - (c) a readily accessible emergency procedure for each student, including emergency contact information, and
  - (d) provisions for and information regarding storage of epinephrine auto-injectors, where necessary.

Mr. Chair, this amendment was proposed as a result of consultation with stakeholders. I know that the Member for Fort

Saskatchewan-Vegreville has worked tirelessly on this file and that it is a deeply held belief of hers that we see this go forward. I know that I stand a hundred per cent in support of the bill. I just do believe that these small changes don't actually change the intent of the bill or anything of that nature, but they actually enhance the bill, creating it more in line with what she heard from stakeholders.

The amendment will change the name of the individual anaphylaxis plan to a risk reduction plan while retaining all the same elements of the individual plan. I know that last week, when we went over this bill, we seemed to see a lot of kickback and push-back. I mean, I was even a guest on the committee, substituting, when we heard the need for a lot more consultation on this bill. I think this amendment and the reaction from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville proves that consultation was done, and this is a really good reaction to that, making sure that we have the adequate wording going forward to reflect that adequate consultation.

The intent of the amendment is to make section 2 more consistent by shifting responsibility for the development of risk reduction plans from the principal or designate to the board level. We know that many boards have these in place already, and this is just a backstop, ensuring that all boards would have these going forward. This makes sense as section 2 is all about board responsibility. If the amendment passes, all of section 2 will be focused on the responsibilities of the board, taking that away from individual schools, where we know there was a little bit of confusion. This will also be more consistent with actual practices, Mr. Chair. Most boards have similar policies in place already for children with life-threatening allergies, but like I said, these are developed at the board level and not at the school level.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment. We didn't have notice of it – we're seeing it for the first time – but from what I can determine, looking at this amendment, it actually is, I would say, an improvement. I think, again, that the bill was very good. As you may recall, the last time we discussed this bill, there were a lot of questions, I think, that came forward from the opposition about how exactly this would be implemented and on whom the liability would rest. Those concerns were because, you know, you don't want to place a liability on an individual person that they can't themselves necessarily fulfill. It's usually better to have sort of an overarching entity.

4:30

In this case I think this amendment does exactly that. It sounds like it was in response to stakeholder feedback, probably, that it was better to have a board respond at a board level to have those policies in place so it would be uniform throughout that board than it would be to have each individual principal. It's also, I think, difficult for the principal because there will be a lot of analysis that needs to go into these policies: legal, medical, other sorts of analyses, risk-mitigation, that sort of thing. I think that placing the onus on the board is probably, in my view, an improvement.

I would say, yeah, again, I think that on the whole this is a good bill. I'm glad that some consultation with stakeholders has occurred. I hope that that consultation continues to be ongoing, because as is almost always the case with these things, even when something is a good idea, the devil is usually in the details in terms of the implementation. So I'm glad to hear that that consultation continues to be ongoing.

I think that, on balance, having just seen it, as sort of an initial reaction to this, I would urge members to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it probably does improve the bill and creates sort of a more coherent – not coherent; cohesive maybe. It will create the same thing at all schools throughout the same board, and I think that's good. So if you have, say, two kids that are in different schools, the policies will be the same. That's straightforward for parents. They can learn it and know what it is.

It also means that all that sort of additional administrative work that will need to go into developing these policies can be done at a board level instead of being repeated at each individual school level. I think there are probably some efficiencies there as well.

Saying that, I would thank the hon. member for bringing forward the amendment. It's well taken, and I would urge members to vote in favour of it.

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

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for the amendment. I appreciate all the hard work that has been done by schools, administrators, and teachers. The bill was developed to ensure minimum standards across the province. Many boards have policies in place to manage students with life-threatening allergies. This is a credit to the boards that have the policies and will provide a plan for those that do not.

I'm in full support of this amendment, and I ask that my colleagues support it also. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford standing to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to use a moment just to ask some questions back and forth with the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville around the amendment, just literally for my understanding since we're seeing it for the very first time.

I would note that under section B of the amendment you're striking out clause (d) of section 2(2) of the bill and substituting – the list here is quite long, so I won't read through it all. In the substitution I noticed two pieces that were eliminated, and I just want to understand the reasoning or the direction that it may be going in here. One of the sections that is eliminated is a communication plan for the dissemination to parents, students, and employees. In the old section it said under 2(2)(b): "a communication plan for the dissemination of information on life-threatening allergies to parents, students and employees." Will there no longer be a requirement for any kind of information to the rest of the members of the school community? I'm just wondering.

Again, the next one is section 2(2)(c), where it required "mandatory regular training on dealing with life-threatening allergies for all employees." It also seems to be eliminated. I'm just wondering if there's a decision to stop training and to stop the dissemination of information. Just a simple question, really.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your recognizing me. It's my first time getting the chance to speak to Bill 201 here in the House. I'm happy to rise in support of this bill.

I first want to start by thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing this forward and for the hard work she has done on this. As we all know, it can sometimes be difficult for private members to be able to do, I guess, the same level of consultation that, for instance, the government is able to undertake. I'm glad to see her put in the kind of work that the member was able to do around this.

My comments will be somewhat brief, and I guess they revolve a little bit more around the private members' bills committee. I really would have loved the opportunity to consult a couple of stakeholders. As you're probably aware, Mr. Chair, the committee has a very, very tight time mandate, in terms of when private members' business is handed to it, to get a chance to review it and then to make recommendations to the House. With those very, very tight timelines, of course, it would have been a little bit difficult to reach out to some people to get responses on this, but I think it would have been sort of helpful for us moving forward on that.

Again, I am happy to support this as a father who had a child that carried around an EpiPen for two and a half years or so. It would be a good safety net in terms of making sure that maybe kids who don't necessarily have, I guess, the same means that I did in protecting my child for that uncertain period that she did have. It would have been rather nice to know some of the smaller details around the implementation, maybe around even the potential funding. As we know, all private members' bills can't be money bills, but with our fantastic nonprofit organizations out there it's good to know that there are some that are already lined up, possibly, to step up to this. Having served on, for instance, the Children's Heart Society, having those things necessarily downloaded to us on top of everything else that we're doing isn't always the best thing. Hopefully, in the future, as we move this forward, maybe the government might consider something around funding this so that our fantastic nonprofits would be able to continue the work that they're doing.

Like I said, it's unfortunate that we didn't get a chance to chat with a few people, but I am very happy to stand in support of this. I would certainly urge all other members to support this. Again I thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for all her work on this.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 201, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 201 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.

The committee shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 201. 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 in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

4:40

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, we've made some great progress, and I would like to continue that progress. I would ask for unanimous consent to go to third reading of Bill 201.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

### Bill 201

#### Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to see the progress on Bill 201. As the bill goes through its various stages, I've been overwhelmed by the support from those affected with life-threatening allergies. I've been touched by the stories not just of members in the House but of Albertans as well as people across Canada and the United States. The stories from those who have reached out are heartbreaking. One woman, who runs a charity in the United States, lost her daughter due to a peanut allergy. In her situation the reaction was so severe that she could not survive even though she received medical attention. As a concerned mother, like myself, she continued to advocate for children with life-threatening allergies.

I had a chance to review the discussion from second reading last week, and I've been really moved by stories told here in the Assembly. I'm quite happy to hear that this bill appears to have unanimous support from members of the government caucus and the opposition caucus. There seems to be consensus that this issue is something that does not divide us but unites us.

The MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat, like myself, has a life-threatening allergy. I truly appreciate what she went through growing up with the stigma involved with an allergy. Our society has come a long way in understanding and embracing those with life-threatening allergies. I was heartened to hear about the progress made by a family member of the Member for St. Albert, and there's been a lot of good progress treating dairy allergies. Those who suffer from nut allergies are hopeful for a similar breakthrough.

I understand some of the arguments made by the members hoping this bill would be broader in scope. I did try to not lose sight through the development of this bill of what the limitations are of a private member's bill versus a government bill.

I want to be clear that I appreciate all the hard work of school administrators and teachers. The bill was developed with ensuring a minimum standard across the province. My goal was to make a step forward on an issue I deeply care about. Most boards do have policy in place to manage students with life-threatening allergies. It is a credit to the boards that have policies for students with other types of medical conditions. There are a variety of conditions that

students have to manage such as asthma and diabetes, which is why boards have developed policies for the medically fragile.

A few members of this Assembly inquired about the support of Food Allergy Canada and the Canadian Society of Allergy & Clinical Immunology. They're widely regarded as leading food allergy associations for parents, patients, and medical providers respectively. I'm happy to have tabled their letter of support for Bill 201 last week. We've been working with Food Allergy Canada as we develop this bill, and I can't say enough how grateful I am for their support. A special thank you to Beatrice and Joni for their support. Food Allergy Canada was also kind enough to let their supporters in Alberta know that this bill is currently debated in the Assembly. I know I've received letters of support from many parents cheering us on so we can pass this bill, and I know other members have received similar correspondence.

There were a few questions raised about liability last week. The most important point I will make is that this bill clearly states that employees that help a student in good faith are protected from liability. I had the opportunity to review some school policies. The policies of Westwind school division, in particular, clearly address that employees are further protected by their liability insurance coverage. I've also had the opportunity to consult with our stakeholders in Ontario about liability. Since Sabrina's law passed in Ontario, to their knowledge there have been no liability issues. Employees have been protected in the very situations we've been discussing.

I do have some experience in the insurance industry, and after reviewing last week's debate, the questions of liability triggered the insurance experience I've had. From my experience in the industry any steps taken to make sure something does not happen often results in a lower premium, and from an insurance perspective this makes sense. If you take steps to reduce a likelihood of something bad happening, it would be less likely to occur, and your premiums would be lower. I started to wonder: what if schools that put these policies in place and have epinephrine on hand would be recognized for risk management practices and pay lower premiums as a result? The cost savings may be small, but when talking about the cost of EpiPens, the costs are also small. My hope is that some really great practices will reduce the chances of an adverse event for a student and be cost neutral for boards.

There were implementation questions. Again, this is why I thought a date for the beginning of 2020 would allow the boards the proper amount of time to adjust. Given that the ASBA has voluntary policies and that most school boards have policies in place, I think the implementation of the bill would not be onerous. My colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon mentioned last week that a school board in his riding that he used to work for has been providing EpiPens for years. His school board will have no trouble implementing this bill and even could be a leader in the best practices for other boards.

I think Albertans are really excited about this bill. Our offices have been receiving letters of support, and I think it's a great start. There's been a lot of enthusiasm to go further now, whether it be regarding more medical conditions covered or other places students go on like buses. As someone with a life-threatening allergy and a mother with children with life-threatening allergies, I understand the emotional response for this bill. For many, they're finally feeling like they're recognized. But we have to start and get our feet grounded. Maybe in the future the government or other private members will seek to broaden the work started by this bill.

I don't want perfect to be the enemy of the good. I'm asking for the support of the Assembly in Committee of the Whole so that we

can send this bill to third reading – now we're here – and make it the law of the land.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I just want to ensure that you moved third reading. Is that correct?

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Okay. I'm moving third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to this matter? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a pleasure to rise so swiftly with the blessing of the House to third reading on Bill 201. Again, as I've stated before, my daughter carried around an EpiPen for about a year and a half. Luckily, we had the means with which to provide that, and I'm always thinking about, you know, who maybe doesn't necessarily have the means for that. I think Bill 201 will be able to provide, like, a safety net around that. Again, thanking the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for doing the work on this and bringing this forward, too. It's the type of bill that all legislators can get behind, and I think, as we've seen, an effort to move this swiftly kind of reminds me of the bill from the Member for Calgary-West, when we moved that around, the bill process, very, very swiftly.

My only other comment that I have around this was a little bit around when it was in the private members' bill committee, kind of a little bit like 202. Given the tight timelines that the committee has, it wouldn't have been too big of a delay to try to reach out to some stakeholders, get some brief comments about this because, I think, you know, when we're looking at 201, we want to see this move through very swiftly. We don't want to see it hit any speed bumps, which could slow it down or, at worse, we end up having stakeholders push back against it just because they don't necessarily understand it.

4:50

I'm hoping that moving forward, that committee will be a little bit more diligent at looking at these things, around getting some feedback just to ensure that there aren't any last-minute things that we might have missed. Of course, bringing that amendment forward earlier in Committee of the Whole managed to, I think, clean up some of the language in the bill to make sure that that gets streamlined and moved forward very, very briefly.

With that, I will end my comments. Again, I appreciate all the efforts. I'm happy to support this and would very much urge all members of this Assembly to support this as well through third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to close debate.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everybody for their time, and I hope to have the support of all of my colleagues. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've made some remarkable progress. I'm certainly proud of my colleague from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

I notice that we're still close to 5 o'clock. Before we begin with the motions, I would ask unanimous consent of the House to continue with the progress of private members' business, which will help accelerate progress for all private members' business throughout the course of this spring session. If we could have unanimous consent of the House to go to Committee of the Whole for Bill 202.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole  
(continued)**

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 202**

**Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's  
Children) Amendment Act, 2019**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. We are certainly doing some business very, very swiftly here this afternoon. Great to see. Of course, I fear that we might be a little bit short on time around this, but I will endeavour to try and make some comments around this.

Bill 202, of course, brings forward a little bit of a change in the language around who we can contact. Again, I find myself, as we saw just briefly discussing Bill 201, referring back to the private member's...

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt. I see the time is now 4:55. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(6) the committee shall now rise and report progress on Bill 202 in order that the Assembly can proceed to Motions Other than Government Motions at 5 p.m. The committee shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 202. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 202.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. So ordered.

**Motions Other than Government Motions  
Mountain Pine Beetle**

505. Mr. Long moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to partner with Alberta's forest industry and the federal government to aggressively combat the mountain

pine beetle infestation in Alberta and to encourage the government to implement its funding commitment of \$5 million to address the problem as expeditiously as possible.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to speak to Motion 505 today. Motion 505 calls for the government to work with the forest industry and the government of Canada to tackle to mountain pine beetle catastrophe head-on as soon as possible. It also asks the government to implement its \$5 million funding increase promised during the last election as soon as practically possible.

The mountain pine beetle is incredibly damaging. It is the most destructive pest for pine trees. While originally thought to only threaten lodgepole pine, it is now known to be a threat to all species of pine, including Jack pine, which is a major species of the boreal forest. It is a menace to our forests and is quickly spreading from British Columbia into Alberta. In its wake are dead forests and economic ruin. Due to a lack of progress and due to a lack of consistent resource action against the beetle, British Columbia between 1995 and 2015 lost more than half its saleable pine timber. That equates to the loss of tens of billions of dollars to the provincial economy and countless jobs over the coming decades. Mitigation of the mountain pine beetle costs Canadians tens of millions of dollars per year, and the loss of economic activity is even higher. Our forest industry contributes \$6 billion to our economy every year.

Our government recognizes the grave threat posed by the mountain pine beetle. That's why when our party announced standing up for Alberta's forestry workers, one of its key promises was to increase the annual funding to push back against this critical threat to our forests. Our government also promised to be a champion for our forest industry in recognition that our companies and workers are world leaders in forestry practices. Without active forest management the risk of infestation or wildfire increases. The forest industry contributes to a healthy forest and safer communities by harvesting mature trees before they become a risk to the area.

I know first-hand how incredible our foresters are. I've spent the last nine years with my sleeves rolled up working in the forest industry. It's been an honour to work in one of Alberta's largest and most advanced sectors. Forestry is highly technical and can be quite dangerous. Logging and forestry are considered some of the most dangerous professions that someone can work in.

The forest industry is critical to Alberta's economy. It directly employs 16,000 people, and it's indirectly employing over 20,000 people. The number of people employed in the industry doesn't do any justice to its importance in small northern Alberta towns. A mill in a town of a few thousand can employ 10 per cent of the town's population. The jobs that our foresters have are not only highly technical, but they can pay quite well. These jobs are the lifeblood of our small towns and flow through to the broader economy. Good jobs make for good communities. When the mills are doing well, our charities and nonprofits do well. They provide a helping hand to those in need.

5:00

I can't emphasize enough how important the forestry industry is to my riding of West Yellowhead. Drive through any of the great towns in my riding, and you can't help but see the forest industry around you. It doesn't matter if you're on your way to Jasper through Hinton or Edson, or heading north through Grande Cache, or on highway 43 going past Blue Ridge and Whitecourt on your way to Grande Prairie. The forest industry is right out your window.

When you're driving through my riding and you notice red trees, those trees are the wake of the pine beetle's destruction. Those red trees are actually dead trees already. The pine beetle has moved on to other, healthy trees.

I've talked about the threat of the mountain pine beetle and how deeply valued the forestry sector is in the riding I represent and other small towns in Alberta. As the devastation of the mountain pine beetle mounts, so does the frustration of my constituents and our foresters. They're frustrated that governments don't feel the same sense of urgency that they feel. The pine beetle is killing trees, and it renders them useless. As it spreads, it means that forestry companies have fewer opportunities to harvest trees, which throttles their production.

This throttling not only leads to environmental destruction but economic devastation and the potential for catastrophic events. Mountain pine beetle killed forests are more susceptible to fire. They'll burn at two and a half times the rate of a regular forest fire and burn much more severely. Imagine how my constituents have felt as they not only watched their forest die and communities suffer but as they are being left vulnerable to an increased risk of catastrophe and they're left helpless by what they see as government's inaction making the situation worse.

As this menace, this pine beetle, has grown and spread, timber access has been restricted, the industry has been overregulated, and the government seemed unable or unwilling to grapple with the problem. Millions of acres have become inaccessible at the expense of our industry and communities. The decisions made by the previous government seemed to many in forestry to be based on ideology and not based on a good balance between the environment and industry. The reality is that good environmental policy actually goes hand in hand with the world-leading forest management and stewardship that Alberta is known for.

Properly managed forests are essential for air and water quality, soil stability, and for wildlife habitat. In the past 20 years our forest industry has planted over 2 billion trees; 83 million of those were last year alone. Knowing that young healthy forests capture more carbon than old forests makes a strong forestry sector vital in our fight against climate change. However, it seemed to my constituents that the previous government didn't want a forest industry at all, that we would just shut down the mills and stop the forestry sector in its tracks.

It's understandable why my constituents and foresters would feel that way. The previous government, with almost no consultation, went about shutting the forestry sector down by creating parks and breaking leases. We saw this with the Castle and with Bighorn. We saw the same with the A La Pêche and Little Smoky ranges. The previous government didn't see the benefits to communities, the benefits to, quite frankly, the health of our forests. Not taking care of our forests, not allowing industry to help maintain the health of our forests has led to an increasing number of disasters in Alberta and the potential for even more.

We also need a change in the direction of the federal government. It seems like the current government in Ottawa is not paying attention to Alberta's forests. We know that they don't seem to care about our energy sector or our agriculture sector. Maybe they're working their way down the list of our biggest industries.

When I look at how Ottawa is tackling the spruce budworm issue on the east coast, plenty of resources are being deployed to tackle the issue. Yet when I stand in Jasper, where mountain pine beetle infected only 122 hectares in 2013 and, due to no management being taken, by 2017 over 93,000 hectares were destroyed – and now many communities in my riding are left vulnerable and are feeling powerless and helpless, yet the federal government is still

unwilling to help. I'm grateful to be part of a government that truly understands the gravity of this situation.

We are dealing with a serious threat to our environment, our economy, and our communities. We needed a change in government so that Alberta could tackle this situation head-on. I ask for the Assembly's support on this motion so that we can take immediate action to combat this catastrophe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to Motion 505, which I believe is very similar to the motion that I put in the Legislature last session as Motion 506, so I will stand in support of the motion.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, life in many parts of our beautiful province revolves around forests. Many industries depend on our forests, from tourism and recreation to the forest product industry. The mountain pine beetle is a serious threat to our forests, affecting a quarter of Alberta's pine forest, with the most severe concentration being in the west-central pine belt. The scourge of the mountain pine beetle is threatening our economy and our environment.

If left unmanaged, mountain pine beetle populations could kill large amounts of Alberta pine resources, up to 6 million hectares of pine valued at more than \$8 billion. This would have a large impact on the forestry industry. Of the 25 major forest companies operating in Alberta, 14 rely on pine to continue operations. The importance of addressing this issue has become even more clear in the last weeks, with curtailment and the closing of sawmills in the interior of British Columbia. Many of these producers have cited the loss of fibre due to infestations of the pine beetle and the increase in wildfires.

This issue was identified by the industry decades ago, with little to no action, and, Mr. Speaker, we are headed down the same path. Without a plan to address the spread of the pine beetle in the federal parks and the surrounding areas, we too will have a significant decrease in access to pine fibre, potentially jeopardizing the 25 major employers in this area. Infestation also threatens watershed health and fish and wildlife habitats.

Since 2006 the province has controlled the mountain pine beetle spread by cutting down and burning more than 1.5 million infested trees. The mountain pine beetle infestation is also controlled through a number of best practices such as timber harvesting planning and prescribed fire. We know that without aggressive control, an estimated additional 564 million trees would be infested and/or killed.

I urge this government and the current minister to recommit to minimizing the spread of the beetle north and south and preventing them from spreading farther east. Removing infested trees is the most effective tool to control the spread. Another strategy is to have the forestry industry harvest susceptible pine stands in order to decrease the spread in the long term. In 2017-2018 alone the former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry allocated more than \$25 million to manage the infestation and impact of the beetle. I see that currently the member is only asking for \$5 million, which is less than what the previous government committed to this issue.

A main area of concern is the Hinton and Edson area, where the mountain pine beetle from Jasper national park is moving to Alberta's forest in great numbers. Of the approximately 950,000 infested trees being controlled this past winter, more than half were in the Hinton area. The Jasper park area has also created an increased safety concern not only for the residents of Jasper but also those who visit the park. Due to the damage caused by the mountain

pine beetle, many of the trees in the national park have died and are now standing matchsticks. We have seen over the past few years the devastation and safety risks that are associated with forest fires, and Jasper national park is the epicenter of the most potential wildfire.

The previous NDP government had provided significant funding for the mountain pine beetle related to research and to the impact on these municipalities, with \$500,000 for mountain pine beetle related research in 2017 and 2018. In April 2018 our NDP government announced it would be investing another \$600,000 to communities around the eastern slope to combat mountain pine beetle. The NDP government also created an agreement with Saskatchewan to help protect the spread to other parts of Canada. Alberta is the main front in preventing the spread eastward.

The huge problem of the mountain pine beetle can only be combated by working together and working co-operatively, hand in hand. I have personally heard from groups like the Alberta Forest Products Association and the mountain pine beetle advisory group in the Hinton area that more work is needed to contain the spread in our national parks. We need to know more about how the spread can be slowed down. We need a thorough assessment as to how much damage has already been done, and the federal government must look closely at their management of the mountain pine beetle, especially in our provincial national parks, not only to ensure that the park can continue to be accessed for generations to come but so that it can also address the safety concerns of the residents that live and visit these areas.

I know that Alberta mayors from affected areas and provincial ministers have sent letters to the federal government in support of our government's ask for assistance. I know that the Hinton chamber of commerce developed a new policy resolution on the mountain pine beetle that has since been adopted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. One of the key pieces of this policy is a request for the federal government to reinstate the federal mountain pine beetle program with funds equivalent in scale to over \$200 million.

**5:10**

Such a program would support provinces like Alberta that are already infested with the mountain pine beetle and provide resources for community and economic diversification and resiliency to communities affected by the mountain pine beetle. The policy highlights that federal involvement is needed to support national mitigation plans, community safety initiatives due to a higher risk of wildfires, and continued research and education initiatives. Simply put, Alberta needs assistance from the federal government to support the good work we're already doing.

Since 2004 Alberta has invested nearly half a billion dollars in order to control this pest, and I know, for example, that the town of Hinton has dedicated efforts to this fight as well. Early in 2018 the province provided Yellowhead county and Hinton with funding to control, suppress, and eradicate the mountain pine beetle on municipal and private lands. The funds were part of the mountain pine beetle municipal grant program, which helps Alberta communities minimize the spread of the mountain pine beetle infestation in this area. I would encourage this minister to again continue this program.

Clearly, Alberta has done its part for quite some time. We need collaboration from our federal counterparts to effectively combat the spread of the mountain pine beetle and the devastation it causes. Co-operation is essential if we are to create an effective strategy towards the mountain pine beetle. Together is the only way we will win this battle.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this motion.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is standing to speak.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to and support Motion 505. The spread of the mountain pine beetle across western forests in Canada has been devastating since it was detected 20 years ago in Tweedsmuir, B.C. The beetle's main target is old forest lodgepole pine, but it will attack other species of pine as well. This pest will destroy trees by implanting itself into the trunk and transmitting a blue stain fungus that cuts off water and nutrient flow and starves the tree.

This process doesn't take long. The pine beetle has killed more than half of the pine in British Columbia, and lack of efforts to control the movement of this infestation led to it quickly spreading to Alberta's forests in 2006. That advancement continues: north, east towards Saskatchewan, and now coming upon the southern forests of Alberta. The spread is occurring so fast that Jasper national park went from detection of the pine beetle in 2013 to an 80 per cent infestation as of last year. The speed and destructive nature of the pine beetle is utterly amazing. The trees of Jasper have turned into a sea of red from dead and dying trees. The lack of action, changes to forest management practices, and reduced funding to battle the mountain pine beetle infestation are to blame.

Now, learning from the mistakes of British Columbia's pine beetle disaster, the former Conservative government developed and implemented an effective plan to manage the mountain pine beetle's advance. The three-point plan included level 1, which would be single-tree removal in infected areas; level 2, the harvest of large infested stands by industry; and level 3 – and this is an important one – the removal of susceptible stands in areas ahead of the advancing movement of the pest.

There are other causes for the spread of the mountain pine beetle and the subsequent increased risk of forest fires. Alberta's boreal forest has a maximum life expectancy of about 150 years. The forest has reached full maturity at 80 to 100 years and can begin dying off after about the 80-year point. At maturity the risks of forest fires and infestations increase dramatically. Now, the mountain pine beetle thrives on old forest, and due to changes in forest management practices in Alberta's forests, we've gone from 40-year to 60-year and now over 80-year averages for these stands.

Our forests are not like others in other parts of the country or the world, for that matter, as forest lifespans can be relatively low as far as old forest goes. With the advanced age of Alberta's mature stands, we now have forests that are dying due to age and infestations. This has created increased risks of forest fires in the province and created fires that spread quickly, are larger and growing in intensity. For best results our forests should have a mix of varying ages of forest for best practice in pine beetle control, fire containment as well as ecological management.

The devastation of the pine beetle has so many implications, including, one, public safety risks from increased threat of forest fires. The communities within these areas damaged by the mountain pine beetle will be living in a virtual tinderbox, increasing the probability of damages to their homes along with an elevated safety risk to their families.

Next, risks to potable water: contamination from heavy metals, soil erosion, and ash after a fire are also concerns. The city of Calgary has identified forest fires as one of the largest risks to the city's water supply.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from forest fires released two to three times the amount of this GHG and other gases as compared to emissions from burning fossil fuels from all provincial industrial sectors combined, and the impacts extend further as the trees killed by fires or pine beetle will decompose over years and decades and release more



CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Additionally, those trees that were destroyed will no longer be removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as living trees do.

Next, there's a risk of job losses due to the destruction of fibre required for mills to produce lumber, pulp, and paper within their processes. This will also be a result of this pest.

Finally, tourism will definitely be affected as the beauty of the forest has been compromised.

You see, the previous NDP government cut funding to pine beetle control as well as wildfire budgets over the course of their four-year run. Expecting a cold winter to kill pine beetles is not sound policy. Weather may slow down beetle populations, but it will not stop their advance. That same NDP government also refused to use the pine beetle strategies developed by the previous PC governments, which made matters worse and allowed for the further spread of the issue. Additionally, the previous government ignored forest management agreements and quotas held by industry and fought against the sector at every turn. This interfered with harvest cycles, which increased the spread of mountain pine beetle, increased the risk of forest fires, and hurt Alberta businesses in the process.

Forestry companies employ over 40,000 people, either directly through the forest industry or in jobs supported by the industry. The forest sector contributes \$7 billion in annual economic activity to the province, and these companies understand that having a healthy forest is the centerpiece of maintaining a viable, long-lasting, prolific business. Conservation efforts in Alberta for this renewable resource are second to none. This industry operates on 200-year forest management plans focused on wood harvest, wildlife habitats, soil quality, water quality, community engagement, and reforestation. Alberta is recognized as a world leader in forest stewardship, and by managing our forests sustainably, we can have a healthy industry and help control the effects of fires and pest infestations.

The problem is that due to maturing forests, pine beetle infestations, and general changes to government policy our forests have been left vulnerable. Jasper is a prime example of what can happen when not managed correctly. We need to work with industry to look for solutions. We should develop new strategies and reinstate the previous three-point plan to reduce the advancement of pine beetles in Alberta's forest.

I encourage all members to support this motion as it keeps up with the UCP's commitment to provide support to the people of this province by improving safety for residents as well as helping to save Alberta's forests and jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members? I see the hon. Member for Peace River standing to speak to this matter.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise happily today to speak in favour of this motion, and I thank the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing it forward. I begin with a little survey of the importance of the forestry industry not just in my constituency but in the province. We'll start in the northwest. A list of towns: Peace River, Fort Vermilion, Manning, La Crête, High Level. These aren't just the biggest communities in my constituency; they're also completely dependent on the health of the forestry industry for their survival as communities in the northwest. We live in one of the farthest, disparately spread-out parts of the province, and to be able to survive there, we need industry, we need access to these resources, and we need those resources to remain in a healthy condition.

5:20

On that, I'm going to cite a few numbers. In Alberta, working forests are about a \$6.5 billion industry annually. Harvesting operations, lumber sales, pulp, newsprint, wood panels, engineered wood products, bioenergy, and ecosystem services add up to provide the third-largest sector of our economy, coming only behind oil and gas. Now it employs more than 16,000 Albertans directly and 23,000 indirectly, with \$1.5 billion in salaries and wages. This has a direct impact on my constituency.

This industry is the lifeblood of the northwest and, I say, a mainstay of Alberta's economy, being the third largest. It might not always be quite as sexy as the panache of oil and gas, but I believe it to have a little more wherewithal than some of the other commodities. So I stand behind supporting this industry, the forestry industry, and that's why we're going to turn our attention now to the effect of the mountain pine beetle on this industry and the future of our province in this side of forestry.

With that, I will say not just how important it is to my constituents and the billions of dollars of economic industry that it has as a result. When we think of the problems of the forestry sector and what it faces, we can think often of forest fires that have hit recently, as we saw in my constituency – the Battle Complex, Chuckegg Creek – and neighbouring constituencies like the Member for Lesser Slave Lake's, with the McMillan Complex. We have huge issues there. We could also think, perhaps, of the softwood lumber disagreements that we have internationally with agreements with the United States. Alternatively, we could think of a lot of other issues. That might bring us to problems that the industry faces. But, first and foremost, for many of the members of this House, they can tell you that it's the mountain pine beetle that is the most direct threat to the prosperity or the future of the forestry industry going on.

Perhaps it's less publicized, but the ecological impacts are undeniable. It's clear to anyone who has driven along the highways in Alberta and B.C. over the last 15 years just how devastating an effect the mountain pine beetle has had on western Canadian forests, regardless of what side of the border you're on. From a car's window one can see large swaths of forest now painted in red, as the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane told us. I remember just this last May being blown away, when I was travelling Alberta's Rocky Mountains, to see how much of it has been affected. It's incredible to think that an insect less than a quarter-inch in size could cause such devastation every summer and spread further, destroying every tree in its path.

The first reference I found on the mountain pine beetle in *Hansard* was from June 1992. The then Member for Banff-Cochrane, predecessor to the speaker speaking previously, was describing to the House the way that the beetle was eating its way through Jasper national park. In the nearly 27 years since that first reference in this place the mountain pine beetle has continued to destroy millions of acres of forest and the economic future of the industry in Alberta, with many negative impacts, ecological and economic. In a speech in 2011 in this Chamber the former Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti Mr. Wayne Drysdale likened the mountain pine beetle to the Norwegian rat, unwelcome in Alberta. It is my hope that under this government Mr. Drysdale's hope that Alberta can be both rat and pine beetle free is realized.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at a few numbers. In British Columbia 16 million hectares of forest have already been killed by the mountain pine beetle. For context, the devastating Fort McMurray fire some years ago destroyed a little less than 600,000 hectares. By comparison, in Alberta more than 1.2 million hectares of forest have sustained some degree of damage from the mountain pine beetle.

There's a 6 million-hectare forest that is at risk of infestation today in our province. The economic impact has been tens of billions of dollars and the future impact untold, an incredible loss to many hard-working Albertans and particularly those in my constituency.

Let's talk about how much money the government has spent trying to deal with this problem. That figure is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, yet the pine beetle seems to persist, in its unfriendly way being a pain to the taxpayers and those invested in the industry. The money that we are committing: we ask it be done aggressively, as the motion is asking, to partner with industry and the federal government so that we might be able to defend our industry and spend those dollars smartly on behalf of taxpayers and the future of this economy in forestry.

The United Conservative Party has only one forest-related policy in its book, a book that I reference often. I suggest that all who are listening find the United Conservative policy book as it is filled with all sorts of interesting policies that we are in the process of enacting. The NDP platform reads that the government of Alberta should permit only one ecologically and economically sustainable forest management method. Our election platform more specifically restated that a United Conservative government would reverse four years of NDP reductions in the fight against the mountain pine beetle epidemic by raising funds from \$5 million to \$25 million. I'd like to point out that many detailed platform commitments can still be found online.

This motion calls for our government to stay true to its election platform and specifically address the mountain pine beetle issue. I am very pleased that my colleague the Member for West Yellowhead has taken up this cause. His riding has felt the economic consequences of the mountain pine beetle, but really each constituency member that represents an area with forests has been impacted by this insect.

In February of this year hon. members might remember how persistently cold the temperatures were in our province, particularly in the north. Many hoped that this would slow the spread of the mountain pine beetle. Let's all pray that that's true. However, even if it spreads slowly this year, the mountain pine beetle and its economic and ecological impact will still be felt by Albertans.

I commend the new Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. He's done a great job in his new role, already having dealt with huge wildfires, shipments of canola that are unable to go to market, and of course beginning the process of actually engaging farmers to get to work on Bill 6. There's no need to add more on his plate, but indeed it's incumbent upon this government to take this issue of the mountain pine beetle seriously and work towards eradicating it in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not an expert on forestry management, but I know that many professionals who work in our forestry and environment departments have been dealing with this issue for many years. They know how they can address the issue of the mountain pine beetle and slow and stop its spread. Our government is committed to giving the public service the tools and resources they need to do their jobs well. Committing this extra funding to the eradication of the mountain pine beetle is important for the many dedicated civil servants to preserve our province's natural habitat and economic and ecological future.

In closing, I'd like to thank all those who have worked on this file: the public servants in our forestry department, the minister, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, and many others. It's my hope that our government will commit this funding to the problem and endeavour to address this issue. I implore all to vote in favour of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. I do want to – well, obviously, I'm going to make a bunch of comments about this motion. First and foremost, I do support this motion. I applaud the member for bringing it forward. It looks strikingly similar to a motion that the Member for Edmonton-Manning brought forward to this Assembly a year ago, two years ago, interestingly. I find that fascinating. I am pleased that the member is bringing this forward.

I want to clarify some comments that government members have made as far as our caucus when we were government and what funds we allocated to fight the pine beetle. At the onset, I can tell you that in 2017-18 alone we allocated \$25 million. So the members need to correct their speaking notes or get their facts straight that we did put forward money. Now, I will say that this is – you know, the former Member for Grande Prairie Wayne Drysdale, whom I hold in high regard, did sound the alarm about the pine beetle for many years, in fact, when he was a former cabinet minister as well, to the former PC government and then through our term, recognizing – and I will echo the member's comments – that the forestry sector is absolutely critical to the Alberta economy.

5:30

I can tell you that as minister of economic development and trade I worked very, very closely with the Alberta Forest Products Association, Paul Whittaker and his team, as well as with a number of the companies individually who, coincidentally, accompanied me on a number of trade missions. We tried to increase the amount of timber that we were exporting to countries like Japan, not only to educate as far as the uses of timber – of course, Japan is only interested in J-grade wood – but to push them to increase the number of storeys in a building to use wood in order to increase their consumption.

You know, on the pine beetle, we see the devastating effects of it here in the province. We know they've been ravaging through British Columbia. Really, my point in this is that I appreciate that the member is calling on the government to commit \$5 million, but \$5 million is grossly inadequate to deal with this. You see the effects, especially of the pine beetle, in the last couple of years around Jasper. The number of trees that are completely destroyed is having an impact not just on the forestry sector, albeit a very critical industry for us, but also on the tourism sector. Tourists from all over the world, including Canada, want to come to our parks and don't want to see the red or blackened trees that are damaged by the pine beetle. I wish the hon. member who brought forward this motion would have significantly increased the amount from \$5 million because this is a considerable problem that the government does need to take seriously.

Again, you know, we allocated \$25 million. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that was enough. This is definitely an ongoing issue. I do want to recognize the men and women that work in the departments, that work on the front lines to tackle this, even as the researchers are trying to do much-needed research on how we can eliminate this problem.

You know, I appreciate and hope that this provincial government will continue to put pressure on the federal government. They also have a responsibility to fund, and significantly fund, this ever-increasing, growing problem.

We know the impact that this is having, not just, again, as I have mentioned, on the timber supply in this province – although we have our forestry companies that are very, very concerned – but also

with the communities, whether it's communities like the town of Jasper and others that are significantly impacted by the pine beetle.

You know, I hope that the government will listen to their member and allocate dollars. Again, I'd like to see more substantive dollars than \$5 million going toward this very critical problem. Again, I say to the government members: if forestry is as important an industry as you're saying it is for your government, then dollars will follow and meaningful action will follow to address this issue.

I mean, we know right now that northern Alberta is struggling due to significant fires. We also know that the frequency and intensity of forest fires are growing and really, in part, significantly because the climate is changing, and we need to take meaningful action on that.

You know, our natural resources are extremely important. I mean, there are hundreds of thousands of men and women that rely on jobs in our natural resources sector. Again, Albertans are very, very blessed with the abundance of resources that we have, but we need to step up our efforts in order to ensure that we're protecting these areas and protecting the jobs of many men and women around the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I will support this motion. I'm pleased that the Member for West Yellowhead has brought this forward. He sees the effects every day that he travels from home to this place, I'm sure. I hope that the government will listen and will recognize, quite frankly, that \$5 million isn't adequate in order to continue the fight that our government started. I would argue that the government before ours had been fighting the pine beetle. This isn't something new, but it is growing in intensity, so we need to redouble our efforts and ensure that we are protecting our province's fibre, the jobs that come with it, and, of course, the beautiful natural landscapes that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, any other hon. members wishing to speak? I do believe I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley standing.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak on Motion 505 also. The forest industry, of course, is our third-largest industry in the province, and it employs tens of thousands of Albertans. Forestry is such an essential part of our economy. In whole, it contributes about \$6 billion across our province, and there are over 70 communities that rely on, at least in part, the forestry industry. We need to protect our forests for the continued economic development of our province, especially rural Alberta.

Now, presently Alberta has over 38 million hectares of forest. These are trees which are indigenous to Alberta's boreal forests, and they reach maturity at the age of about 80 to a hundred years. These forests, of course, need proper forestry management. They need sensible, pragmatic environmental policies in place. These older forests will inevitably succumb to insect infestations and the forest fires that we see today if we don't protect them properly. When our forests are properly managed by Albertans, who love our environment, we are provided with numerous environmental benefits, which are vital for our exceptional air and water quality, soil stability, and for our wildlife habitats. Young, healthy forests capture more carbon than old forests.

I'm happy to say that our great province of Alberta is a world leader in forestry management and stewardship. Every single time one tree is harvested in our province, another two trees are planted. In 2018 alone the Alberta Forest Products Association managed to plant 83 million trees. Not only that, but over the span of the last 20

years, since 1999, there have been over 2 billion trees planted. These are numbers we like to hear.

Many Alberta communities and thousands of families across our great province are dependent on the continued success of the forestry industry. Unfortunately, the past few years have created uncertainty and unease for Alberta's forestry companies because of the ideologically driven agendas and closed-door meetings that the previous government has had. Under the last government, input from industry stakeholders fell on deaf ears. The forest industry faces uncertainty due to inaction on a destructive and devastating threat not only to the industry but to the very forests we all care about.

What, of course, we're talking about here today is the mountain pine beetle. The mountain pine beetle, while only half a centimetre in size, has had a devastating effect on millions of hectares of forest in North America. It starts when a beetle lays its eggs under the bark of a tree. From there the beetle introduces a fungus into the sapwood which prevents the tree from repelling and killing the beetle. In addition, this fungus prevents the transportation of water and nutrients within the tree, which contributes to the tree being in a weakened state. The tree succumbs to the beetles in only a few short weeks from the initial contact of the beetle planting its larva and introducing the fungus.

British Columbia has already been devastated by the mountain pine beetle. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers reported that between 1995 and 2015 British Columbia lost more than half of its saleable pine lumber, resulting in the loss of tens of billions of dollars to the provincial economy and countless jobs over the coming decades. The impact from the mountain pine beetle cannot be measured in simple financial loss either. This goes beyond economic indicators or financial forecasting. There are additional research and studies indicating that areas that had mountain pine beetle that are faced with forest fires not only burn at a faster rate but burn more severely.

Now Alberta is facing an unfortunate and similar a fate as British Columbia. The mountain pine beetle has crossed into Alberta, and to the dismay of communities in their path, hands have been tied by regulations and partisan politics. For four years people begged the previous NDP government to consider changes to existing policy, but nobody would listen. These same stakeholders have done the same with the federal Trudeau Liberal government, and nobody would listen. The same so-called progressive parties, who are concerned about the environment, can't see the forest for the trees. Five years of inaction has caused damage by the mountain pine beetle in Jasper national park to grow from 122 hectares to almost 100,000 hectares of forest.

**5:40**

To put that in perspective, Jasper national park's total hectares of land come to almost 1.1 million hectares. Eight and a half per cent of the total surface area of Jasper national park has a mountain pine beetle problem, and it puts its nearby communities at risk. Without more action from all levels of government on this problem, it will only get worse, and the end result will have devastating and long-term impacts on communities and businesses.

This is not a problem that is limited to my constituency, to Alberta, or even to western Canada. This is a national problem. Lodgepole pine as a tree species is most impacted by mountain pine beetle, but it also affects Jack pine and many other species of pine. It's a common sight through our nation's great boreal forests, as are other species of pine. These trees are seen from the borders of the Yukon all the way to Halifax, and if action is not taken to control and eradicate this threat, it will continue to spread unabated into other regions of the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, without proper forest management and without sensible and pragmatic environmental policies in place, older forests will inevitably succumb to insect infestations and forest fires, which we see today. We know that the mountain pine beetle prefers these mature trees. We know that the solutions for this are not easy solutions. We know, of course, for instance, that the caribou rely on the mature forests also. So we have conflicting issues here, with caribou requiring these forests and, of course, pine beetles feeding on these forests and causing problems there. The mountain pine beetle is a large threat to our wildlife and habitat also.

Now, British Columbia, of course, has already suffered huge losses, and of course in Alberta we're suffering big losses, too. We know that cold weather can help slow down the pine beetle spread. We had some cold weather this past winter, but of course the pine beetle, because of its nature, I guess, can create somewhat of an antifreeze or something to protect itself against cold weather. But really cold weather at the right times of the year can affect the pine beetle even more, so we could always hope for the weather to help us out in this regard. That would be the best help we could get, but of course we need to do something to help in the meantime. We know that fire also will help reduce the pine beetles, but of course these fires are usually coming after the pine beetles have already gone through and killed all the trees.

We know that money doesn't always solve all problems, but we know that we need to put something into this effort. We know that the additional \$5 million that this motion proposes is a good start. Again, it's about spending money wisely and doing things properly. A lot of times we find government just throwing money at things and expecting the problem to go away, but we know that if we take this money and we spend it wisely, if we do the research that we need, and if we work with forestry companies to help alleviate some of these concerns and some of these issues, we will be able to move forward and protect our environment here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen to speak.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this Motion 505, and I want to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing it forward to the Legislature for consideration. I want to thank all of the members who've spoken so far, who've underlined the importance of the forestry industry to the province of Alberta. Certainly, as a child I benefited directly from the importance of the economic contributions of the forestry industry in Alberta. My dad was a welder who worked on the construction of the pulp mills in Hinton and Peace River. Certainly, during the '80s the forestry industry was what was keeping lots of folks like my dad employed because, as we all recall, the oil industry was on some pretty hard times at that time. So I'm grateful for everything that the forestry industry provided to me in my childhood, and I am certainly eager to protect the forestry industry to provide for the future prosperity of all Albertans.

I do have to express one concern. You know, after hearing the Member for West Yellowhead and the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley talking about, you know, the mountain pine beetle and the threat that it poses to the forestry industry here in Alberta and, as a result, the prosperity of the people of Alberta, I am waiting for any one of them to mention that the underlying cause of the spread of the mountain pine beetle is, of course, climate change.

We've gotten dangerously close to admitting that climate change is the underlying cause for the spread of mountain pine beetle when

the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley admitted that, in fact, cold winter months will prevent the spread of mountain pine beetle, but the fact is that we don't have the cold winter months that we used to anymore. In fact, global temperatures have been above average for every month of every year since 1984, so to rely on the Member for Peace River and the Member for Central Peace-Notley's strategy to just wait for cold weather to come back won't work, Mr. Speaker.

That's why I'm pleased to support, of course, the kinds of forest management strategies and government policies and actions to control the spread of mountain pine beetle, but I just wish that we could admit that climate change is one of the contributing factors here and that spending money to halt the advance of the mountain pine beetle is a climate change mitigation strategy that we all have to pay for. You know, we've talked about the significant costs. All of the members who have spoken have thrown around numbers that are significant. I will take issue with some of the accusations that the members opposite have made about our government's spending on mountain pine beetle mitigation. I would remind all members that if they want the government to spend money on this kind of work, we need to have the money in place to do it.

Now, our government had a plan to collect money for climate change mitigation and spend it on those kinds of things that would not only help prevent further carbon dioxide emissions but also mitigate the effects of climate change that we're already locked into. That was the carbon tax, and we would collect that carbon tax and spend that money on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, Mr. Speaker. Now, there's nobody in this House who disagrees with the premise that government, through its tax dollars, has a responsibility to work to mitigate the spread of the mountain pine beetle, so if you follow the logic to its natural end, we all have a responsibility to contribute, through our tax dollars, to government action to halt the spread of the mountain pine beetle. It just doesn't make sense to me why they would do away with a carbon tax that levies a tax on people who are emitting carbon dioxide so that they can take that money and reduce the impacts that are one of the causes of the spread of mountain pine beetle.

We had a plan in place. I understand that the members opposite take issue with some of the programs that we developed on how those dollars were spent, but they could have left it in place, could have left the carbon levy in place, taken all of that money and spent it on mountain pine beetle mitigation if they wanted to. That would have been 1 and a half billion dollars worth of mountain pine beetle mitigation every year if they had just left that carbon tax in place and used it to mitigate one of the effects of climate change, which is the mountain pine beetle. Now, Mr. Speaker – all right – we don't want to have the carbon tax in place. Well, where else is the money going to come from for climate change mitigation for things like the mountain pine beetle?

We also recognize, through this resolution, that industry has a responsibility to mitigate the spread of mountain pine beetle, but we've just given every industry, every profitable corporation in the province a 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway. That money could have been collected, Mr. Speaker, and the \$5 million in additional funding commitments that the member is seeking easily found. We could have easily found that within the 4 and a half billion dollars that was given away to corporations in their Bill 3, but that money is no longer there.

I appreciate everyone's sincere desire to mitigate the impacts of the mountain pine beetle. It's just incredibly frustrating to me, Mr. Speaker, that we want to take action on it – and I have no doubt that all of the members here are sincere – but we're tying our hands behind our backs when it comes to actually giving ourselves the tools to deal with it. The primary tool that everybody in this

Chamber has identified this afternoon in this debate is money used to mitigate the spread. You know, if we had kept the carbon tax in place or if we had kept the corporate tax rate the same way it was, that would have been \$6 billion in next year's budget that this government could have had from which they could have found an appropriate amount of money to spend on mountain pine beetle mitigation.

5:50

I am, you know, more than happy to support this motion, Mr. Speaker. I just wish that all of the members would admit that this mountain pine beetle infestation is an effect of climate change, that it's our responsibility to do something about climate change to protect the health and the economic well-being of Albertans, that we had a plan in place to deal with it that they've just thrown out the window and haven't replaced with something else suitable, that we need the money to be able to tackle the problem effectively, and that they've reduced our capacity to tackle this problem and all of the other problems that Alberta is facing by throwing 4 and a half billion dollars in corporate taxes out the window.

Perhaps they know something that I don't know. Perhaps the forest industry is going to take some of their share of the 4 and a half billion dollar tax giveaway that they've been given and put it into mountain pine beetle mitigation. I would be more than happy to see that as a result of their corporate tax giveaway, Mr. Speaker. I doubt that's the case. Perhaps the Member for West Yellowhead can act on behalf of his constituents and demand that that 4 and a half billion dollars, at least some of it, be targeted to climate change mitigation.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate on Motion 505.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, thank you to everyone else for your input today. This motion today is one that will likely not garner a lot of attention in this Chamber. It isn't a motion that's going to create headlines or sensationalism. The reality is that it shouldn't.

This motion today is simply one small, common-sense step that we need to make in order to, as government, get back on the right track. This is about our government increasing the funding to combat the mountain pine beetle by \$5 million from \$25 million to \$30 million, as we promised in our platform. This is about Alberta doing what Alberta has always done: lead the way.

We know that Alberta was left vulnerable by the inaction in British Columbia to combat the mountain pine beetle. We know that we were left vulnerable by the inaction to combat the pine beetle through the national parks. As I mentioned earlier, we now know that the pine beetle is attacking other species of pine, including the Jack pine, which is a major species of the boreal forest. What that means is that if we continue to turn our backs on the mountain pine beetle rather than tackling it head-on in Alberta, it has the potential to devastate the boreal forest from the Yukon all the way to Halifax.

It is essential that the Alberta government lead the way and work with our forestry sector as well as challenge the federal government to step up and help combat the mountain pine beetle. This will help ensure that we can have a strong, vibrant forestry sector from coast to coast that all Canadians can be proud of for generations to come.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** I believe that, just to clarify, we are potentially on a motion to close debate.

**Mr. Long:** Sorry. I move to close debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Prior to us going through that question, I just want to clarify that debate is closed and we are voting on the Motion Other than Government Motion 505 as proposed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has the call.

**Mrs. Savage:** I would like to move to adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]



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