



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, July 3, 2019

Day 23

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

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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),  
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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)  
Dreesen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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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  
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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

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
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Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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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

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
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Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
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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

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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

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Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

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

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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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

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

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

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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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

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Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
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Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Rowswell  
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Turton  
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

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Feehan  
Getson  
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Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to 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.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests joining us today in the galleries. Guests of the Member for Calgary-West and members of the Sudanese community, please feel free to rise when I call your name if you can recognize it: Gar Gar, Angelo Wol Mawien Dut, Garang Kuot, and Chol Gar.

Guest of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge: Gobinder Khaira.

Also in the gallery today a guest of the Member for Grande Prairie: Alex Dorscheid.

Guests from Lacombe-Ponoka: Sean Stroud and Martin Zuidhof.

In the gallery as a guest of the Minister of Labour and Immigration: Donovan Makus.

Hon. members, please welcome our guests to the Assembly today.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo would like to make a statement.

#### Calgary Stampede

**Member Ceci:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. All year long Calgarians look forward to the Calgary Stampede. In only a few short days it will be here again. Cowpokes and city slickers alike will put on their cowboy hats and boots to enjoy the parade, pancake breakfast, and chuckwagon races, and our NDP caucus will be there to join in the fun.

Mr. Speaker, our government was proud to invest in the Stampede to make sure it can continue for years to come. We approved a 20-year extension to the CRL program to fund the BMO Centre expansion on Stampede grounds. This will make the BMO Centre the second-largest convention centre in Canada, support the creation of 2,250 jobs, and contribute \$223 million annually to the Alberta economy. Last year we saw our investments working. This year's chuckwagon canvas auction came in \$50,000 higher than last year, for a total of \$3.29 million. Things are looking up because of our investments in Calgary. We fought for pipelines, invested in the Calgary cancer centre and the LRT green line, and we refused to turn our backs on Calgarians when times were tough.

Mr. Speaker, as a Calgarian the Stampede is one of my favourite times of year. I'm so proud we get to showcase this incredible city and celebrate what it means to be an Albertan. I look forward to welcoming all members of this House to Calgary for 10 days of festivities at the greatest outdoor show on Earth. Yahoo!

**The Speaker:** Apparently, the great debate, whether it's yee-haw or yahoo, has been settled.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### South Sudanese Community

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and address this Chamber. I want to take this opportunity to recognize Alberta's South Sudanese community and the contributions they make to our great province. The Republic of South Sudan is located in east-central Africa. The country gained independence on July 9, 2011, making it the most recent state to join the international system.

Now, I recently connected with a member of this community who is a guest of mine here today. As you know, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to celebrating the diverse cultural groups in Alberta, and the South Sudanese community is a key thread in the rich cultural fabric of our province. There are many values that United Conservatives share with this wonderful community. We want to make life better for our families. We are resilient in times of hardship. We are devoted in service to our communities. We are not afraid of hard work. We want to ensure that our future generations are prosperous. As well, we value democracy, and we value freedom. These are the values that guide my work and the work of my colleagues on this side of the House every day. I believe that these same values are shared with my guests and our United Conservative movement.

I want to close by quoting our Premier when he said, quote: Alberta isn't just a place on a map, and it's not just random collection of people; Alberta is an idea. Unquote. Mr. Speaker, today I want to thank the South Sudanese community, especially those joining us here today, for helping us to build this idea through their ongoing civic engagement and for contributing to the vibrancy of our democracy and enriching the culture of our province. I am sure that I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that we look forward to working alongside them in our efforts to renew the Alberta advantage and to make Alberta strong and free.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Abortion Rights

**Ms Renaud:** Controlling when and if you reproduce is a basic human right. Women in Canada have the right to access reproductive health procedures; however, we've seen a deliberate erosion of access to these medical services in provinces where socially conservative governments backed by antichoice organizations use whatever means available to them to impose barriers to those services. These groups are powerful lobbyists.

While abortion remains legal and somewhat accessible, there are plenty of ways these rights have been limited and suppressed. Antichoice groups like Campaign Life Coalition, Wilberforce, RightNow, and the Association for Reformed Political Action boast about their work nominating and electing antiabortion politicians. By my count, there are at least 28 antiabortion MLAs here.

In 2004 at a March for Life rally on Parliament Hill the crowd assembled was challenged by this Premier to ask politicians how they stand on abortion. He said, quote: if they say they're personally opposed to abortion but they don't want to impose their opposition on society, ask them if they're personally opposed to child abuse and ask them if they're personally opposed to slavery. He equated abortion, a medical procedure, to child abuse and slavery. Make no mistake, antiabortion politicians make antiabortion laws.

For many girls and women, particularly those who are poor, live in rural areas, are young, disabled, indigenous, are in a racial

minority, or are immigrants, access to abortion is limited. Access to reproductive health care is essential to women's health, and not all women in Alberta have adequate or, in some cases, any access to abortion.

Later this session I will be tabling Motion 506, that will focus on reviewing access to abortion services with the goal of removing barriers and creating equitable access in all communities across this province. I hope this new government won't run away and hide their votes from the women of this province.

Thank you.

### Canadian Rockies School Division Update

**Ms Rosin:** On June 19 the Member for Edmonton-Glenora quoted:

Does the minister know the consequences of her bungling of the Education budget for Banff's public schools? . . . The Member for Banff-Kananaskis probably should have asked this question, but let me make sure that I tell her the answer. The answer is that staff morale is in the tank. They're cutting the music teacher from the elementary school [and] half the teachers . . . are going to be new.

This comment was made without proof, so it is a public, direct insult to the hard-working individuals who manage the Canadian Rockies public school division.

I called up the superintendent of the school division to get the facts straight. Today I don't need to be told the answer by the member opposite; I'll put the truth on the record myself. CRPS is not cutting the music teacher. In fact, there are nearly two full-time music teachers that they are keeping, and interestingly one of them is the president of the local ATA.

Further, CRPS is not cutting one, single front-line worker or teacher of any subject. Only three teachers are going to be new next year, and any turnover they occasionally do have is because the average cost of housing in Banff is \$1.2 million, making it hard for anybody to settle down there.

Let's talk about staff morale. This school division attracts teachers from all over the world because of their unique, experiential for-credit trips that get students and teachers out of the classroom and into the wild.

1:40

CRPS management called me, and they were insulted to hear these false claims levied against their school division, and they actually encouraged me to set the record straight today. So to quote the superintendent of CRPS: I suggest that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora get her facts straight and actually call the school division directly rather than listen to street gossip. He continued, saying that the previous NDP government's costly policies are the real reason their budgets are tight as they've been forced to implement OH and S changes, labour code changes, and paperless practices.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member should focus on representing her own constituents rather than mine. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Balanced and Deficit Budgets

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, balance is one of the most important first steps in protecting our core services. Over the past few weeks I've heard, over and over, never-ending criticism from the opposition about this government's plan to restore balance, yet I sit back and question how those same members can criticize our plan to renew our economy and create jobs when their record is crystal clear. Their uncontrolled growth and expenditures, exacerbated by poor

decision-making, produced a serious and unsustainable imbalance that must be corrected. Without the actions outlined by this government, we risk increasing our debt to unsupportable levels and we jeopardize our long-term economic growth.

In four years the previous government's willingness to mortgage our future has left Alberta with the biggest deficit and the highest net debt recorded in our history. Their poorly implemented and timed policies eroded investor confidence, contributed to record job losses. Their uncontrolled spending contributed to a debt on track to \$100 billion, that will now cost Albertans \$1.9 billion in interest payments every year until it's paid off, interest payments made by hard-earned tax dollars, tax dollars that will not go to education or supporting our public-sector workers or health care. It goes directly to foreign banks. Should we not ask ourselves how passing on billions of dollars of debt to future generations is responsible or even fair?

With 55 per cent of the vote, the largest mandate in Alberta history supported this government's commitment to fiscal balance. Our government knows that it is important that Albertans have a thorough understanding of the reality so we can begin to work together on solutions. Without balance there is no future for education, without balance there's no future for our health care system, and without balance there is no future for our children here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie is making a statement.

### Canada Day

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today as a proud and patriotic Canadian and recognize our country's 152nd birthday. No matter where we are, as Canadians, each July 1 we celebrate Canada and the people who have built this country we love.

Our nation was united through the pursuit of a dream that many once thought to be impossible. On the first day of July 1867 our nation's founders created this great country and gave truth to that dream of a fair, free, and democratic country stretching from sea to sea to shining sea.

Here in Alberta we had the privilege of joining Confederation in 1905 along with our friends in Saskatchewan. I am grateful for the vision of those Albertans that have gone before us to join in this beautiful country of Canada. In the words of our national anthem:

God keep our land glorious and free!

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

We know we can count on Canadians. We stand up for each other. Our success has always come from its people, lifting each other up, one community at a time. From our indigenous people, francophone, ethnic communities, and faith communities to our pioneers and newcomers, we will continue to be a country that welcomes and offers opportunity to all.

Each time others have tried to extinguish the liberties we enjoy, Canadians have confidently stood up to defend our values. We take immense pride in our Canadian Armed Forces, and we admire their role as protectors and peacekeepers, both globally and within our borders.

Canada Day is an opportunity for all Canadians to set aside any disputes or differences that we may have so that together we can acknowledge and enjoy the abundance that our nation has to offer. Together we will keep building a country where every Canadian, no matter where you're from, has a real and fair chance to succeed. On behalf of the United Conservative government I wish everyone a belated Happy Canada Day. Bonne fête du Canada.

May God bless Alberta, and may God bless Canada and keep her glorious and free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition today, organized by workers themselves, regarding the inclusion of banked overtime provisions in all overtime agreements. The petition states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, [urge] the Legislative Assembly . . . to ensure that workers in Alberta are not subjected to violence, harassment, fear or intimidation by continuing to adequately protect workers through recently amended workplace legislation, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Workers' Compensation Act and the amendments to the Employment Standards Code requiring that [all] banked overtime provisions are contained in all overtime agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition today. The petition relates to the government's stance on GSAs and was signed by over 200 Albertans. The petition states:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, urge the Legislative Assembly to [defeat] Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019, a law that will remove legal protections for GSAs and QSAs meaning LGBTQ2S+ students who join could be outed without their consent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there other petitions? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies, five, of a petition signed by almost 1,000 people in Lethbridge: we the undersigned call upon the Alberta government to ensure safe and inclusive schools for all by removing any barriers to students creating GSAs or QSAs and calling them such.

**The Speaker:** Prior to you tabling the petition, just for clarity's sake, was that particular petition approved by Parliamentary Counsel?

**Ms Phillips:** I'm not sure, so it can be just tabled.

**The Speaker:** My recommendation would be that you table that under Tabling Returns and Reports, and I'll provide you with another opportunity to do so at that time.

**Ms Phillips:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a petition with the appropriate number of copies that was done by Lynn Macdonald from Rimbey in regard to concerns with

daylight saving time and asking the government to look at the Daylight Saving Time Act.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, sir.

**The Speaker:** Details, details.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have here the requisite number of copies of the Alberta New Democrats' constitution, specifically where they reserve seats for the Alberta Federation of Labour on their provincial executive. They have special voting rights at their convention to set policy, perhaps the real reason that the NDP is so interested in Bill 9.

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

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise to table the requisite number of copies of a petition calling on the government to ensure immediacy and confidentiality in forming a GSA or QSA in any Alberta school.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is from today's *Calgary Herald*. It's about gas producers being given interim tax relief for this year by the province, backfilling that.

The second is from today's *Globe and Mail*, and it talks about the government likely curtailing production of natural gas in Alberta to achieve higher prices, something we did with crude in January.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with the requisite copies of a document in regard to the earplug saga unfolding.

An additional document, also from a constituent: the earplug controversy continues as UCP accused was leaving the House.

Also, a third tabling with the requisite copies, that will be referenced by the Official Opposition Leader, titled, with the Premier's name, Said NDP 'Lied' about Alberta's Finances; New Numbers Suggest Otherwise, from CBC Calgary.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few tablings this afternoon. First of all, from the *Edmonton Journal*, Cancelling Superlab Undermines Foundation of Patient Care by Cheryl Mather, a clinical assistant professor and anatomic in molecular pathology, who states that the Edmonton hub lab "was not an indulgence; it was the best option to improve our ability to offer care."

I have five copies of a Facebook post from a laboratory scientist calling the decision to cancel the Edmonton clinical lab hub short-sighted and noting the loss of an innovative plan, amazing things that could have been accomplished, and the money that could have been saved.

I have another Facebook post from an assistant professor and laboratory technologist noting cramped offices shared by pathologists and supervisors, lack of space for equipment, and the support of the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

I have another from a lab technologist expressing her frustration with the Minister of Health's suggestion that cancelling the lab hub

was about patient care, stating: “We are a vital part of health care . . . We show up for every shift with our focus on our patients.”

An e-mail from a laboratory scientist noting . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. We will return to tablings following our favourite part of the day.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Premier’s Remarks

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, first this Premier claimed that we lied about the province’s finances. Then after the Q4 report proved that wasn’t true, he doubled down on that inaccuracy and claimed that we created the deficit. Now, for the record that’s also not true. This Premier’s predecessor party introduced a budget predicated on \$54 oil, imposed costly health care premiums, fee hikes, service cuts, and still promised a \$5 billion deficit. To the Premier: will you apologize to the people of this province for repeatedly providing inaccurate statements to them?

**Mr. Kenney:** No, because I haven’t, Mr. Speaker. It’s time for the NDP to apologize to Albertans for creating a fiscal train wreck. Of course, I was speaking about the fiscal year that we inherited, and it’s absolutely clear, as the MacKinnon commission will report, that the fiscal situation of the province has deteriorated since the third-quarter report made by the NDP. That was a party that committed to Albertans a \$600 million surplus this year, instead left a multibillion-dollar deficit, the largest per capita deficit in Canada. They were only off by \$7 billion. It’s time for them to apologize.

**Ms Notley:** Well, here’s the thing about continuing, as we just heard, to spin tall tales: eventually, you can’t remember what’s true and what’s not. That’s a thing that does plague this Premier. Now, in discussing his recorded inconsistencies, respected political scientist Duane Bratt said, quote: he either didn’t know and then doubles down even though he could have realized those numbers, or he did know the answer and is basically bull-bleeping Albertans. To the Premier: which is it? Did he accuse us of lying without knowing, or did he actually know and decide to bull-bleep Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I was clearly talking about the fiscal year that we inherited, on which the MacKinnon report will shed light, shed light on how badly the fiscal situation is compared to what the NDP projected in their third-quarter report. We can also compare their commitment to Albertans in 2015 to a \$600 million surplus when, in fact, we have a massive deficit. The NDP promised to add only a few billion dollars to the provincial debt but instead took it from \$13 billion to \$60 billion, headed to \$100 billion, five credit downgrades at the . . .

**Ms Notley:** Well, again he’s wrong.

You know, Albertans deserve a Premier who won’t call people liars with no evidence. They deserve a Premier who won’t strip constitutional rights from 180,000 workers right after an election where he hid the plan. They deserve a Premier who won’t promise to preserve people’s overtime a mere month before clawing back a third of their overtime. They deserve a Premier who won’t rule out legislating on social issues who then immediately legislates on social issues. To the Premier: why does this government so consistently misrepresent so much?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader, who was the first Premier in Alberta’s history to lose an election after one term, just said that what I said was wrong. Now, what was wrong? Was I wrong when I claimed that their platform committed to a \$600 million surplus this year? Was I wrong when I said that they drove the debt from \$13 billion to \$60 billion? Was I wrong when I said that they were headed to \$100 billion? Was I wrong when I said that they went through five credit downgrades? Was I wrong when I said that they had the largest per capita deficit in Canada? Was I wrong when I said that they missed their target this year by several billion dollars? All of that is absolutely demonstrably true.

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

#### GSA Policy Compliance and School Funding

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, there are 28 private schools refusing to support gay-straight alliances, in some cases refusing to even accept that people are gay or transgender. Here’s a direct quote from one policy: a covenant relationship between one man and one woman is the sole environment in which sexual activity is permitted and is the context in which children are to be raised. To the Premier. This school is publicly funded. Why do you believe it should receive public funding if it’s going to push these types of discriminatory policies?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as we’ve been absolutely clear, this government will maintain the strongest statutory protection for gay-straight alliances and peer support groups of any province in Canada, the right of the ability for students to create such groups. At the same time, unlike the NDP, we believe in pluralism, diversity, and religious freedom, as reflected in Alberta’s strong tradition of school choice. [interjections] I hear the NDP angrily heckling. That’s all they’ve got left. While they insult people, we’ll defend school choice in Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** What they will defend, Mr. Speaker, is overt discrimination.

We tried to work with these 28 schools, and we gave them a great deal of time to come in line with our Bill 24 and the Charter rights it seeks to protect. They refused, so their public funding was to have been pulled last week. One policy reads, quote, men and women are to dress and behave in accordance with their biological sex. To the Premier: has he pulled funding for this transphobic school, or is Bill Straight specifically designed to protect it from the consequences of discriminating against its students?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP, as a party of division, has always opposed school choice in Alberta because they don’t believe in pluralism and diversity. They don’t seem to have much regard for religious freedom as it’s expressed in this province’s long tradition of school choice. We fundamentally disagree, and we believe in respect for everybody. We also believe that respect extends to faith-based communities and the right of parents to choose an education which they believe is rooted in the universal declaration of human rights, section 26(3), the right of parents to choose their children’s education.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers should not be paying for anyone to choose to discriminate against children. We know it’s critical to have safe and caring schools where LGBTQ youth are not outed against their will. One policy states: the school will involve parents as appropriate and necessary regarding their children’s participation in school groups. To the Premier: why are you and your Education minister working so hard to provide the legislative



protection for these schools to out kids and potentially put their lives at risk?

**Mr. Kenney:** We're not, Mr. Speaker, but I find it passing strange the NDP is asking why this government is continuing to fund schools that the NDP funded for four years. That shows the total lack of coherence from the increasingly angry and divisive . . .

**Ms Notley:** You know that the funding would have ended last week.

**Mr. Kenney:** The former Premier is heckling, Mr. Speaker, because she's angry with Albertans for having rejected the NDP's divisive record and total economic failure. You know, she tried to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. We will have order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Her government tried to defund the largest home-schooling group in Alberta until a court of law stopped them, because the courts won't tolerate the NDP stripping people's religious freedom in school choice.

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

#### Shallow Gas Tax Relief

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week news emerged of a tax relief program for natural gas producers. The government is touting it as a job support program, but the municipalities I'm talking to worry about the cost of this tax relief being downloaded ultimately onto them and Alberta's families. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas. Somebody has got to pay. You're picking up the tab this year. Will municipalities ultimately be called on to cover the bill next year?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the reckless policies of the NDP government were jeopardizing several companies and thousands of jobs. We saw Trident Exploration declare bankruptcy earlier this year, and multiple shallow gas producers report that they are on the verge of bankruptcy. There is a broad acknowledgement that the assessment guidelines have caused those producers to pay much higher than the real value of the assessment of their linear property. We are providing some short-term relief here to help save jobs in the Alberta economy.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government didn't involve municipalities in developing this relief program until it was a fait accompli. I'm hearing that this associate minister turned up with a fully developed program that municipalities had no input in. This comes after the Minister of Municipal Affairs also jammed municipalities with Bill 7, which they didn't want, didn't ask for, and which, many will fear, there'll be a race to the bottom as a result of. To the Premier. Your ministers have now failed on multiple occasions to take the advice of locally elected mayors, reeves, and councillors. What is it about the word "partnership" that you all don't get?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, Bill 7 was in the election platform of the United Conservative Party at the request of municipalities like Strathcona county and the Industrial Heartland Association, who want to be able to attract job-creating investment. So, you know, we said yes to our municipal partners in that respect.

With respect to linear taxation for shallow gas producers, we will be consulting with municipalities in the months to come to ensure an accurate, fair, and proper assessment of those properties to avoid driving those businesses into bankruptcy.

**Member Ceci:** Forty-two municipalities. You heard from one. The fear I'm hearing from municipalities is that business alone is driving the agenda of this government.

Now, our natural gas producers are important, and that's why we commissioned a study on how best to support that industry, but our businesses are nothing without consideration of the municipalities they're located in. This rushed program could result in higher taxes or cut services that communities rely on. To the associate minister: will you promise here and now that local taxpayers won't foot the bill for your heavily rushed tax relief program?

**Mr. Kenney:** Classic NDP economic incompetence. They commissioned a study and then did precisely nothing to implement a single recommendation while we have been facing a crisis amongst shallow gas producers, jeopardizing thousands of good-paying jobs.

By the way, if those companies go under, Mr. Speaker, there'll be zero revenue coming from those sources for municipalities or the provincial government. Rather than just talking and studying, this government is acting to preserve and create jobs in Alberta.

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

#### Classroom Improvement Fund

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some very concerning information has come out about students struggling with severe learning disabilities in Calgary schools. Autism Calgary reports that students are being suspended from school because they don't have the staff to support them. This is an issue that I hope this entire House can agree is unacceptable. We need to do more to support these students. That's exactly what the classroom improvement fund was intended to do. To the minister. It's been weeks of questioning. Will you please commit today that you will maintain funding for the classroom improvement fund?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I am committed to looking after each and every one of our students in our classrooms. As was said earlier numerous times, day in and day out, we have committed to funding education, to providing the supports that are necessary. We will be accounting for enrolment growth, and we're going to be building schools. We continue to say the same things. More information will come out as we bring things forward.

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't think it's acceptable for schools to suspend children because this minister fails to commit to the classroom improvement fund.

We know that boards are cutting key support positions because this minister refuses to provide them with the clarity that they need. The classroom improvement fund would have added 400 important teachers and educational assistants to our schools this fall, in September, when kids show up. Without those, our students with severe learning disabilities are going to suffer the most. To the minister: why won't you confirm that this funding is coming? Is it cut, or is it that you just don't care?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As the hon. member knows, the classroom improvement fund was due to end August 31 of this year. No decisions have been made on funding for the upcoming year. As a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to school boards following approval by the Legislature in the fall.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** School starts in September. It's unacceptable to make these children go home suspended and make their parents miss days of work because this minister can't get a budget together. That's completely unacceptable.

Autism Calgary is warning that the CBE implications will be even worse with the \$22 million in budget cuts to schools that have been passed down by this UCP government and this minister. The minister said yesterday that her heart is with the children. Autism Calgary says that things are going to get worse under the UCP. Minister, if your heart is honestly with the children, is this acceptable to you or to any member of your government?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again we're seeing the opposition continue to play politics with our children, using scare tactics. We have heard from the hon. minister back here that there's been misinformation being spread. We spend amongst the most per capita on education, but the outcomes just aren't there. We're going to review the outcomes. We're going to provide for our students. We're going to look after every single student, especially those that have the largest needs.

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

#### **Rural Crime Prevention and Policing**

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the downturn in the economy, that was made far worse by the policies of the previous NDP government, crime has increased, particularly in rural Alberta. Many rural communities in my constituency, like Fort Macleod and many more, have seen a spike in crime. Residents are scared for the safety of their property but, more importantly, the safety of their families. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: what is being done to ensure the safety of rural Albertans and to show that this issue is being taken seriously?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has the call.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this. All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their communities. Rural crime is a real crisis that was ignored for far too long by the NDP. We're going to make sure that we're committed to ensuring that our law enforcement officials have the tools that they need to get the job done. I'm regularly talking with our law enforcement officials as well as meeting with municipal leaders across our province to make sure that I listen to them and hear their concerns to make sure that we provide our police forces with the tools that they need to get the job done.

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

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the RCMP have had staffing issues that an increase in funding doesn't seem to be solving and that the matter of rural crime here in Alberta is getting worse and given that Ontario, for example, has its own provincial police force instead of the RCMP, does the

minister have an idea of the approximate cost of having a provincial police force here in the province of Alberta as opposed to contracting the RCMP from the federal government?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an estimate for the hon. member regarding this request. However, this question does come up a lot, particularly from people in rural Alberta that have concerns about policing in their communities. This stems back to the loss of confidence in the previous government and the feeling of alienation that they had in the smaller communities across Alberta. [interjection] This is a very serious issue, and we're getting heckled by the NDP right now. This is a serious issue for rural Albertans. This is one of the top issues for them. So many people do not feel safe in their communities. Again, it's disappointing to hear heckling from the other side on this.

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

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the RCMP have a requirement that members be flexible in moving around the country to available postings and given that this may hamper their ability to recruit members that prefer to stay in one place and given that the province of Alberta set up the Alberta sheriffs branch in 2006 and have already begun to fill gaps in law enforcement here in Alberta, can the minister comment on the feasibility of expanding the mandate of the Alberta sheriffs to become a provincial police force, and could that potentially increase our effectiveness in dealing with rural crime?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for this question. I'm regularly talking with law enforcement leaders across our province about how best to use our resources, from policing to sheriffs to making sure that we use community leaders as well, to help spread information about how to protect people and make them feel safe in their communities. We're going to be making sure that we tour this province this summer and fall. I'm looking forward to listening to community leaders, municipal leaders about how best to make sure that all Albertans feel safe in their communities.

#### **Abandoned Oil and Gas Well Liability Management**

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, abandoned oil and gas wells pose significant health and environmental risks and severely harm landowners' ability to develop or sell their own land. The Alberta Energy Regulator estimates the total liabilities of these wells at more than \$18 billion while third-party estimates have those liabilities at values much, much higher. Some of these liabilities will be passed on to the Orphan Well Association. Can the government share with this House how it's working with the Orphan Well Association to make sure that it has the money to deal with those liabilities?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that the economic environment exists where private industry can be successful, allowing them to bear the costs themselves of well abandonment and build on Alberta's strong record of responsible environmental reclamation. We will be opening a consultation on liability management, and we'll be reporting back to the House.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that timely oil and gas well abandonment prevents liabilities from being passed on to the

Orphan Well Association and given that the UCP often holds up Texas and North Dakota as jurisdictions with which we must compete for oil and gas development and given that both Texas and North Dakota have strict timelines for gas wells to be reclaimed, will the government level the playing field for oil and gas companies operating in all these jurisdictions and enact timelines for abandoned wells to be reclaimed?

2:10

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, as previously committed to, we are working with the AER and industry to overhaul the entire liability management framework in Alberta. We want to ensure that liabilities are covered without unduly distracting and discouraging new investment. It's important to keep our energy industry alive and thriving, and it's important to reclaim and ensure environmental cleanup. We have to get the balance right, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that oil and gas liabilities are the responsibility of the last licensee on record and given that when a licensee goes bankrupt, those liabilities are passed on to the Orphan Well Association, what is the UCP doing to make sure that big companies aren't spinning off their liabilities to shell companies that have no hope of being able to pay for the reclamation costs, leaving the taxpayer on the hook for the cleanup?

**Mrs. Savage:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are doing a full, comprehensive review of the entire liability framework. We want to ensure that we don't detract investment. We want to make sure that liabilities are cleaned up and the environment is managed properly. That will take time. I would note that the orphan levy has increased to \$60 million; companies are investing in it. We want to make sure we get the balance right.

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

### Film and Television Industry Grants

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Screen production grants play a major role in attracting film and television productions to our cities. However, it has come to our attention and to many in the industry that some approved project grants are on hold and that some new requests are not being sent forward for project approval. This is only going to hurt our industry, and no explanation is being provided. To the minister of culture: what is behind the delay in processing and approving screen production grants?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, and thank you for the question. Right now, as we are going through our projects and through budgets and finding out everything that's going on, as I had said earlier to the member, we're going to take our time with the rollout of the tax credit. There is also a lot of consultation that needs to be done. Until we actually know what is going on, we will make sure that the industry is well aware of what's happening.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the film industry contributes greatly to the Alberta economy and given that only a little while ago the minister of culture herself pointed out that every dollar invested generated a \$3.50 return to Albertans and given that many of the grant delays appear to be in the form of

postproduction grants, to the same minister: why do the post-production grants appear to be feeling the brunt of this government's delays?

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's a great question. Actually, there are no delays as we know that these roll out at certain times. There are certain intakes, and there are certain times that they come out. I find it extremely rich coming from them, considering the number of promises that came from them by overspending on the capacity of the dollars going out. If you actually want to talk about the amount of money that went out – there are commitments that need to be made to this industry. We are going to make sure and follow through on those commitments. But, at the same time, it's very interesting, coming from that side, considering that they overspent by \$90 million.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an interruption in reliable screen production grants causes uncertainty in the industry, particularly with investors, and given that the minister of culture has already acknowledged the economic benefit of the Alberta film industry, including benefits for the tourism industry and skilled jobs, to the same minister: how does this uncertainty demonstrate to the world that Alberta's screen industry is open for business?

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's a great question. The industry is excited to come here not only because we got rid of the carbon tax, not only because we have the lowest taxes in the country for companies to come here, but they're also very excited about the changeover to the tax credit. Of course, the NDP actually way overspent in this capacity. We are taking a look at those numbers to make sure that we hold to our commitments to the industry. But, more than that, it's actually about attracting the industry here, sir. This is something that we're very excited to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Bighorn Area Land Use

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment and Parks. It was extremely evident during the campaign that the lack of consultation relating to the Bighorn proposal infuriated Albertans. The previous government and the previous minister pretended to consult, calling town halls when they might as well have just called to tell stakeholders how it would be. As a constituent joked to me, "Come on down and let us tell you what we're going to do." I sincerely hope, Minister, that you will not do this. Please tell this House that you will consult with the people most affected and that you will not pretend to consult, like Alberta's previous government.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I can assure him that this government will consult Albertans when it comes to land-use decisions, not only in the Bighorn but elsewhere inside the province. It was very disappointing to see the previous government not work with First Nation communities, municipalities, business owners, recreation users – and the list goes on and on – when they made their land-use decisions. We have a different approach. We're focused on finding balance between economic, recreation, and environmental needs. We recognize that we can't manage places like the west country

without working in partnership with the municipalities, First Nation communities that are there, and the nonprofit sector, that works so hard every day to preserve the west country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your answer. Minister, given that there was and is a belief that something should be done, needs to be done, and that the regional plans should be followed through on and given that the previous government led a sham consultation with stakeholders, I ask the hon. minister to update this House on the direction that our government will take regarding the Bighorn.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's important that we do things inside the west country. The communities that are there have been calling for it for a long time. As we promised during the campaign, we will return to the North Saskatchewan regional planning process. The difference is that we won't have secret meetings, where we don't allow the community to participate. Instead, we will focus on building a partnership, making sure that we're able to provide the resources that are needed to the community, standing with the indigenous communities that are in the area, that were very frustrated with the NDP's approach, standing with the municipalities that are in the area to be able to find solutions that will work for Albertans long term to be able to protect my backyard, one of the most beautiful places in the world.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that our government has made a promise to empower the people most affected by changes in regulation to help set the rules rather than deciding from afar, as the previous government chose to do, would the minister please elaborate on what specific strategies are being taken to enhance the consultation project and make sure that the affected stakeholders are properly consulted?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the big differences between the previous government and our government is that we will not be having people in ivory towers in Edmonton determining the future of places like the Bighorn. Instead, we'll be working with the people that actually live inside the community and working very hard to be able to make sure that we get it right. They're the experts. There are some amazing things already happening in the Bighorn despite the fact that the NDP did not want to acknowledge the hard work of the community already there. We recognize that there has to be a partnership, particularly with the First Nation communities in the area, the municipalities that are in the area, tourism businesses that are already doing an extraordinary amount of work, being able to give people access to our big area. We'll co-operate with people. That's the difference between our government and theirs.

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

### Hospitals

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when you ask this government about why they are breaking contracts, slashing wages, not saying how they will be funding education, you get the same stale, old talking point about how they're waiting on their blue-ribbon panel and given that the chair of that panel shut down 52 rural hospitals in Saskatchewan in 1993, cutting people's rights to

free and accessible health care, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you commit today that you will not close a single hospital for the duration of this term regardless of what your prize panel says?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, we are going through the budgeting process. All the hospital projects that are under construction are continuing construction, and for all the new projects, we will review the capital project list in due course and get back to them.

**Mr. Dang:** That sounds like a big fat no, Mr. Speaker.

Given that in 2009, when reflecting on the closure of, again, 52 rural hospitals, the chair of the blue-ribbon panel actually acknowledged that the savings from closing these hospitals was, quote, far less than what was expected and given that I hope that all members of this House would agree that compromising health care for rural Albertans for a pittance in savings isn't worth it, to the Minister of Health: can you confirm you will not stand by if your colleague moves to shutter rural hospitals, and would you please explain how exactly you're going to expand access to health care in rural Alberta while you shovel a multibillion-dollar tax giveaway?

2:20

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we have a clear commitment to maintain or increase health care funding. In fact, we have continued to invest in the completion of hospitals under construction. But what I find really insightful is that we now see the huge gap between Alberta's increasingly left-wing NDP and the mainstream NDP in Saskatchewan. This member is attacking Dr. Janice MacKinnon, one of the most highly regarded fiscal experts in the country. You know what? After she made difficult choices to balance Saskatchewan's budget, her government, unlike theirs, was re-elected three times.

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like we're going to be losing some hospitals all across this province.

Now, given that last week the Infrastructure minister hedged on his previous promise to commit to the capital plan and given that while he previously said that he would honour the capital plan – he said that he would prioritize the projects; he said that he was looking at every project – to the minister: will you commit to at least building hospital projects that were committed to on the original timelines? Yes or no?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the minister and the government have been clear on that matter, but what we have here is the spectacle of an NDP MLA attacking one of this country's most highly regarded former New Democrat ministers, Dr. MacKinnon. [interjections] Now they're heckling her. Now they're groaning. They're so angry. You know why? Because Dr. MacKinnon and Roy Romanow's government were re-elected and re-elected in part because, like Tommy Douglas, they understood the importance of fiscal responsibility, unlike this lot, who were thrown out after their first term in office.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

### Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 30 Leslie Peers and Sandy McCabe wrote to the Minister of Health with their concerns about the quality of care provided to their mother, Marilyn, at Rutherford Heights' privately run, publicly funded, high-care needs ward. Left unsupervised, Marilyn fell twice over two weeks, breaking her pelvis. At different times her family found

feces on her toilet and on the bedroom floor and that she'd been left wearing the same dirty clothes for three days straight. To the Minister of Health. It's been a month since they wrote to your office. Why haven't you or your staff responded to their serious concerns?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics of that specific piece of correspondence. I'm happy to go back to my office and understand which letter that was and get back to the constituent if they have not received a response. Obviously, if we do provide a response and if it was provided to us through the hon. member's constituency office or any member's constituency office, we don't disclose personal information about somebody's health care. We would not let any other member of this Assembly know about that correspondence, but I look forward to getting back to the member.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that addressing situations like those raised by Marilyn's family is indeed no easy task but given that this government has stated it intends to continue to invest in this model of publicly funded but privately delivered care and given that this minister has a duty to listen to issues like those faced by Marilyn's family and to act on them, to the Minister of Health: what steps will you be taking to ensure that facilities like this maintain the staff needed to provide residents with the dignity and quality of care that they deserve?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear. We were clear throughout the campaign and we've been clear since April 16, since the election, that we were going to maintain or increase our spending in our health care system and continue to build on the strength of our front-line workers. That's our commitment to patients in this province.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Marilyn's family eventually had to resort to staying with her 24 hours a day until they could find another place for her to live and given that she is now happy and receiving excellent care alongside her husband in a personal care home and given that in their platform this government has stated it would support the creation of more of these community-based spaces, to the Minister of Health: will you commit to meeting with Sandy McCabe and myself to hear her concerns and discuss how we can provide proper, dignified care for seniors like her mother, Marilyn?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times in this House, my office is open to all Albertans who want to discuss health care concerns. To the extent that the constituent wants the hon. member to be at the meeting, I leave that to that constituent to make that decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

### Domestic Violence Prevention

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I would like to quote a promise from the 2019 UCP campaign platform: "A United Conservative government will introduce legislation to protect vulnerable Albertans and increase funding for Alberta's specialized law enforcement agencies that combat domestic violence." Given this clear commitment to Albertans and the importance of preventing

domestic violence, would the minister please outline the steps that she is taking to proactively protect those at risk?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government made a commitment to address domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence. Among other initiatives under way, we pledge to pass an Alberta version of Clare's law to ensure that Albertans at risk of domestic violence have fuller awareness of an intimate partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. Working together with the Minister of Justice, I will be tabling legislation for an Alberta version of Clare's law in this Assembly in the fall of 2019.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta has the third-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence in the country and saw 166 deaths in Alberta due to family violence between 2008 and 2017 and given that over half of all female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner or relative and that 29 per cent of Canadian women will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, can the Minister of Community and Social Services please outline her process for implementing Clare's law here in Alberta?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the responsibility to protect vulnerable Albertans, including from domestic violence, is one that this government takes very seriously. The process will involve a broad consultation with stakeholders, including women's shelters, First Nations and Métis communities, victims' advocates, police associations, new-Canadian and immigrant support centres, and offender advocates. I also look forward to the member's input and input from this entire Assembly as we move Clare's law through the legislative process.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you. Given that Clare's law was implemented in the United Kingdom in 2014 after Clare Wood was murdered by a man with a history of violence against women and given that Saskatchewan has also implemented its own version of the legislation to protect survivors and those at risk from domestic or gender-based violence and further given that many survivors of domestic violence, male or female, don't want to report but must be adequately protected from this violence as well, can the minister please address the effectiveness of Clare's law in preventing domestic violence in relationships?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, with domestic violence there is no one single solution. The intention behind Clare's law will be to equip potential victims of domestic violence to be informed of their partner's previous convictions for violence. We believe that potential victims of domestic abuse have a right to know about that individual's criminal history. Our legislation would allow the person at risk and family members to apply for this information although only the at-risk person would receive it.

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

### Clubroot of Canola

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canola farmers are being hit hard this year, whether it be from a ban on their product, invasions from cutworms, or facing reduced crop yields as a result of clubroot. I recently met privately with a local canola producer who

shared his grave concerns about the proliferation of this disease in Alberta, and he noted that clubroot is now found in southern Alberta and the Peace River area, where it was not supposed to thrive. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what steps is his ministry taking to control this disease, that threatens the future of one of our most important export crops?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question and also for attending the barbecue that we had today at the Legislature, which was a great show of solidarity for our farmers. Most of those are up in the gallery today: our beef producers, our canola growers, and also our pork producers.

To that very important question on clubroot, it is a disease that we are working on and monitoring, and it is something that we're trying our best to get a handle on to make sure that when it comes to canola around the world, we have high-quality and the best canola. We do a great job of selling it. It is controlled, and we work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as well as other departments to make sure that we can get . . .

**Mr. Dach:** Given that mitigation measures to combat clubroot in infected fields such as extended crop rotation, planting clubroot-resistant seed, and minimizing movement of soil contaminated with clubroot spores are only as good as the enforcement measures that govern them, can the minister please explain to this House what legislation governs the spread of clubroot disease, and what level of government is charged with enforcing that act?

2:30

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We trust farmers to make sure that they do the best type of crop rotation. They have the land, lots for generations, for over 100 years, and they want to do what's best for their farms and for their land. It is something that this side of the House, that we actually trust farmers to do what's best for their crop rotations, and it isn't something that we're going to mandate something of that nature. It is great to see the canola producers here in the House, and I'm sure that they can attest that they know their land a lot better than any government official ever would.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's the Agricultural Pests Act and the municipalities of Alberta that are in charge, invested with enforcement. So I hope the minister informs himself of that. Thank you again.

To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that fighting clubroot disease costs producers money and lowers their net income per acre and given that as a result some canola producers may choose not to extend their crop rotation, grow canola-resistant seed, or wash soil off their contaminated equipment before moving it from field to field to save money in the short term and given this increases the potential risk of spreading the disease to their neighbours . . .

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite. What are we doing about it? What is this government doing about it? We're working with farmers to make sure that they can make their money from the mailbox – from the marketplace. Sorry, Mr. Speaker; not the mailbox. It is something that government shouldn't get involved in, businesses like that, and it's great to see that farmers do such a great job. They produce such a high quality of food that we're proud as a government to be able

to support, whether it's on the international stage and promoting it around the world or to here at home as well. As a message that we had at the barbecue today, to all Albertans watching: please buy Albertan.

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

### Legal Aid

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A publicly funded legal aid system helps to ensure that Albertans have access to necessary legal advice and, in turn, ensures that we are all equal before the law. I've been unable to get a clear answer from the Minister of Justice about funding for legal aid or even a commitment that legal aid is an important part of a functioning system. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul even went so far as to say that legal aid is money for criminals. To the minister: will you take this opportunity to set the record straight and publicly recognize the critical importance of legal aid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, legal aid is an important part of a fair and accessible justice system. My wife actually articulated doing legal aid work. It's an important part of our justice system. All Albertans deserve to have a reasonable defence. It's an important part, foundational, to make sure we have also an efficient justice system.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that legal aid, the government of Alberta, the Law Society, and many other stakeholders have worked tirelessly to reach an agreement that will provide better service to Albertans, a sustainable program, and certainty for the legal community and given that this program is critical to ensuring timely access to legal aid, which in turn ensures that matters move through the system and are not stayed due to Jordan, to the minister: will you commit to ensuring that budget uncertainty created by your government will not lead to cases being stayed?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to be providing a detailed budget this fall. I find it a bit rich talking to somebody on the other side when for four years we saw a clogged up justice system here in Alberta, cases being dismissed through a triage system. That member brought in a triage system to our prosecution services. We're going to be making sure our police and prosecution have the tools that they need to make sure that we're prosecuting the cases in Alberta's best interests to make sure that Albertans feel safe in their homes.

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Premier Kenney's close friend and ally Doug Ford recently made a massive \$133 million cut to Ontario legal aid and given that Premier Ford and the Premier stated that they finish each other's sentences and engage in a long-standing bromance and given that cuts to legal aid will have a devastating impact and given that the first thing to be cut is always family law services, that put vulnerable women and children at risk, to the minister: when you answer in a moment, will you finish your sentence with a commitment to legal aid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, legal aid is an important part of an efficient justice system. But let's talk about this and our justice system that we have right now. In Edmonton since 2015 assaults were up 11 per cent, property crimes are up 13 per cent, sexual assaults are up 17 per cent. That's the record of the opposition on justice. We're going to make sure that our police and prosecutors have the tools that they need to get the job done.

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

**Shallow Gas Tax Relief**  
(continued)

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Associate Minister of Natural Gas announced urgent tax relief for shallow gas producers and municipalities. This news was welcomed by associations like the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, who were happy to see the government of Alberta finally take action on this file. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain why this was such an urgent priority for his office?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Immediately upon taking office, I found out that the NDP did nothing for the past four years. They let companies get assessment rates that were far too high. They let companies go bankrupt. They let our municipalities suffer. Our government has taken action to support shallow gas producers and protect municipalities. We are also reviewing how wells are assessed as that model hasn't changed since 2005 despite drastic changes in the industry. The NDP did nothing. We are taking action.

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that tax relief for shallow gas producers serves as a temporary approach to address the out-of-date uniform assessment of gas wells established in 2005, which causes differences in current property values, and given that the system is broken and the gas producers are selling products at very low prices, to the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: can you provide some reassurance that providing this short-term tax relief for shallow gas producers will help in the establishment of a long-term, viable solution for the industry?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas is rising.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is creating real solutions for natural gas producers because, unlike members across the aisle, we understand how important this industry is to Albertans. Yesterday's measures correct a long-term inequity that has resulted in our natural gas producers being overtaxed. It is a stopgap solution that addresses a complex issue until we can complete a full assessment. I should note that this government will not tax business into bankruptcy. The NDP might want to take note.

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the government has pledged to work with municipalities to help shallow gas producers receive more than \$23 million in total support from this tax relief, can the minister explain what steps are being taken to help municipalities lower these taxes for the 2019 assessment year?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are helping municipalities to provide this tax relief by giving them a list of qualifying wells, helping with reporting, and

reducing the amount of education property tax they owe by the same amount. I was proud to make this announcement with the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada. They understand how bad the situation has become, and that's why we are taking action.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is rising.

**Economic Development and Job Creation**

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years of poor decision-making and policy choices under the previous government in tandem with a large recession has left Alberta barren and stripped of jobs. Our provincial unemployment rate is staying flat at 6.7 per cent while the rest of Canada is improving and even breaking records. Many of my constituents are struggling to find gainful employment, and they want to know what the Minister of Finance and our government are doing to foster job creation.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Alberta does have an unacceptably high unemployment rate. We've inherited that rate from the previous government due to failed economic policies that they've implemented. Albertans expect this government to change that. We're doing just that. We've implemented a job-creation tax cut. The first point of that tax cut took place two days ago, on Monday. That is the first of many measures that we know will bring back investment and job creation to this province.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Calgary has the highest unemployment rate out of all major Canadian metropolitan cities, at an unacceptably high rate of 7.6 per cent, and given that the previous government did little to help alleviate the financial difficulties experienced by Calgary and area residents and given that many of their poorly thought out economic policies only hurt job creators, what are the next steps to ensuring that the Calgary region gets back on track in terms of economic development and job growth?

2:40

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, we've been quick to act to turn around the harmful policies put in place by the previous government. Along with the job-creation tax cut we've repealed the carbon tax, that killed thousands of jobs, many of those in the energy sector and felt acutely by Calgarians. Additionally, we passed Bill 7, which allows municipalities the property tax flexibility to attract investment in an increasingly competitive global environment. We're doing all we can to improve Alberta's job market. That includes the city of Calgary. But every municipality needs to ensure that their policies accomplish the same thing.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's economic growth suffered tremendously due to antijob policies such as the 50 per cent hike to minimum wage, increased labour regulations, massive tax hikes, and changes to statutory holiday

pay, what can be done to reverse the massive damage these poorly thought out policies have done to my constituents?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the member that we're committed to bringing back jobs to Alberta, and that's just what we're doing. We're supporting our province's job creators by, again, initiating the Red Tape Reduction Act, the open for business act, reducing red tape, and bringing common sense back to the workplace. Our government is reversing the trend of fleeing investment. We're bringing prosperity back to the province. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, order.

In 30 seconds or less we will return to the daily Routine.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

(continued)

**The Speaker:** We were at the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to complete my tablings. I have two more. I have an e-mail from a laboratory scientist who notes that "increases in the number of necessary analyzers in facilities not designed to accommodate them [are producing] facilities that are hot, noisy, and crowded."

Then, lastly, an e-mail from a clinic molecular technologist expressing great concern regarding the cancellation of the Edmonton clinical lab and noting that investing in "a single building would have decreased waste by reducing redundancy and achieving economy of scale."

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first one is from *The Guardian*: The Female Game Designers Fighting Back on Abortion Rights. "Through video games, live-action role-playing games and interactive documentaries, developers are challenging the conversation."

The second one is: June was Hottest Ever Recorded on Earth, European Satellite Agency Announces. This is from yesterday, I believe.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of an article as advice to the Premier and the front bench about where they seek economic ideas from. The article is titled Harper's Economic Record the Worst in Canada's Postwar History.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Panda, Minister of Infrastructure, supplemental

responses to questions regarding the former Royal Alberta Museum site, posed by Ms Goehring, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, during Oral Question Period on June 19, 2019; supplemental responses to questions regarding modular classrooms for Father Michael Mireau school, posed by MLA Loyola, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, during Oral Question Period on June 27, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to a Member by Name

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I believe was noted by the hon. Government House Leader, I did in fact use the Premier's surname in my question earlier today. I would like to take the opportunity to apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I consider that point of order concluded, and I appreciate your expeditious work there. Very quickly, very fine.

We are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Alberta Property Rights Advocate

27. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:  
Be it resolved that:
  1. The 2017 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review;
  2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the motion is fairly self-explanatory.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18. Are there any members wishing to add to the debate?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Waive.

[Government Motion 27 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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



## Bill 8 Education Amendment Act, 2019

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. Madam Chair, if you would be so inclined, can you refresh us about which amendment we are on?

**The Chair:** We're on, actually, the main bill.

**Ms Pancholi:** The main bill. Fantastic. Thank you. That's what I thought. I wanted to be sure. Thank you. I appreciate that, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 8. I've had the opportunity to speak to Bill 8 a few times, but I will continue to because there are some pieces of this act, Madam Chair, that I believe are very important to discuss which to date have not been discussed. As the members of this Assembly who may have heard me rise to speak to this bill before will know, I do have a great deal of familiarity with the Education Act, which is being amended by Bill 8. The context of the Education Act: it was work that I completed while I was a public servant working for Alberta Education and Alberta Justice, and I was pleased to be heavily involved in that work, so I have a very deep understanding of the Education Act, which is being amended by this bill.

One of the things that I would like to raise and I'd like to use my knowledge of this act to do is to talk about those provisions of the act which, frankly, the government has failed to talk about at all. The government talks about the fact that they're seeking to proclaim the Education Act because it will modernize the school system. However, we have failed to hear any discussion from members opposite about what exactly it's going to do that's going to modernize the current education system. Because of my deep familiarity with both the Education Act and the School Act, one of the exercises that I went through was to actually compare the provisions of the Education Act, which the government is seeking to proclaim, with the current provisions of the School Act.

2:50

Again, as the government's intent was to propose legislation that will modernize and transform and bring the education system into the future, it's interesting to note – and I believe all members should be aware of this – that only about 25 out of the 300 provisions of the Education Act are in any way different than what's currently in the School Act. For a piece of legislation that is apparently going to modernize and transform the education system, only about 10 per cent, less than 10 per cent, of its provisions are in any way actually different from the existing School Act. What's interesting to note is that even those provisions that are different are only minorly so. They're minor amendments, sometimes to clarify language. There's change in terminology throughout the Education Act, and it's simply to comply with that.

Again, I want to make sure that everybody in this House is familiar with, when we talk about the Education Act and how transformative it is, that it's really not achieving that end, particularly, as I've mentioned before, because the government has repealed some of the provisions from the Education Act which may have actually had a bit of a transformative effect on the act and on the education system. I won't go through that in detail because I have mentioned it before, and those are the changes to raising the age of access and the age of mandatory or compulsory education. Those have not been changed by this government. Really, what we have here is the government seeking to proclaim a piece of

legislation that is, for all intents and purposes, pretty much the same as the current School Act, so much so, in fact, that some of the amendments that are being proposed in Bill 8 to the Education Act are actually to carry forward changes that the NDP government made to the School Act.

When drafting Bill 8, the members across the aisle clearly thought that there was some value in a lot of the work that had been done by the NDP to update the School Act. In particular, the sections that the government has chosen to adopt from the NDP's agenda to change the School Act include those provisions around school fees, include the provisions around superintendent compensation, the provisions around First Nations education services agreements, otherwise known as tuition agreements, that are entered into between school boards and First Nations for the education of students who live on-reserve in provincial school board schools. The government has chosen to adopt the NDP's amendments with respect to certification requirements for superintendents and principals. They've chosen as well to adopt the NDP's changes to the School Act around the separate school establishment process.

Clearly, there is a lot that the government believes that the NDP did that was actually very useful because they've actually transported some of those provisions right into the Education Act. Of course, the significant outlier in terms of the provisions where the government has taken from the NDP and made changes to the Education Act, the one giant, big, glaring outlier is the provisions around gay-straight alliances. That is the one area where apparently the government does not believe that the changes that were made – and we know that, that the government does not believe that the Bill 24 changes that were made to the School Act were worth transferring over.

Now, my colleagues have spoken at great length as to why the NDP made those changes to Bill 24, why they made those changes to the gay-straight alliance process. It seems to be falling on deaf ears because we keep getting talking points about how the Education Act provisions allow a process for gay-straight alliance establishment, never mind the fact that the deficits in that process which were acknowledged and recognized by the NDP government have been completely ignored by this government. I actually am not going to speak too much longer about that because I believe I'll have plenty of opportunities to do that further and my colleagues have done a great job on that already.

I'm going to also speak to some of the other changes in the Education Act, the fewer than 25 sections out of the 300 sections that are being amended, and talk about what they are because I don't think they've gotten any light of day in this Assembly. They will be changes to the system. I think all the members across the way who may not already be familiar with it and also any school boards, parents, teachers, students, private schools, charter schools, home educators should also know what those changes are.

One of the changes, actually, that the Education Act makes is around charter schools. It's actually an amendment that I think is a good one. What it does is that it goes back to the heart of what charter schools were intended to be when they were brought into our provincial system. As many people will know, if you look into the history of the charter schools in this province, they were established in order to provide centres of research and innovation for teaching in Alberta. The idea was that if there was a group of people, an organization, parents who had a potentially innovative and research-based way to offer education in a way that's different than a school board is already offering it, they could establish a charter school.

The idea was that it was almost like a pilot project. It was supposed to be an idea, an opportunity for a new way, innovative

ways of teaching to be done, and if it was research based and it was successful, then the charter schools could then share those learnings with school boards, and school boards could adopt it. It was meant to be an innovative way to approach education. For that reason, charter schools were intended to be temporary. They were not supposed to be permanent because the idea was that if what they were doing, their programming, was actually innovative and research based, it would be adopted by the school boards. That was the idea. They were temporary pilot projects, really, to help infuse some fresh thought into our school system.

Over time that's not exactly how charter schools grew to evolve. It tended to be that charter schools – and there are plenty of fantastic charter schools in this province – sometimes grew to be a very devoted and invested group of people who were not willing to then become folded under a school board even after years of operating successfully. They felt they had been operating quite well for some time, and they wanted to continue to do that. The problem was that the concept behind a charter school just simply was not being realized in the sense that the learnings in research were not being infused into the broader school system.

One of the amendments that the Education Act would do is actually require that charter schools as part of their approval process and continuing approval process would have to demonstrate collaboration or engagement with a postsecondary institution or school division. I actually think this is a good change. I actually think this is a change that goes back to the heart of what a charter school is meant to be. In this case, charter schools now have to work collaboratively with postsecondary – so there's the research; there are the innovative ways of learning – and work collaboratively with school divisions. That's really great as well because the idea, again, is that if there are great learnings to be had from the operation of the charter school, why would we not want to infuse that throughout the school system? I think this is actually a great change.

Now, another change that the Education Act makes around charter schools is that it will lift the cap on charter schools. Currently the cap is at 15 charter schools although, to my understanding, for quite some time there have actually only been 13 or 14 charter schools. There actually hasn't been a rush for more to be approved. So I'm not sure what effect lifting the cap will do because, as I've mentioned, there doesn't seem to have been a great desire for there to be more charter schools, but so be it. That's one of the changes that will come in under the Education Act if proclaimed.

Another change that the Education Act will bring in is that it will require school boards to establish a policy respecting the resolution of disputes or concerns at the school level between parents and school staff. Now, what's interesting about this amendment is really that it's, quite frankly, unnecessary. As I worked quite heavily with many school boards in this province over the last five years and prior to that with Alberta Education, I can say with quite a bit of certainty that almost every school has a school dispute resolution process at the school level. In fact, that is the heart of what principals often do. They are navigating issues between their teachers, between parents, between students.

In fact, collaborative ways to resolve disputes are something that is pretty much a key part of a job description of any school administrator. Certainly, standardization of a school dispute resolution process is not a problem although I think most school boards already have that. But, then again, it seems to be that there is certainly some desire from members on the other side to sometimes mandate policies and things that already exist despite their commitment to red tape reduction. But so be it. So the Education Act will require that all schools have a dispute resolution process at the school level.

One of the other things, actually, that the Education Act will do, if proclaimed, is that it will provide certain rights to parents and children who are receiving early childhood services, or ECS services. ECS is actually that programming that's provided to children before they enter grade 1. It's commonly thought of as kindergarten although there's often some programming that can be provided to children with identified special needs at an earlier age, also known as PUF funding, or program unit funding, so certain children even under the age of kindergarten will receive some support for ECS services.

Now, one of the things that the Education Act will do – and, in fact, I will again put this one in the category of a change that I actually think is a good change. It will make sure that operators of ECS programs – and for those who are not familiar with that, ECS programs are offered quite regularly by almost all school boards. I'm sure you all have kids who've gone to kindergarten at your local school, but it's also provided by private schools or private operators of ECS services.

3:00

One of the changes that the Education Act will make, if proclaimed, is that it will require those operators of ECS programs to keep student records for even the children that are enrolled in ECS programs. This is important because the student record actually contains some pretty important information about the student, particularly when it comes to things such as assessments, that can provide some continuity of programming once they get into the grade 1 system and become what's known as "students" under the School Act, which are all children enrolled in programming above grade 1. That's one of the changes that the Education Act, once proclaimed, will do. It will require operators of ECS programming to keep those records for even those children in ECS programming. That, again, I'll put in the category of things that I think are a good change.

Another change that it will do is that it will allow parents of children receiving ECS programming to have a right to appeal to the school board and potentially to the minister if they have disagreements around the programming that their child is receiving in ECS programming. This is a right that is mandated for all students in grade 1 to grade 12, and now that right will be extended to parents of children in ECS programming, again a change that I think was a good thing.

Now, one of the things that is a little bit more controversial about the changes that will come into effect if the Education Act is proclaimed is that it actually will allow for separate school electors – that's the very formal School Act, Education Act way to refer to what we typically think of as Catholic in our public and Catholic systems. It is typically the Catholic supporters. Usually the way it works is that you are eligible to vote for a trustee, depending on which system you claim to be a resident of. Are you a resident of the public system, or are you a resident of the separate school system? Typically you are only allowed to vote in the election for whichever school system you are an elector for. So if you're a public school resident, you vote for the public school trustee. If you are a Catholic school elector – and I'm using "Catholic" generally; really, it should be "separate" – you vote for the Catholic trustees. That's the way the system works.

Now, the Education Act will propose a change to that, and the change will be that Catholic voters will be able to vote in either the public or the separate school election process. That may seem a bit controversial to some people because the right is not reversed. Public school electors are not allowed to vote in a Catholic election. They can only vote in the public. But under the Education Act a Catholic voter may choose – they cannot vote in both – which one

they want to vote in. So even though they are a declared Catholic and are a resident of the Catholic system, they may choose to vote, instead, in the public system.

Now, a little bit of background on that is that, actually, that came about as a result of a human rights complaint that was filed by a former trustee, and his name was Roy Brassard. This was probably in the early 2000s, maybe 2006, 2007, I believe. I'd have to check my dates on that. Roy Brassard was actually a public school trustee in an area where there was no separate school board. There was no Catholic school board. He had been sitting as a public school trustee for a long time, and everybody knew that Roy Brassard was a Catholic. He talked regularly. He spoke about his Catholic roots and his beliefs and his traditions, but he was a public school trustee because there was actually no Catholic system in that area at the time.

Then through the process of separate school establishment, which is set out in the School Act – it's quite a detailed process – a separate school board actually established in the area that covered the jurisdiction of which Roy Brassard was a public school trustee. By virtue of the way the separate school establishment process works, because he was a Catholic in an area that now had a Catholic separate school board, the law, the traditions that fell in both the School Act and hearkening back to the Constitution and the Alberta Act of 1905 stated that if you are a resident of the separate school board and a separate school jurisdiction exists in your area, you are therefore a resident of the Catholic system and ineligible to be a trustee in the public system.

Despite the fact that he'd been a trustee for quite some time in the public system, he suddenly, because a separate school board had established in his area, was no longer eligible to sit on the public school board anymore, and he very much wanted to sit on the public school board. So he launched a human rights complaint and argued that by virtue of being a Catholic, he was being discriminated against because he was no longer eligible to be a public school trustee.

Now, that human rights complaint was never actually resolved because, unfortunately, Mr. Brassard passed away before it was decided by the human rights tribunal, so it was withdrawn. However, that certainly raised a question for the education system about what to do when a Catholic system formed in an area that previously had no Catholic system and how that affected the eligibility of those individuals who identified as Catholic in that area.

That's just a bit of a history lesson behind why this provision is a part of the Education Act. I'm certain that the Education minister probably has this background and could do this as well, but we haven't heard about any of these provisions from the Education minister yet. So that's why I'm raising them in the House today.

I certainly think that this idea of a Catholic resident or elector being able to vote for a public trustee is something that's worthy of discussion. It's certainly controversial. It's certainly not required. As I mentioned, the human rights complaint was never actually heard or resolved, so there's no statement of law as to whether or not that's appropriate. I recall that during my time with Alberta Education there were a significant number of Catholic trustees who were very concerned about this idea that a Catholic elector being able to choose who they wanted to vote for may undermine the separate school system and the Catholic system. They felt that, you know, there were certain constitutional provisions that were very clear, that if you are a Catholic resident, you vote for the Catholic system. That's who you're eligible to vote for. If Catholic voters were allowed to choose, that may undermine support for their Catholic system.

I recall that being a concern that was raised by trustees during consultation, but again, to highlight, that consultation took place over 10 years ago. At least 50 per cent of the sitting public and separate school trustees right now were not part of those discussions. They were not a part of those consultations. I'm certain that there are certain public board trustees who might have thoughts about whether or not this is appropriate. I know that there were historically some separate school trustees who had significant concerns about this provision.

Again, we're talking about proclaiming an act that is now over seven years old, where consultation took place over 10 years ago. I'm not confident, certainly, based on the conversations and what we're hearing from the Minister of Education and from the members on the other side – although not many other members have spoken to this, and I don't know that any discussion has been had with school board trustees about this or if they're aware of the potential erosion of their separate school rights as trustees. I would like to hear that feedback, and I think government should give some thought to that before implementing a change that could potentially impact our separate school system.

One of the other things that the Education Act would do, if it is proclaimed, is that it would actually change the process by which school boards can establish their wards within their jurisdiction. Again, many school boards in the province have a ward structure, and that's, of course, particularly in the rural areas, where a school board jurisdiction can be quite vast.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and continue to take part in the debate on Bill 8, the amendments this government is choosing to make to the Education Act before they bring it forward for proclamation and indeed, in particular, some of the elements that they are choosing not to include from the School Act.

We've had some fairly robust discussion on this. Indeed, my colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud has been very good in outlining how many of the changes that we brought forward in the School Act this government has chosen to include in these amendments, recognizing that by bringing in the Education Act, they are effectively replacing the School Act, which we had made a number of amendments to. It's wonderful to see that the government supports so many of those amendments and is moving them over into the Education Act. But there are some very key and specific provisions which this government is choosing not to move over. That being the case, that suggests that for this particular government there are very particular things that they are hoping to accomplish, that that is a very intentional step.

Now, as we've discussed in this House, those elements that they are intentionally choosing not to introduce, recognizing again, Madam Chair, that they are removing the majority of what the Education Act itself was actually intending to do, as my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has very ably and thoroughly pointed out on the record – they are taking the Education Act, largely hollowing it out, refilling it with the majority of what we had in the School Act, and leaving out these very specific elements that have to do with providing protections for LGBTQ youth and their allies who want to form a GSA.

3:10

Despite the protestations from this government, from multiple ministers and members who have stood in this House, it is very

clear what their intention is here. It is to attempt, with as little public notice as possible, to remove particular provisions that were there to protect LGBTQ students and youth and their allies in the formation of a GSA at the behest of particular stakeholders that this Premier finds himself beholden to. Now, it's been clear from comments that have been made by this Premier in the past and indeed not that long ago; from the rather vague statements that have been made by the Minister of Education around the need to provide balance, without being able to provide any definition or clarity as to what that balance is; and indeed by the close relationship which this Premier has with his close friend and ally Mr. John Carpay, who has made such reprehensible remarks such as comparing the pride flag to the Nazi swastika, where this springs from.

Now, the thing is, Madam Chair, that I've spoken a little bit about my own history. I grew up in a conservative Christian environment. I understand that world view well. I know people that are still part of that. I have members of my family that are still part of that. I have seen the kinds of, to quote this Premier, fear and smear which is regularly spread amongst some members of some of those communities, certainly not all but some, regarding the LGBTQ community. I've talked about it at some length in this House already, the types of conspiracy theories that lie behind the kinds of hateful remarks made by Mr. Carpay and, I would hope, are not hailed by members of this House. Certainly, we have heard from some members who are sitting here today remarks that very much strayed in that direction.

But to set that aside, Madam Chair, I do want to acknowledge that there are people in the faith community who understand the importance of truly standing up for LGBTQ youth, of not just making a vague, broad statement and then not following through with action, of actually standing up for these youth and ensuring they have protection, not simply mouthing the words that you feel need to be said in order to maintain your political position.

I have here today a letter that I received from the Reverend Rachel Frey. She says:

Dear Mr. Shepherd,

I am writing to you – as both a parent and as a person of faith – to express my deep concern for the proposed changes to the Education Act with Bill 8. While I find several aspects of The Education Amendment Act troubling, of preeminent importance to me is the threat to students' privacy regarding involvement with Gay-Straight or Queer-Straight Alliances. I am an ordained Christian minister, and in my many years of ministry, I have often served with LGBTQ youth. While privacy and maintaining confidentiality are essential ethical components of any ministry, they are especially crucial when working with LGBTQ young persons as outing youth can place them in dangerous – even deadly – situations. The previous School Act provided protections for student privacy, not allowing student involvement in GSAs to be disclosed to their parents/guardians, who may not be supportive of their children's sexual identity. Rolling back these protections potentially exposes our children to violence – both emotional and physical.

Gay-Straight Alliances offer LGBTQ children/youth and their allies safe spaces to be themselves. They provide sanctuary, a word from the Judeo-Christian tradition which means both a "holy place" and a "place of refuge or protection."

I believe that all humans are created in the image of God, and I also hold that sexuality and gender identity are aspects that reveal the divine within each of us. I know that many people who profess my faith or other faiths do not share this view, instead believing that certain sexuality or gender expressions are not in line with their religious traditions. And sadly, their religious beliefs can become a barrier to their expression of love for their children and/or the youth in their faith communities. Thus, homes and faith communities are not always safe places – or sanctuaries

– for LGBTQ children and youth. The risks to these youth can include: emotional isolation leading to depression and suicide, psychological abuse, neglect or shunning, and physical violence, among other dangers.

I have seen the damage done by forced outing. I knew "Cassidy" ...

She makes a note here that all names have been changed to protect the identities of the youth she references.

... who joined our youth group after she was called before her entire congregation to confess her "sin of impure thought" after confiding her attraction to other girls to her youth pastor, a person she thought was safe. And I counselled "Blake," whose parents kicked him out of the house after reading a love note he had written to another boy. His father, a leader in the family's house of worship, also repeatedly punched him to "toughen him up." I could list many others. Their names and unique situations vary, but the common thread throughout their stories is that these young people suffered tremendous trauma and abuse after being outed to their families and faith communities.

As a person of faith, I believe it is a moral imperative both of society and of individuals to keep our children safe. I identify as Christian, which means I strive to follow the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who throughout his ministry, according to Christian teaching, taught his followers to care for and protect children. I believe that the protections established by the School Act safeguard some of our most vulnerable children – those who identify as LGBTQ and their allies. I implore you to call upon the government to keep these protections in place.

Thank you for your continued witness on behalf of your constituents and Alberta,

Rev. Rachel Frey

I deeply appreciate these words from the reverend, and indeed I can tell you, Madam Chair, that I have heard from many faith leaders from a wide background of faiths and beliefs. Indeed, I am looking forward in the coming days to sharing more of their thoughts on this legislation as well, because while government members may tire of listening to our debate on this topic, it is one, I believe, of crucial importance. No matter how much this Premier, his ministers, and members of this government caucus protest that they are simply making common-sense amendments with the introduction of the Education Act, as much as they claim that they intend to maintain the best protections in Canada for LGBTQ youth, it is demonstrable and it is incontrovertible that they are intentionally choosing to lessen protections that are already in place, and not a single member of this government has had the courage to stand in this House and give any reason for doing so.

We've heard any number of talking points. We've heard any number of claims that their choice to do this does not in any way besmirch their support for the LGBTQ community. But they cannot offer any explanation whatsoever as to why they are choosing to remove the word "immediately" in the provisions for when a youth requests that a principal allow them to form a GSA. There is absolutely no reason to remove that word, to not bring that over from the School Act, as they did with so many other provisions. Not a single member of this government has provided any explanation for why they are not doing so. Not a single member of this government has been willing to stand in this House and explain why they feel we should not have a clear and explicit explanation of what the expectation is in terms of a school revealing a student's participation in a GSA.

3:20

Members of this government have stood and said: well, it's there in the privacy act, in those provisions there, in the province of Alberta. A government that is dedicated to removing red tape, that is dedicated to providing clarity and certainty for businesses in this

province and in so many other areas is content to hide behind a rat's nest of legislation when it comes to a question that, as the Reverend Rachel Frey noted, is of such deep significance and can have such an incredible impact on the life of a vulnerable young person. Not a single member of this government has the courage to stand in this House and explain why they feel that clarity should not exist.

Given that these are such simple and basic things, Madam Chair, I can only come to the conclusion that it is the kind of hateful rhetoric that we have heard from members of this governing party that we saw brought forward during their policy convention, in which members sought to pass a policy mandating that schools have the option to out LGBTQ youth if they felt that that was appropriate within their discretion, that parents had the right to know that fact even if the child had decided they do not want to share that information. Given that in this government not a single member has offered any other plausible explanation, we have to assume that they are removing these protections, that they are potentially endangering and making life more difficult for LGBTQ youth who simply want to create a safe space in their school, that they are doing so to satisfy what I hope is a small minority but clearly a powerful one within the ranks of their party and their supporters.

That is a disappointment, Madam Chair. That, I would say, is not the Christian thing to do. That is not the moral thing to do. I would say that that is a cowardly thing to do. Despite the fact that I know we have all been here in this House for some weeks and we have had extensive debate on this bill – we have brought forward many amendments, and I imagine we will likely introduce a few more – and though I recognize that perhaps members of this government grow weary of the debate and perhaps may resent the fact that we continue to bring this up and hold this debate in this place, this is a question of enough moral importance for me that I feel the need to continue to stand in this place and speak.

My constituents have been clear, Madam Chair, that they oppose what this government is choosing to do, that they do not support its choice to remove very clear provisions and protections that our government put in place after seeing concrete examples where school boards, administrators, principals were exploiting loopholes to impose their own beliefs and ideologies as obstacles in the way of LGBTQ youth who simply want to create a safe space in their schools. What this government wants to do is say to those youth, “We’re going to take those protections away; we’re going to take that clarity away; if you run into a problem, just let us know,” and some vague, undefined process will take place.

The Minister of Education and indeed the Government House Leader have stood several times and read out their list: these are the steps that will happen in the creation of a GSA. But, again, within those steps there is no clarity regarding timelines, and there is no clarity about when those things will occur, this from a government which is up in arms about any other process which, in their view, is set up and creates red tape and possible interminable processes. Indeed, I support the concerns that they raised around Bill C-69, which suggested similar sorts of processes and concerns around what kinds of delays could be had in building pipelines and other energy infrastructure. That’s a reasonable thing to note in a piece of legislation. A lack of clarity around timelines indicates there is a lack of appetite, perhaps, in actually getting the job done.

Again, in so many areas this government is happy to provide and indeed seeking to provide clarity – talking about freezing royalty rates for oil companies so that they can be sure to have that clarity going forward and so they can have that certainty – yet for LGBTQ youth, vulnerable young people who have but a mere three years in junior high school, three years in high school, which, as I’m sure many in this House can attest to, at times can feel like an eternity when you’re there, we are taking away certainty for those youth,

saying: “Trust us; we’re the government. We’ll make sure nothing happens; we promise. We won’t tell you how. We won’t give you a clear process. Just trust that every last single adult involved in this system is going to handle it honestly and with your best interests in mind despite the fact that we have seen demonstrably that that has not been the case.” Again, I believe that the vast majority of school administrators, principals, teachers, indeed the vast majority that I’ve spoken with, are going to support these youth, absolutely. But I’ll tell you that every single one of them that I’ve spoken to that support these youth also supports keeping the protections that we put in place with Bill 24.

The reason sometimes that government steps up and legislates and provides clarity and lays things out clearly and specifically is because we recognize that while we have a majority of good actors, we will at times have a minority of bad, so it is incumbent on us to do our responsibility as a government and provide the maximum level of protection for these youth, because when it comes to balance, youth are not the ones in the system that have too much power.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I’m pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 8. I think we’ve probably expounded for a long time on the importance of this, but one thing that may or may not have been touched on and that I certainly haven’t touched on yet has to do with the importance of agency. I think one of the reasons that GSAs are so important and one of the reasons for ensuring that youth are able to come out and share information with whom they want, when they want, and in the order they want is because it’s their story.

At the end of the day, these are things that are very personal to an individual: what gender you identify with, whom you love. These are some of the most fundamental things about us, and I think that it’s incredibly important that we be permitted to share those things and to tell those things in our own way. I think it’s very inappropriate to suggest, whether a teacher or a parent is well intentioned or not, that those people have the right to make a decision on behalf of someone else.

3:30

These youth should have the right to choose what they share about themselves, when they share it, and with whom they share it. I don’t think that that’s an unreasonable ask. I think that a 16-year-old who may be struggling with their sexuality or their gender identity, who’s trying to determine who they are, has a right to have a safe space to have that conversation, to explore it, to consider it, and to tell the people that they want to tell when they are ready to tell them. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the people they’re telling, be they parents or others, are ill intentioned. It just means that that youth ought to have the agency to make that decision for themselves, that they should have the right to share very personal details of their own lives with people when and how they choose. I think that’s one thing that we should not lose in this conversation.

I think another thing here is that at the end of the day, what we are talking about is people’s rights. There’s been a lot of talk back and forth on this issue. There’s been a lot of talk from the government side about why it is that we’re so concerned about this. Well, we’re concerned about it because we’re talking about people’s rights. If there’s one thing that a government, that the state should do for people, it’s to ensure that their rights are protected. I feel like that’s a pretty low bar to expect to clear. What we’re doing when we stand up is that we’re standing up to fight for those youth.

They're standing up throughout this province, over and over again, to fight for themselves, which I also think is at the same time both incredibly heartening, to see that youth are willing to fight in that way for themselves and for each other, and also incredibly sad, that in this day and age they have to do that, that in this day and age they would be required to stand up to the government and ask the government to respect their rights.

The government has said over and over again that their intention here is to proclaim the Education Act. Now, again, my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has outlined in, I think, incredible detail the fact that most of the provisions that they're talking about in the Education Act have been removed. None of the purposes of the Education Act are achieved by this move. In fact, the only thing that is achieved by this move is these changes to GSAs and QSAs.

Really, at the end of the day, this is a conversation about intention, and it's actually quite interesting because one of the things, for those who have not worked in human rights law before, that's difficult about this is that it's often difficult to prove intent. When someone's human rights are violated and they go before the tribunal or they go before a court for whatever reason or often an arbitrator, because these are often adjudicated in the context of labour disputes where a union is supporting the rights of the individual employee and the employer is on the other side, I think one of the most challenging things there is to prove intention.

But the interesting thing is that at the human rights tribunal, in the court, it's not actually necessary to prove it directly. If you have sufficient evidence to indirectly prove that there could have been no other motive for the action – if an employee comes forward and says, "My job was terminated, and it was terminated because of my sexual orientation," you don't actually have to catch the employer saying to the employee, "I am terminating your employment because you're gay." The fact that there is no other possible, credible explanation or the fact that there are many other factors that point to the termination being because of the individual's sexual orientation is often sufficient to prove that intention, and I think that's exactly what we have here. The government lacks any other credible explanation for these changes. There is no other credible reason. All of the reasons that they have given have been disproven over and over again. There is no other possible reason they could be doing this besides making these changes with respect to GSAs. So I think that is really sufficient to demonstrate their intention.

I think another thing that demonstrates their intention incredibly clearly is their refusal of the amendment "immediately." Earlier, of course, we saw the government refuse to amend this new legislation to permit a GSA to be formed immediately. Well, if your intention wasn't to roll back protections on GSAs, then what does this harm? Denying the inclusion of "immediately": the only effect that that has is that schools can drag their heels and essentially prevent a GSA from ever being formed. Say you have a grade 12 student who comes forward in September or October and says: I would like to form a GSA. Essentially, the school can just wait until that student graduates, and then they never have to do it. Maybe that person was speaking on behalf of other people. Maybe that person was the brave person who was coming forward on behalf of several other people who were seeking that GSA. I think their failure to accept that amendment, their refusal to accept "immediately," speaks volumes to their intention.

The fact that this doesn't do any of the other things that the Education Act was intended to do speaks volumes to their intentions. The fact that they claim to care about modernizing education: after countless people from all different perspectives throughout the system came together and reviewed a curriculum that is more than 30 years old, they have prevented that curriculum

from going in in September for ideological reasons. I mean, it clearly signals that they have no commitment to renewing education or bringing it into the future.

I think that all of those things signal their intention incredibly clearly, and I think, honestly, that Albertans see that. Certainly, the students protesting throughout the province to support their rights and the rights of their peers see that, and I think that Albertans generally see that.

Another thing, again, that is worth noting – and it'll be interesting to see different members speak over time in this House because we've had such vacillation from the government on their messaging. But we seem to have returned – after saying, "oh, they are the strongest protections," and then obviously having gotten advice from nonpartisan department officials that, in fact, they are not the strongest, the language was walked by to say, "among the strongest," which is a thing that's more difficult to prove is inaccurate.

Now we're seeing them return to this language of "strongest" at this moment. I think that that is, well, sad, because it's not the strongest. We've tabled evidence that it's not the strongest. People need only to go and actually look at the laws in other places to see that it clearly isn't the strongest. Honestly, again, if they wanted the strongest, Alberta has the strongest currently. Before this bill passes, what we did under Bill 24 was the strongest protection, so if they wanted to be able to say that we had the strongest, all they had to do was absolutely nothing, which I think again speaks volumes and volumes as to the intention of this bill. That intention, again, is to roll back the rights of LGBTQ students.

I think another thing worth noting on this issue is that it is legislating on social issues, and I think that that should be incredibly troubling. The government stands up every time a question is raised about anything. I mean, honestly, we can ask a question about: "Hey, I've noticed there's a cut in the budget. Why is that cut, and what do you intend to do about it?" They stand up and say: "We have a huge mandate. We got elected, and therefore no one cares." I actually think they're wrong about that. I think the idea that no one cares about, you know, potential election fraud because they got elected is ridiculous, but that is the answer that we're given over and over again. I think it's worth pointing out that when they talk about their mandate, when they talk about the fact that Albertans elected them on their platform, what they leave out is the fact that they made an explicit promise not to legislate on social issues, and in the very first term they have broken that promise. This is nothing more.

As I've said, their actions speak very clearly to intent. Just because they've never said that they intended to roll back protections for LGBTQ students: that is (a) the effect of their actions; (b) they have no other credible explanation for why this bill would even come forward; and finally, their failure to accept "immediately." I think it's clear. I think we would prove in any court of law, on any standard of proof we would be able to demonstrate fairly clearly that what we're talking about here is, in fact, an intention to roll back these protections for youth.

3:40

Despite their promise, they legislated on social issues. I think that that is one of the most troubling things about that, and I think it should be troubling to everyone throughout Alberta because, essentially, the response we're getting from the government is: "We got elected, and we are allowed to do whatever we want. We are no longer accountable to the people who elected us." I think that that is pretty troubling. I think the suggestion that, you know, this was somehow part of their mandate is absurd because (a) the Premier explicitly said to the contrary. He explicitly said: I will not legislate

on social issues. In the very first term, here they are legislating on social issues.

There are a number of places in which this has happened. He explicitly said during the campaign that he would not cut overtime for workers, yet that's exactly what he did. They certainly didn't explicitly say they were going to violate the rights of unionized employees and break contracts, yet that's exactly what they did. I imagine that the reason we're here doing this at this time, in July, is because they hope that while they break their promises that were made during the campaign, maybe people are on vacation and they won't notice. I think that's incredibly sad.

I think another thing worth noting about this is that it is an inherently political conversation. People are sometimes uncomfortable talking about political issues. We often hear from the members opposite: well, you're turning it into a political issue. We're not turning it into a political issue when the government takes away rights from individuals out there in society. That's inherently a political issue. Nobody needs to turn it into a political issue. You know, if the government says, "Oh, we're going to take away rights from this group, and we're going to take away rights from this group, and we're going to take away rights from this group, and that's all okay because we're the majority," well, the whole point behind rights, the whole idea of rights is to protect minorities from the majority. What we have is a government who's essentially saying: we are the majority, and therefore we don't have to pay attention to the rights of minority groups.

That's incredibly troubling, and it is, in and of itself, inherently not just a political act, but the response to it . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** Arrogant.

**Ms Ganley:** It is. It's incredibly arrogant. That is an appropriate way to put it, to suggest that.

I actually think that it's not in keeping with the majority of Albertans. Majority government or no, I actually think that the majority of Albertans are in favour of LGBTQ rights. I think that the majority of Albertans are in favour of the protection of LGBTQ youth. I don't think that there's really an open question about that. I think that's actually, probably, the reason that this Premier, who has some pretty troubling stances on minority rights in his past, had explicitly promised not to legislate on social issues, because he knew that the majority of Albertans support rights for LGBTQ people throughout this province.

I think that coming here and doing this, again, in the very first legislative session, at the very first available opportunity, should really cause people a lot of pause. I mean, there's speculation – there's significant speculation – as to what's coming. You know, we can see budget cuts coming in the future, and that will certainly roll back services and entitlements and potentially even rights with respect to special-needs children in schools, which is itself troubling.

But this isn't even an indirect action. This isn't even: well, we've withdrawn funding to save money, so indirectly that has the impact of violating your rights. This is a direct action. This is a purposeful and intentional move to take away rights from a group of people who the government thinks is weaker in society and therefore won't be able to stand up for themselves. I don't think the majority of Albertans would support it. I think that the majority of Albertans would be very, very troubled by it, and I think that that's the reason we're seeing these sort of weird, weak justifications coming forward.

We haven't actually even heard, that I'm aware of, an attempted justification for the refusal of the term "immediately." I don't think we've heard anyone even try to explain why that is. Certainly, we've heard over and over people laying out the process for how a

GSA is formed, but what's lacking in said process is a timeline, right? I mean, the thing is that people can – these are, interestingly, exactly some of the complaints that we heard about, some of the processes that we reviewed while were in government, the fact that people would come forward and they'd have a complaint, and it would sort of trail along indefinitely, right? That's the thing. People want certainty.

You know, if you're a 15-year-old gay student, you're not interested in having your rights recognized when you're 25. You're interested in having your rights recognized now. To say that you'll have to wait until you're 25 to have your rights recognized, I think, is pretty troubling. I think many in the community, in the LGBTQ2S-plus community, have fought long and hard for those rights so that those who came after them would have it different than they had it. They fought long and hard for those rights to ensure that subsequent generations didn't go through what they went through, and this, particularly in combination with the defunding of the working group on conversion therapy, is really troubling. I think we should be moving forward and not backward.

I think it's sad to see. I think it's sad to see this concept that we're going to roll back the rights of minority groups and for no reason that I can see. That's the other thing that's incredibly troubling about this. It's not like it's intended to have beneficial impacts somewhere else. This is the only thing it does. The only thing it does is damage the rights of those students.

Certainly, there were those, I believe, about 28 schools that had noncompliant policies, and let me tell you in no uncertain terms that Bill 10, the old legislation, didn't give the government the tools to deal with those noncompliant policies. I am extremely well aware of this because it was something that we had to look over. When they came forward with their noncompliant policies, obviously, lawyers from the government were involved in looking at: how can we make these schools come up with more compliant policies? And the answer was: we can't. That was incredibly troubling.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, is there anyone else that would like to speak to Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to continue our debate regarding Bill 8. Like many of my colleagues have done, I'm going to also focus on sort of the most concerning part of the legislation, which is the weakening of previous legislation, where granting permission to create a GSA has no kind of structure in terms of timelines. It just is sort of a broad, vague willingness to create them by the principal, but there is no specific timeline. Of course, you know, the current legislation does have that, and this is a concerning piece about this Bill 8 that is hurting kids now. We want to make sure that they do have access to GSAs.

3:50

Of course, inserting, as we've talked about before, immediately granting permission by the principal to create a GSA and designating a staff liaison is really what we're asking the UCP government to look at. In that way, then students will have access to these very important GSAs, that really support them through a difficult time when they're grappling with their own sexuality and wanting some support in that. You know, as my colleagues have, I just want to say that students don't need a GSA whenever; they need it now. We know that students grappling with their sexuality often feel isolated. They're not accepted, they feel they don't belong, and indeed they're afraid to actually be open about who they are. There's good reason for this, Madam Chair. It may not be safe for them to reveal their true selves.

We know, of course, that it is very important for each of us to have a sense of belonging. As human beings we all want to belong. We all want to be part of our family. We want to be part of our community, our province, and indeed our country. We saw an amazing display of that just earlier this week, of course, on Canada Day, where people do extraordinary things so that they can belong and be part of our great nation. We wear red and white and sometimes stick flags in our hair and wear caps and all sorts of things to belong. But when you're different and you feel like everyone around you is heterosexual and nobody is talking about different sexual orientations, it can be extremely isolating and also shaming.

They feel ashamed. They're afraid to speak that out loud. Depending on their family system, the values, the type of faith, religion, maybe country of origin, if they're newcomers or refugees to the country, there could be many layers to them feeling like they don't belong and also extremely fearful of sharing the truth that is fundamental to them. Of course, GSAs create that safety. It is for both the LGBTQ community and straight kids also, so people are joined together and can have sort of a safe haven, where perhaps there isn't that safe haven at their home.

You know, I spoke previously in this House regarding my middle son, who had been bullied in elementary school. He blamed himself, and instead of reaching out to his teachers or to his dad or to me, he kept it all inside. It was just mostly about his personality, being a young guy that's kind of timid. There were just some more aggressive, boisterous boys, and he just became sort of the target of attack. That was really difficult for him, but he was ashamed. He blamed himself for that, so he didn't reach out to his mom, who would have accepted him and supported him. Maybe there could have been something that we did within the school system to make sure that that was stopped not only for him but perhaps for other kids, but he just kept quiet. He isolated himself, and I never knew. I never knew.

I know that my son for years just always was not belonging. He always was kind of the kid on the edge. It wasn't really until he was in junior high that he told me one day about this, and then, of course, I was able to support him, help him, and listen to his concerns. He was loved and accepted for who he was. You know, this is just a minor – a minor – example to what someone who's struggling with their sexual orientation is going through. As a mom I certainly have some empathy for that because I can see how much my own son, who wasn't really grappling with such a large issue as that, was still sort of part of the dominant culture in terms of his sexuality and how much it hurt him. It really delayed some of his progress, I feel, for those years.

The sad thing about children who are grappling with their sexual orientation is that they may not be accepted by their family. They may not be understood or loved, and the support just is not available to them. That's why this is so important, because a school can really act as a safe haven for these kids. Even though at home it's all secret and they mustn't share any of it because the consequences could be grave, in the school system they have maybe some reprieve for a few hours of the day where they're accepted and have a sense of belonging.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I've been a social worker for about 30 years, and certainly I worked with a lot of vulnerable children. Some of my colleagues have already shared some stats, but I just want to reiterate that we know that homeless youth, about 50 per cent of them, identify as being part of the LGBTQ community. So they're not on the streets by happenstance, the majority. They're out there because they

indeed maybe have revealed or someone, a parent, has suspected, and they've been kicked out. Now they have no place to go. Tragically, their parents just don't have the ability for whatever reason to be able to accept them as they are.

Another thing I know about being a social worker is that all parents do not have the best interests of their children at heart. It's a sad fact, but I'm not naive. I know that some parents aren't able really to care for their kids. It's not necessarily because parents are malicious, but a lot of times it's because parents aren't well themselves. They have their own significant barriers. They probably weren't parented very well or supported. There are so many things that get in the way. If a parent is not very healthy, can't really have that compassion or empathy, put themselves over to have understanding of their child because they're so lost in their own angst and stress – you know, there are so many barriers that parents may face.

I mean, addiction is one clear one, whether it's drugs or alcohol. If you're an addicted person, then you're consumed by that need to have your next fix or your next drink or whatever it is. So this kid, who's just causing you problems, is just in your way, and you're not able to give them compassion or understanding. For many parents we know that that's a key issue. We know that Alberta has some of the highest rates of addiction in all of Canada.

We also know that parents have mental health issues, that people have different concerns with depression or anxiety. People can be bipolar. People can have a myriad of issues that prevent them, again, from supporting their children when they're in vulnerable situations. Certainly, sometimes, you know, those things go together, addiction and mental health, because people are experiencing some great anxiety, perhaps. "Well, guess what? I'm going to have a drink because that makes me feel better, and – guess what? – that makes me even less accessible to that vulnerable young girl or young boy": this prevents parents from being available to them, to their children.

Also, family violence. Sadly, again, Alberta has some of the highest rates of family violence in the country. Kids, you know, are just in the way. I mean, there's so much chaos in that family system. How can people be present for one another? The adults aren't present for each other. There's tremendous stress. Again, that's another huge barrier that children experience. Maybe that family is experiencing poverty, so they're not able to really make ends meet. They're challenged significantly by just getting enough food on the table, keeping a roof over their heads. Maybe that single mom might be working three jobs at minimum wage, and she's just not available. She's not around. She's exhausted when she is. All she does is work and sleep, so she can't be present for that child.

Certainly, there just is general stress for a myriad of reasons. That can also get in the way. Divorce, you know, a family system that breaks up: then there's obviously much less attention for children. It can cause tremendous stress. I mean, I'm a single mom myself, so I certainly know what it was like for my kids, especially early on and when they were little, just how difficult it was to be able to keep a job, support the kids. You're doing it all as a single person.

All of these things that parents – I guess I just want people to be aware that parents aren't the panacea. We need to have a healthy society so that parents can be supported in that society and then indeed they can support their children, but the school system needs to also support parents and children. So creating GSAs in a timely manner, you know, as we're suggesting – the principal would immediately fulfill this request of a student that comes forward and have a staff liaison be part of that to help those students – is just key. There are so many things in our society, so many challenges that really it's incumbent on us to make sure that, you know, vulnerable students do have the support.



4:00

Just recently in the *Edmonton Journal*, actually on June 27, there was an opinion editorial by Dr. Kristopher Wells. Of course, Dr. Kristopher Wells is a local expert. He's the Canada research chair for the public understanding of sexual and gender minority youth, and he's an associate professor in the Faculty of Health and Community Studies at MacEwan University. I'm just going to repeat some of the things that he shared in his opinion editorial, you know, coming from a deep understanding, an academic, as well as working very closely with his community for many years.

He begins by saying:

Over 20 years of global peer-reviewed research indicates that LGBTQ youth are among the most vulnerable groups of students in schools today, with significantly higher rates of substance use, smoking rates, eating disorders, homelessness, depression, self-harm, and suicidality when compared to their heterosexual peers.

These risk factors are not because of who LGBTQ are or how they identify. They are the compounding product of discrimination, harassment, and prejudice, which all contribute to the development of unsafe school environments that impact the mental and physical health, safety, and well-being of sexual and gender-minority youth.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has noted that schools are a critical site for targeted interventions to help reduce these risks by supporting the development of protective factors.

What are protective factors? They're

inclusive policies ...

and certainly a GSA would qualify,

... and evidence-informed programs designed to help build resilience, increase safety, and improve mental health.

Contemporary research demonstrates that GSAs are one such important intervention that not only reduces risk and helps to build resilience, but can also save over \$183,000 in future student-related health-care costs that result when discrimination and prejudice are allowed to flourish in schools.

Not only is there a human rights argument to supporting children in schools through GSAs; there's an economic argument, Mr. Chair.

Notably, research shows that GSAs are a vital public-health intervention, which not only creates safer school [environments] for lesbian, gay, and bisexual ... youth, but also for heterosexual youth. One very recent study from the University of British Columbia, which included over 39,000 students in Grades 7-12, found that the longer a school had a GSA the greater its protective power was for all students.

When you've had a GSA for one year, there's some improvement. When you've had it for two and three years, there's even more because the environment changes. All types of discrimination are reduced, not only for a gay student but also a heterosexual student.

The length of time and presence of a GSA is positively related to increased feelings of school safety for both LGB students and heterosexual students. This finding lends strong support to not only the importance of GSAs, but also to their long-term, cumulative, and positive impact on school climates and student safety.

Research unmistakably indicates that GSAs make schools safer, so why would any government seek to limit, weaken, or reduce their implementation? Rather than seek to restrict GSAs, the UCP government should strive to increase support and amplify their impact in all schools.

Unfortunately, Bill 8 does exactly the opposite of what the UCP proclaims it will do. If Bill 8 is passed, schools will become less safe, policies more vague and ineffective, and both LGBTQ and heterosexual students will suffer the long-term consequences.

GSAs do not just change lives, they save them. Government legislation should at the very minimum seek to do no harm. Bill 8 will remove important protections and increase risk impacting the health and well-being of all students. It is legislation that is

not supported by research or evidence. Instead, it appears to be crafted out of willful ignorance, ideological dogma, and wanton prejudice.

Bill 8 is the kind of retrogressive legislation one might expect in Alabama, not in a modern and progressive Alberta.

I'm deeply concerned, Mr. Chair, regarding the lack of understanding from the current government of the importance of this time allocation, that principals must provide access to a GSA in a very timely manner – immediately, meaning within a very short time – so that students are protected. You know, even though our government did bring in Bill 24, which had those kinds of timelines, where it was necessary for principals to immediately create GSAs, we still had some resistance from schools, a lot of the private schools. Actually, 28 of them were very difficult to work with, and they were unwilling to bring in the proper policies and programs to support students. Despite giving them additional time to fulfill what they needed to, they still were unwilling to do that.

I guess I hope that the UCP government isn't naive, that just by saying yes, they're to create these with no specifics, that indeed this will be done. It won't be done necessarily, and then those kids will be vulnerable. It's so important that this timeline, that makes it incumbent on principals to fulfill the request for a GSA immediately, be fulfilled.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall progress on Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election 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 Edmonton-Manning rising to speak.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me to speak to Bill 13, the Senate election reform act, I guess we can call it. What I would actually call it is an opportunity to create loopholes and put big money back into politics.

We all know that there were Senators that were elected in the past in Alberta. The legislation at the time lapsed, and part of the reason that the legislation was allowed to lapse under the NDP government is that we recognized that this is something that we actually have absolutely zero jurisdiction in being able to enforce. You know, Albertans have a right to a voice in the Senate, for sure. However, in saying that, just because they're elected in Alberta, that doesn't mean that they have to be appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. We've seen that in the past.

4:10

What I see this bill actually doing is creating partisan politics in an area that's supposed to be nonpartisan, which is what we believe the Senate should be. This legislation actually mandates that anybody who chooses to run in Alberta as a Senator must first be affiliated to a federal political party. Of course, the question then becomes: are we just now creating the Senate into a political force where Conservative and Liberal parties have an opportunity to use partisan politics to push through governance?

Really, the current version of the bill reads that any CFO of a third party who does any type of election advertising can now spend

up to \$100,000 a year, and it also allows for political parties, both provincially and federally, to fund raise on behalf of Senators. It allows the political parties to then spend fundraising dollars during a Senate campaign, which is really interesting because when we were government, our focus was on taking big money out of politics and ensuring that all voices of Albertans were heard.

Now, we've heard from the government side that, you know, part of the reason why they want Senators to be elected in Alberta is that they want Albertans to have a voice in the Senate, and they want that voice to be an elected voice because then there's accountability. But the reality of it is that what this really is doing is allowing political parties to fund raise. It's allowing political parties to, then, use their platform, whether it be federally or provincially, to argue what they believe is the philosophy, policies from their political parties.

This bill also allows for an election for Senators to occur really at any time. It can be during a federal election. It can be during a provincial election. It can be in a municipal election, and it can also just be in a referendum. What that also does, then, is that during municipal elections, you now have political parties, both federal and provincial, campaigning. Our municipal system within Alberta does not have the ability or the structure in it to have affiliations with political parties. Now we're creating another ability for political parties to start influencing municipal elections using their message box, using their policies, under the guise of electing Senators.

It also allows a governing party who decides that they want to have an opportunity to campaign between election cycles to then call a referendum and say: well, now we're going to call a referendum because we want to be able to have a Senator elected. Then it allows for another campaign period of time that would not normally be seen in Alberta.

The other piece that this legislation, that is supposed to just be about supporting individuals to run for the Senate, does is it brings provincial politics back into what is a federal jurisdiction. You know, it raises some questions. I mean, the first question would be: why does a political party need to get involved in the federal jurisdiction and the federal election of a Senator? Why would this legislation even speak about provincial parties when it actually has zero jurisdiction within the federal context?

The other question that I would have as well is that when you're looking at the changes around having Senators elected during municipal campaigns and/or potential referendums, when we look at our First Nations communities, they actually don't have polling stations in First Nations communities typically during municipal elections, nor do they have them typically during referendums unless there is a request by the community to have those polling stations put in First Nations communities. This bill is actually excluding a population within Alberta who has a right to a voice in the Senate given that it's federal jurisdiction, given that those are the bodies that have the most influence over our First Nations communities and our relationship with the Crown, yet we don't see that really being discussed in this bill.

Now, I think it's important that we look at exactly how much money we're actually talking about because this isn't small amounts of money. The money that this bill is actually allowing to come back into provincial politics, federal politics is quite substantial. We see that for an individual Senator, they can raise over \$100,000 just for their nomination.

Right now we have potentially up to three vacancies that are going to be existing in the Senate over the next few years as people retire, so let's just use the number of three people running for nomination because, again, through this legislation you now have to be registered and you have to be endorsed by a political party.

Let's say that the political parties, the federal Conservatives, the Liberals say, "Well, we're only going to run three in the province," just because that would, you know, make sense. Heaven forbid that this legislation be used to fund raise any additional on top of three candidates. It would be \$100,000 for their nomination, and then it would also be \$500,000 that they would be able to fund raise and then spend on their campaign, because I guess the argument is that it is a provincial campaign.

The interesting thing about this legislation as well is that even though we're talking about provincial representation and we're talking about Albertans having a right to representation in the Senate, there's no regional requirement in this legislation, so every single Senator that could be elected could maybe be from Calgary.

**Member Ceci:** Yahoo.

**Ms Sweet:** Yahoo.

Or maybe they could be just from southern Alberta. There's no requirement in this legislation to say that those who are running to be in the Senate to represent Albertans equally and fairly should have to represent northern Alberta, central Alberta, and southern Alberta. It just is a global "as long as you're an Albertan," which I think is interesting given the fact that there are different interests depending on where you are in Alberta. There may be different philosophies about where you are in Alberta, and there's definitely a different need for where you are in Alberta.

There are definitely lots of questions, and I know that we will probably have quite a bit to say about this, specifically around the fundraising component, as we move forward.

But before that, as we reviewed the legislation, we did note that the government would like some help from the opposition on, you know, some of their ideas around this piece of legislation, so I have an amendment, which I feel is a friendly amendment.

Mr. Chair, I'll just wait until you have a copy.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. If you would wish to continue speaking to this amendment, we will be referring to it as A1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, I mean, the opposition is always here to help. We like to help the government out when we think there's an opportunity for us to do that. I feel that this is a friendly amendment to Bill 13. I think it's actually a very helpful amendment to Bill 13. I'll read it into the record. The Member for Edmonton-Manning to move that Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended in section 51(22) by striking out the proposed section 44.9499(1) and substituting the following:

44.9499(1) The chief financial officer of a third party whose election advertising expenses are \$20,000 or more shall file an audited financial statement with the Chief Electoral Officer within 6 months after polling day.

4:20

Now, the reason for this amendment, Mr. Chair, is the fact that I believe there was just maybe a word or a spelling mistake or something that happened in this piece of the legislation that, you know, because we're here to help, we caught for the government and decided that to make their legislation just that much better and effective and to maybe clarify the piece that the hon. minister probably intended this piece of legislation to actually say, we decided to change it for you.

The current version of the bill reads that a CFO "of a third party whose election advertising expenses are \$100,000 or more shall file an audited financial statement with the Chief Electoral Officer within 6 months after polling day." The bill also limits third-party

expenses during a Senate election race to \$30,000; therefore, this doesn't make any sense. During a regular provincial general election third parties may incur expenses up to \$150,000 and the \$100,000 threshold for an audited financial statement applies. So \$100,000 is two-thirds of the allowable expenses; therefore, the \$20,000 threshold is two-thirds of the allowable expenses for senatorial election races and applies the same standard to third parties.

Again, I think this is a common-sense amendment to ensure clarity for both the chief financial officers as well as Elections Alberta and the Election Commissioner. The current limit of \$100,000 in 44.9499(1) is inconsistent with section 44.942(1), which reads:

A registered third party shall not incur advertising expenses in an amount of more than \$30,000 in the aggregate, as adjusted in accordance with section 41.5, in relation to a senatorial selection advertising period.

So it is clear that if the limit on expenses is \$30,000, a third party will never reach the limit of \$100,000.

I'm assuming that this was just an oversight in the legislation, and I urge that all members of the House support this reasonable amendment to ensure that the legislation, if it's passed, is clear with the intent and the direction. To fail to do so will leave a loophole in this bill that could have unintended consequences. Third parties may never have to provide an audited financial statement to the Chief Electoral Officer. This removes accountability and transparency from this process. We work hard to ensure that the elections in the province are accountable to their voters and, of course, not to their donors, and this could potentially undermine democracy in the province for these types of elections.

While I don't agree that this bill is necessary or beneficial to Albertans as a whole, I do believe that in this House when legislation is passed, it is our duty to ensure that it is good, complete, and accurate. Therefore, I urge all members on both sides of the House to please put aside your partisanship, and I urge them to simply do the opposite of what we usually do, and for the sake of this province and Albertans support this common-sense amendment.

Thank you.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Chair, I heard the words "good" and "better." I'll accept those parts of the submissions of my friend. Everybody here is probably a little bit tired after a very long session that we've had here for – are we on six or seven weeks now? Sometimes I lose count as to where we're at. But I just want to make sure for all of our guys that are here that sometimes don't necessarily tune in all of the time for all the different amendments that are proposed, I am in favour of this friendly amendment being proposed by the member. It does improve the legislation.

Thank you so much for giving me an advance notice last night so that I could run it to ground internally. I really do appreciate that. I do think it makes this legislation better. Again, we might disagree on what the intent of this legislation is or what the goal of it is, but thank you very much for the heads-up and this reasonable amendment. I would encourage my colleagues here to vote in favour of this amendment.

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

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back to Bill 13. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to rise to speak at Committee of the Whole to Bill 13, the Alberta Senate

Election Act. I'm going to keep my comments focused primarily on the elections financing related pieces because I see in this bill several concerning trends of the government appearing to bring big money back into politics. Our government worked very hard to put in some reasonable things that Alberta had been lacking for a very long time. Looking at Bill 13, I have a number of concerns going forward.

Just as a quick recap, during our term in government we took significant action to minimize the impact of big money on politics, specifically provincial politics, obviously: banning corporate and union donations, forming the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, inviting all parties to take a look at the Election Act, elections financing, and then bringing forward Bill 35, that for this province did some very major things. It brought down contribution limits, which previously had been set incredibly high: \$15,000 contribution limits provincially and a doubling of those contribution limits during an election year, moving that to a more reasonable bar of \$4,000 which, still, when you look across jurisdictions, is actually on the relatively high side, but it is much more reasonable than \$15,000.

We introduced spending limits for everything from nomination contestants to the elections themselves, what candidates can spend. We all ran our campaigns under these new spending limits: \$50,000 for local campaigns, \$2 million for parties. Then Bill 16 came later, making sure that parties were not colluding and circumventing the spending limits.

Finally, under Bill 35 we also introduced very strong third-party advertising rules. This was something that a lot of Albertans were concerned about, dark money getting into politics. So during an election period third-party advertisers are limited to spending \$150,000 province-wide and no more than \$3,000 in a specific constituency against a specific candidate. We really tried to walk an important line, which was to try to limit big money's influence and those third-party advertising campaigns. Honestly, a lot of the general public and Albertans see those and wonder why that's allowed and how this can happen, depending on who's advertising for whom.

We also needed to balance the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of expression and political expression not only for individuals but courts have ruled that corporate interests, union interests have that right to freedom of expression. Jurisdictions that have tried to overly restrict third-party advertising have had those laws struck down by the courts at one level or another, so we paid very close attention to what was happening in other jurisdictions as we were bringing in third-party advertising laws and putting those limits on spending.

Now, we also, both through the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and then through the legislation that we introduced, put limits around government advertising. We tried to, again, strike a good balance because in this province we had seen some less than ethical behaviour, I would suggest; for example, schools being announced in ridings during which an active by-election was happening. That would be an example of inappropriate government advertising, potentially designed to influence the outcome of a by-election. There was even a private member's bill introduced by a Wildrose member to address this, and it was incorporated and eventually became part of our government bills, changing elections financing and making those amendments.

All of this, I think, is really important work that we started. What Bill 13 appears to me to do is weaken some of those things. First off, regarding government advertising, Bill 13 specifically allows government advertising during a senatorial election, which – okay – maybe is not related to the government and provincial politics except Bill 13 also specifically includes provincial politics and

provincial parties supporting senatorial candidates and spending money on their behalf.

4:30

I would submit that if you have something that the NDP or the UCP are spending money to support during an election period, that ban on government advertising should be maintained at the same time. The opportunities and the optics for there to be appearances of inappropriate influence, undue influence when a provincial party – let's say that the UCP is endorsing a particular senatorial candidate, yet now the government is allowed to advertise at the same time. These are some of the things that I think are very concerning within Bill 13.

I also question why the contribution limits to senatorial candidates are set at the \$4,000 mark. I note that this matches what we currently have provincially, but we're talking about Senators elected into a federal context, which is the hope of this bill, so that a Senator winning the election would then get selected by the Prime Minister to become a Senator. Why not use the \$1,600 federal contribution limit? Why are we using the \$4,000 provincial contribution limit? I think that that's a concern as well.

I'm also interested in finding out more about why the spending limits for these candidates were set at the rate that they are: \$500,000 spending limits as well as the provincial party being able to spend an extra \$100,000 in support of that candidate. It strikes me as being very high. Making sure that we have reasonable spending limits is an important part of maintaining our democratic system, and that was work that our government worked very hard to do.

I have a number of questions in that regard, but my strongest concern is around that potential for government advertising, where the government has chosen, through Bill 13, to introduce provincial political parties and their money into this senatorial election. My colleague from Edmonton-Manning already questioned: why has that been included in this bill at all? But to do that and then not include a ban on government advertising I think gives the governing party an unfair advantage. It seems to have been very deliberately done because the sections of the Election Act that deal with government advertising were specifically, essentially, referenced in the bill, but then the exception has been left out.

I would be very interested to hear the government's response to some of those questions. I do have a few others, but I think that at this point I will pause and maybe see if anyone in the government caucus is prepared to respond to some of these concerns with the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore rising quickly to speak.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm always amazed at your ability to be able to pick me out of the throng of people jumping up to speak. Thank you so much for those sharp eyes of yours. I appreciate that.

Of course, we're busy talking about Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act. I have to be honest here, Mr. Chair. I'm kind of wondering sort of what's going on. You know, although the Senate, I could certainly agree, is broken and needs to be fixed, we cannot fix it at Alberta's level. That has to be fixed at the federal level. So I can't help but wonder, when bringing in Bill 13, sort of what the Premier is expecting to accomplish. I can't help but wonder why it wasn't accomplished back when he was a senior cabinet minister representing a Calgary riding here in Alberta, why some of these changes weren't brought forward then to address the Senate.

I kind of briefly sort of run through what's going on here with the bill, obviously establishing Senate elections, to be held in Alberta, to elect a nominee. Elections can take place as a stand-alone election, alongside a provincial general election or a municipal election, or alongside a referendum.

Candidates. You must be aligned with a federal party or run as an independent, or a federal affiliation will be displayed on the ballot. Candidates can also be endorsed by a provincial party, then allowing that provincial party to spend \$100,000 per candidate during that campaign period. Of course, candidates are also allowed to spend up to half a million dollars on their campaign and \$100,000 on just their nomination. Third-party advertisers are able to spend up to \$30,000. The maximum spots filled by the election would be the number of impending vacancies in the Senate for Alberta. The next election taking place is the 2021 municipal election. Nominees remain on the list until they are no longer eligible.

When I kind of start to work through these things and how we're going to be addressing this, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, it looks like a whole lot of red tape, which this government clearly ran on to try to get rid of. As I've stated in other discussions, in other debates around this seemingly rushed approach, in bringing in a bunch of red tape, I'm concerned about what may happen, going forward, in their commitment to reduce red tape. I remember the promise was to eliminate it by one-third, on a one-in, one-out basis. I've seen very recently how we've had a whole lot of ones coming in. Certainly, this bill, Bill 13, is quite thick, too. I start to wonder: what is going to be on the chopping block in a rush to compensate for some of these things coming in?

I just wanted to quickly add those comments around that. I think this is something that, again, should have been dealt with when there was a chance to actually deal with it. The Premier as a federal cabinet minister, during his time representing a Calgary riding down there, could have looked at trying to update the Senate, which, again, I agree there are certainly some problems around. It needs to be addressed, but we do not have the ability to effect those changes. I mean, we pass this bill. Great. I'm sure the Premier can then run to the Prime Minister and say: look, we need to fix the Senate, and here it is. The Prime Minister, quite honestly, can say, "Well, thank you for that" and toss it into the garbage can if he wants.

I wonder why we're spending a lot of taxpayers' money around trying to monitor all of this through Elections Alberta as well as even the federal elections. I don't think this is necessarily money that's being spent wisely considering the government's quest to review all of its finances, of course not reviewing any of the revenues coming in. I struggle to find out where we're going to benefit from this.

I know that we managed to, I think, get the first amendment passed in this entire session. Congratulations to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for providing a very good case, that government members just absolutely could not ignore this time around. Unfortunately, I'm not prepared, even with that amendment, to support this. But the debate is not over. There may be some other ones that might make this possibly a little better. But at this time I don't see how we can effectually change the Senate even by passing this. It should have been done by the Premier when he was a minister in Ottawa.

With that, I'll take my seat and allow others to jump into the conversation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, are there any others? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise again on Bill 13. Just continuing, now that we've completed some of the

housekeeping pieces, on sort of what this bill is actually going to do. Again, I do want to reinforce that this is just another ability and another loophole to allow money back into politics, to allow political parties to fund raise.

4:40

I think one of the pieces that I didn't mention before was also this \$4,000 cap. Now, that was a cap that we put in place as government when we did the financial review on getting money out of politics under our democratic renewal. What we've seen now is that that same \$4,000 cap, that is supposed to be used for individuals to donate to political parties, is now being doubled under this act, so people will actually be allowed to donate an additional \$4,000 to a candidate that's going to be running for the Senate. Because, again, the bill as it reads speaks to the fact that you must be endorsed by a political party, a federal political party, what this is allowing, then, is that \$4,000 can go to that political party, whether it be the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party, and then an additional \$4,000 can go to that Senator candidate, the candidate that's running for the Senate, who is also endorsed by that same political party. In a way, it's kind of double-dipping.

I recognize, in discussions with the minister, that the tax credit that individuals will receive due to their personal donations of \$4,000 will not change, and therefore even if you give \$8,000 as an individual under the nomination process and/or to the candidate, you will only get a tax credit that's equal to the \$4,000, not the \$8,000. However, my question would be: why are we doubling it and allowing for political parties to now have opportunities to raise an additional \$4,000? Where does that money go if the candidate happens to have a surplus, or is there an expectation that whatever they raise must be used? Those are some pieces of the questions that I have.

The other piece that I have is that I'm not really sure why we need to be looking at having these elections happen during municipal elections or referendums, for that matter. Again, this is a piece of legislation where even though people will be elected on behalf of Albertans to be candidates to the Senate, their names put forward to the Prime Minister, there's absolutely nothing binding to it. A Prime Minister does not have to appoint the individuals that Albertans may decide to vote for. Because of that, we are now starting to influence municipal elections with partisan politics. During the last municipal election in my area alone we had 14 people running to be city councillor. Like, that was pretty confusing in itself, to have to decide between 14 people who should be the city councillor for the area. To now add an additional component of a candidate for the Senate on the ballot will, I think, create additional confusion for many people in Alberta.

Because of that and because I'm not sure that that's an effective use – I just don't think you should be getting elections for Senators involved in municipal politics – I now have an additional amendment, because I'm all about amendments today. I will wait until you have the original and copies, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** We will be speaking to this amendment and referring to it as A2.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning rising to continue.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would you like me to read the whole two pages into the record?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes, please.

**Ms Sweet:** Yes, please. Okay. I move that Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act, be amended as follows:

A. Section 1(1) is amended

- (a) by striking out clause (c);
- (b) in clause (d) by striking out “or an officer under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be.”
- B. Part 1 is amended
  - (a) in section 2
    - (i) in clause (a) by striking out “or a deputy under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (ii) in clause (b) by striking out “or election day as defined in the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (iii) in clause (c) by striking out “or a voting station as defined in the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
    - (iv) in clause (d) by striking out “or a returning officer or a substitute returning officer under the Local Authorities Election Act, as the case may be”;
  - (b) in section 5
    - (i) in subsection (1)(a) by adding “or” at the end of subclause (i), by striking out “or” at the end of subclause (ii) and by striking out subclause (iii);
    - (ii) by striking out subsection (5);
  - (c) in section 7 by striking out clause (c);
  - (d) in section 19 by striking out subsection (5);
  - (e) in section 27
    - (i) in subsection (1)(h) by striking out subclause (ii);
    - (ii) by striking out subsections (3) and (4).
- C. Part 3 is struck out.
- D. Part 4 is amended
  - (a) in section 51
    - (i) in subsection (2)(a)(i), in the proposed section 1(1)(b), by striking out subclause (iii.2);
    - (ii) in subsection (22), in the proposed section 44.941(1)(h), by striking out subclause (ii).
  - (b) by striking out section 52.

All of that being said, in summary, I'm asking that these elections would not be held in municipal elections. It just removes all of the clauses out of the bill. This amendment removes the ability to hold a senatorial election during municipal elections.

The UCP has announced that the next senatorial election will take place in conjunction with the 2021 municipal election. Senatorial candidates are endorsed by provincial parties and federal parties, which brings provincial politics into municipal elections. This would allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during a municipal election cycle. If a party endorses three candidates, that would mean \$300,000 would be spent during that time, which would add up to a minimum of \$1.5 million that the parties themselves would be allowed to spend.

Provincial and federal parties do not have a place in our municipal system. Mr. Chair, this amendment removes the ability for senatorial elections to be held in conjunction with municipal elections, and there's good reason for this. Municipal election candidates do not run under any party banners. Municipalities are not party systems. Candidates are all independents that run on their own merits, ideas, and platforms. Political parties and their endorsed candidates have no space in this arena. This is a dangerous first step in fundamentally changing the landscape of municipal politics in this province.

It will also bring more money into municipal elections because donors can then contribute \$4,000 to a municipal candidate, \$4,000 to a senatorial candidate, and \$4,000 to a political party. Mr. Chair, that's \$12,000 – \$16,000, actually, which is \$8,000 more than the limits that were in place at the request of municipalities, I might add, less than a year ago.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

On top of that, holding senatorial elections during municipal elections would allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during municipal election cycles. If a party endorses three candidates, again, that would be \$300,000 that could be spent during this time.

You see, we have a theme here. We take money out of politics, and the UCP is putting it right back in. Madam Chair, Albertans deserve better than this. They deserve a government that will stand up for democratic institutions. They deserve a government that believes that people should be elected on the merits of their ideas and on their character, not on the amount of money in their bank account, and if the members opposite won't give this to Albertans, Albertans deserve an explanation why. Why is this government using campaign promises to create loopholes to give their wealthy donors access to all levels of government in this province?

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

4:50

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for something that I think is an incredibly reasonable amendment. She asked some really important questions. I hope we will hear from the government members, their response, too. I certainly hope they will consider supporting this amendment because I think it does something really important, which is kind of change the direction just a little bit to keep provincial and federal politics and the party system of politics out of our municipal elections.

Now, I had the opportunity to consult with a lot of different Albertans as we worked, first, on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and, secondly, as the minister responsible for democratic renewal, talking to people about the Election Act and election financing, and then, thirdly, when I was working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs during the updating of the Local Authorities Election Act, when he was specifically working with municipalities. Particularly when I'm talking to constituents, to Albertans, Albertans don't want the political party system brought into their municipal elections, and I've heard that clearly.

In fact, through my own anecdotal viewing of it, candidates who align themselves with a particular political party in running for municipal elections often do not find themselves successful regardless of the political party. Long-standing people who are known to be somewhat aligned to particular political parties won't come out and identify that they are a member of X, Y, or Z. Many candidates specifically do not join provincial parties or do not join federal parties so that they can say that they are neutral, that they're there to represent the views of their constituents so that they can run on their own platform of ideas. I've seen that in my own cities but also when travelling the province and talking to other municipalities.

What I see in Bill 13 is essentially bringing the provincial parties into municipal elections, both explicitly, by allowing the senatorial elections to be held at the same time as municipal elections, and then also combining that with allowing provincial parties to endorse and spend money in support. Now, we can picture that during a municipal election we will have UCP-branded election signs because they'll be there to advertise for their senatorial candidates. I think that that influx of money, \$100,000 per candidate – they can endorse up to three candidates – could have many negative effects on our municipal elections, and I think it opens the door to bring more of that partisan party politics into the municipal level.

I have serious concerns with that just based on the conversations I've had with Albertans on this and my own experience in this province watching municipal elections, because I know that although it is different in other jurisdictions – I understand that party politics are a big part of municipal elections in British Columbia, for example; I understand that there are other jurisdictions where that is the norm – here in Alberta, throughout the province, having independent, free-from-political-party candidates has been the Alberta way.

The changes in Bill 13: although many Albertans may not be aware of what Bill 13 is about to do, because, of course, it's being introduced and talked about as if it's bringing back the previously held senatorial elections, there are so many changes. Like, it's not the same thing. They didn't just bring that bill back. There are significant amendments and changes happening here, including the ones that allow political parties to step in and spend money and start to influence what's happening, married to the fact that these elections can happen at the same time as a municipal election.

My colleague from Edmonton-Manning also raises the very important point about potential loopholes around big money coming back in because of what's happening now provincially: someone in a given year can donate \$4,000 to provincial-related entities, whether that be a political party, candidate, leadership candidate, anything like that, and they will get a provincial tax receipt. But now they can also donate \$4,000 to municipal candidates and \$4,000 to a political party. Now, we're talking about people who have \$12,000 in a single year to put into politics and to further a particular political agenda. I can tell you that I heard clearly from Albertans that the idea that somebody being rich means that they have more ability to influence the elections was something that Albertans felt was distasteful. They generally disagreed with \$50,000 donations to provincial political parties, and now we have essentially \$12,000 because all of these things will be happening at the same time. It's essentially bringing big money back into politics.

My support for this amendment, which I think is a very reasonable amendment that helps this legislation significantly, comes from – municipal elections in Alberta have not historically included political party affiliations. From my consultations, talking to constituents and just talking to Albertans and talking to political leaders in municipalities, there has been no desire to incorporate that. I think this does something that Albertans are not interested in. And then the big loopholes around \$12,000 of political influence in a single year, a single municipal election event, because of the different orders of government involved, are very concerning to me. As someone who was part of a government that worked really hard to get big money out of politics, I think this amendment addresses some of the concerns that I have regarding Bill 13 and the loopholes that it's putting in to bring big money back in and to start to almost encourage provincial parties to get more active during municipal elections and to do that through the senatorial elections.

For those reasons, I will be supporting the amendments proposed by my hon. colleague, and I hope all members will. I'm also hopeful that the government might respond to this amendment and respond to some of the questions that the Member for Edmonton-Manning asked and the concerns that I've echoed.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak in support of this amendment. I think it's a really important amendment. I understand that the UCP talked about this

in their platform, and I understand the big rush to push this through. Now I really understand the rush to push this through. I think that once you take the time to read through this, you realize all of the loopholes that are created. This is sort of piggybacking on what my colleague just said.

I, too, was part of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and we spent quite a bit of time, all parties, actually, talking about: what could we do other than taking the big money, corporate and union donations, out? That was the first thing we did when we formed government, Bill 1. But what else could we do to ensure the integrity of elections, to ensure that it was individual Albertans that were choosing their representatives and their government as opposed to just the wealthy and the well connected?

This amendment removes the ability to hold senatorial elections during municipal elections. Apparently, the UCP has announced that the next senatorial election will take place in conjunction with the 2021 municipal elections. Now, I'm sure that the municipal elections weren't that long ago. I'm sure everybody remembers what that was like and why municipal elections are indeed so different from provincial and federal elections.

One of the things that I appreciated in my community of St. Albert is that all of the people that ran – the men and women: I'm happy to report that there is some gender balance on St. Albert city council – ran on their ideas. They ran on their individual ideas that they had heard from community members, that they had tested. Some were very new to municipal politics, others were seeking re-election, and they really did run on their own individual platforms, if you will. You heard that sort of loud and clear in the different debates or the written responses that they shared with constituents or citizens. What was really important about that is that it was about individual people and ideas, not political affiliation. I think that to preserve the integrity of municipal elections – this amendment is really quite important.

Now we have the proposition by the government that with senatorial candidates being endorsed by provincial parties, which indeed then brings provincial politics into municipal elections – that will erode, I think, the unique nature, in particular, of municipal elections. It also allows provincial political parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during the municipal election cycle.

5:00

You know, you can sort of shrug your shoulders or – I don't know – put your hands up and say: well, you know, it's just \$100,000. But we already know that big money – which is why we sort of invested the time and energy to remove big money from politics. We already know that people that are powerful in terms of finances, financial ability, and connectedness or the ability to influence change, not unlike some of the successful lobbying that we've seen which has resulted in the legislation that we debate in this place – we know that when you let money sort of colour things, it has an impact. And when you start to bring in this kind of financial backing, clouding the issues, bringing in partisan politics, you are going to chip away at the integrity of municipal elections, so I can't imagine that our municipalities would be comfortable with this.

I think that some of the beauty of municipal politics or some of the municipal candidates is that these very much are, in the best sense, really, grassroots campaigns. Very often it is neighbours, co-workers, people that have formed little groups in their community, and then it grows from there. It's not a large, well-connected, well-funded party that is swooping in and influencing the way people vote or the way issues are framed. This is very concerning.

If a party, let's say, going back to this financing, endorses three candidates, that literally means an additional \$300,000 is possible

in terms of spending during that time. This is in addition to the minimum of \$1.5 million that the candidate is already allowed to spend. You know – I've said it before – provincial and federal parties in politics have no place in our municipal politics.

We brought in some changes to municipal election financing, and I think that was a great step forward. Once again, we can see that this new government is unhappy with the way that we've tried to make elections a little bit more fair financially, and once again here we go introducing some loopholes that will take us in another direction.

We've already heard of the tens of thousands of dollars in fines that the government has received because they had difficulty with rules around election financing. I think the earlier amendments to this bill would perhaps provide some clarity in terms of election financing. Obviously, this government has issues with election financing, understanding how the rules work. These amendments are important because they are going to provide some clarity and fairness. In order to get people, just average, everyday Albertans, to participate in this process, whether it's by putting their name forward as a candidate or by choosing the best person for them, we have a responsibility, I think, to keep the level playing field, to keep things as fair as possible.

I can remember back to one of the discussions we had at one of the Ethics and Accountability Committee meetings, and that was about the lack of women in politics, the low numbers of women who run for office, the numbers of women who are successful running for office. This was an important discussion because we talked a lot about the need to make the playing field as equal as possible. Now, that's not an easy thing to do, but I think when you start to look at big money in politics and levelling that playing field, it does help, particularly when you start to bring in these really large political parties that are well financed, well connected, and very much have an agenda. If Albertans don't see that happening right here in this place, they're not paying attention, because it is happening.

We see the impact of money in politics, lobbyists, and parties. We see it all the time. We saw it just before the election. We saw Restaurants Canada lobbying for changes very quickly after the election. Surprise. Here we go. They're getting exactly what they lobbied for, all under the guise of creating jobs by cutting the wages of youth. Anyway, I digress. Back to the amendment.

This amendment, which I think is a very reasonable amendment, removes the ability for senatorial elections to be held in conjunction with municipal elections. I think that's fair, and I think it's essential. I think it's important not to be, whether it's on purpose or whether it's just underhanded – I think it's really important to allow municipalities and residents of municipalities to be as independent as possible when they select who will represent them on a city council and things like that.

Municipal election candidates don't run under any party banner, and that's done for a reason. Municipalities are not party systems. This amendment, although, you know, I certainly do not support this bill, would help clarify a little bit and provide a little bit of protection to keep municipal elections as independent as possible. Political parties and their endorsed candidates have no space in a municipal election arena. They don't. This is a dangerous first step to fundamentally changing the landscape of municipal elections in this province, and it'll bring more money into municipal elections because donors can contribute.

Now, I know this government isn't super pumped on consulting. They were clear about that even before the election. I think their then leader told us that he was just going to do things quickly, no time for consulting because, really, the election was the consultation. Well, no. The election was the election, but that's okay. What this

has done is create change on a level that we won't even understand until the municipal election occurs, and even then we won't really know. By making these fundamental changes to the fairness and the structure of municipal elections, we are influencing way past what is ours to influence. I mean, I hope I'm wrong, but I don't get the sense that this government took the time to consult with municipalities on this legislation.

The legislation, Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act, seems on the surface, you know, the pretty old way of '80s politics. Let's create some division. We need to do this. We already know how that turned out, but okay. But this goes a little bit further because it starts to stick your fingers into municipal elections and the fairness of municipal elections. I don't recall hearing that before the election. I don't recall seeing that in the platform document.

I mean, I would question. Did the Minister of Municipal Affairs consult with anyone, with AUMA to talk to them about: how do you feel about this change to municipal elections? Did the Premier take any time to talk about this other than, you know, "We must do this in Ottawa," because, clearly, his focus usually is Ottawa?

Hearing the rhetoric just last week about one of Alberta's Senators, Paula Simons, an independent Senator, some of the flack she's been getting is just horrendous. I thank her publicly for her service.

I think, going back to this legislation, this was supposed to be simply about Senate elections, you know, I guess, for whatever reason. But this overreach is a little bit stunning. This is overreach of a government that is now wanting to interfere by creating these loopholes or aligning dates or changing totals to involve themselves in something that should not be their business. They should not be involved in municipal elections. They shouldn't.

You know, I'm concerned, too, about the amount of money. Again, going back to this recent election we just went through, obviously some people had more difficulty than others in understanding what those limits were. I guess they're feeling the penalties of that now. These loopholes created in this legislation will indeed bring more money into municipal elections because donors can now contribute \$4,000 to a municipal candidate, \$4,000 to a senatorial candidate, and then \$4,000 to a political party. That's \$12,000, which is \$8,000 more than the limits that were put in place at the request of municipalities, I might add, less than a year ago.

5:10

I think we heard pretty clearly from municipalities that they wanted some of the same structure that we had put in place for provincial elections. I heard that in St. Albert. I don't know what other people heard in their communities or if they asked that question. I don't know if this government took a breather and asked municipalities what they thought of provincial and federal politics bleeding into municipal elections. I'd be very curious to hear that answer, and I know that I will spend some time in St. Albert asking those very questions.

That's \$12,000, \$8,000 more. On top of that, holding senatorial elections during municipal elections will also allow provincial parties that have endorsed candidates to spend up to \$100,000 per candidate on political advertising during the municipal election cycle, once again trying to influence something that, really, we have no business influencing. I think we saw this try to bleed into some school board elections, or we had allegations of that. But this is not our place to decide on who the leadership is for our municipalities.

We worked really hard to remove big money, whether it was from unions, whether it was from corporations, and it seems like since our new Premier turned up in Alberta full time, he has done whatever he can to sort of muddy these waters. I think a really good example of that – and why I support this amendment – is the PC

leadership race. You know, we heard very loud and clear that once that race was done, those donors would be released. When that was done, that full list was not released.

That's just one more reason why we knew it was so important to make the rules very clear. These are the limits. These are the periods of time during which you can spend that money. These are rules for lobbyists. Here's a registry. Here are rules for lobbyists. Here's what you must report. We made those things very clear. You know what? Municipalities liked the changes that we were making and asked for assistance to do that on a local basis.

Sadly, you know, I think that, like my colleague said, we tried really hard to take money out of politics. We worked diligently, I think, through Bill 1, through the all-party committee that did some good, sometimes interesting work. We actually did introduce some changes that started to change the landscape a little bit and started to be a little bit more fair, started to remove big money out of politics so that everyday Albertans, those that aren't wealthy, that aren't necessarily well connected or lobbyists: their vote and their voice is worth the same as somebody else. That was important.

On that, I'm going to end my comments and just say that I support this amendment, other amendments, and I hope that this government, at the very least, will make these changes. The best-case scenario is to put the brakes on, pause, do your job, and consult. Do your job and look at what is fair in your municipalities. I'm guessing that you haven't consulted with those municipalities, whose elections you will impact with this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the hon. Member for St. Albert and her views about all of this, and I must agree that I think the amendment is needed, Madam Chair, because the municipal election periods are the wrong time to have a senatorial election as well.

You know, when you think about what goes on during municipal elections, we really need citizens across this province to be laser focused on the issues in their community. Those issues aren't espoused by senatorial elections or senatorial contests. They are espoused by people running for city or IDs or Métis settlements or summer villages and the views that they have in terms of making their communities a better place.

The citizens, during municipal elections: we all know that they also have to focus on school board elections for trustees. I can't think of two more important things to focus on than education of our young people and the trustees that are committed to guiding that education and making sure that they adequately prepare the classrooms, the schools, and all other places for the young people to get that education.

The other critical thing that goes on during municipal elections, of course – and I mentioned it before just now – is electing councillors, whether that's a small county or MD or a large city like Edmonton and Calgary. It's reflective of the times, I guess, where, as the Member for St. Albert was saying, that partisanship and party politics is entering municipal politics, and I can tell you that that's the wrong thing. We need municipal councillors to be elected on their own merit.

Back in 1995 I stood for election on a platform on my own merit, not involved with a party. I didn't hold a party card until probably sometime in the mid-2000s. In 1995 I ran on a platform of doing better for the communities that I was working for as a community social worker and making sure that those communities got what they deserved in terms of support from the city of Calgary. That



was a contest with seven people in it. I was the fourth one into it, and then there were three others who joined after me, and none of us – none of us – were endorsed by a party. None of us were seeking the support of the party mechanisms to get elected. We ran on our own, and we did the things that, you know, maybe are not so normal anymore. We did things like we got our own committee together to support us. We raised funds on our own. We put out our signs and literature on our own, and none of it looked like orange for the NDP or blue for you guys or red for the Liberals. It was quite something to put your slate up, essentially, and say: this is what I stand for.

Now to muddy that with a senatorial election at the same time is going in the wrong direction. We need focus for what is ailing us in our communities, and that does not get better with another election going on at the same time for Senators, who will muddy the waters with regard to the platforms of the parties that they represent.

Another thing that I think we need to speak to with this – and I certainly support the amendment wholeheartedly and believe it will be a positive addition to the bill that's before us, Bill 13, the Alberta Senate Election Act – is that the Alberta Senator elections in this bill talk about enhancing democracy. You know, what we need for municipalities during municipal election times to enhance democracy in those communities is a focus on the issues in those communities, and I don't believe that the Senators necessarily will be doing that. I think they will be going around Alberta, of course, to get support for not their nomination but their election. They won't be focusing on, say in Calgary, the challenges around the downtown core assessment. They won't be focusing on the issues related to, in Calgary again, the need to have good flood protection in place immediately for those communities along the Bow River and the Elbow River. They will be looking at, like, larger party issues, and those party issues don't drill down far enough to what needs to happen in communities all across this province.

5:20

All across this province we need to enhance or get higher the percentage of the vote that goes on in municipalities. You know, often the votes in municipalities, the percentage of people eligible to vote voting in municipalities, is in the 20 to 30 per cent range, which is just abysmal. It is indicative, you know, that unfortunately many people don't see their right to express their vote at the local, municipal, level as an important thing. As we used to say at the city of Calgary, if it's a 30 per cent turnout to vote, you often hear from those 70 per cent of the people who don't vote, and they're the most vociferous sometimes.

So we need to raise the level of the popular vote in municipalities, and senatorial elections are not the way to do it. We need to put more emphasis on municipalities. We need to put more emphasis on the local needs in municipalities so that people can actually come out and get excited about getting behind the different views of different candidates. As I was saying, in 1995 my own race was very much focused around social issues and trying to ensure that the people in the east end of Calgary got the supports they need because it's a challenged area in many respects. The seven of us in the race had different views about that. I remember one person in the race had the view that he needed to support a golf course in the ward with better funds coming from the city of Calgary. He didn't win, of course, but he was very enthusiastic about talking about the golf course on a regular basis.

You know, the work that the Minister of Municipal Affairs perhaps and the government should be focused on is: how can we get more people out and better quality people to put their name forward for municipal councillors all across this province? How can we support people to put their name forward? Are there kinds of additional training, any kinds of in-services that can be given on the

quality of people who want to support their communities as an elected local councillor? I think there is, Madam Chair. There's lots of work that can be done there. It won't help for the parties to be going around and to be kind of muddying the waters with regard to what's going on in municipalities. It wouldn't help at all for those things to take place.

I, of course, want to let people know that, you know, the Senate elections have happened in the past here. I believe I ran during one of them, and I don't think it added to the focus of the municipal election that I was in. I do want to say that the expense of running these elections is another problematic piece for me. I think municipal elections have just gotten too expensive for everybody who chooses to put their name forward. I'm so proud of the NDP government in curtailing the amount of expenses that can go into provincial elections. That was, in my estimation, long overdue, and the Wild West in terms of elections is something we often heard about before we brought in the bills that my hon. colleague down the way here brought in.

We have too many important issues. I can think of that in Edmonton: you know, the whole focus on mass transit. How is a senatorial election going to assist in all of that? It's not going to assist in it. It's going to, as I said, divert people's attention from the important local issues that they need to essentially hire a councillor, a person running for council, to address for them on their behalf. Edmonton, Calgary, the 340 other municipalities in this province don't need the additional expense, and that's a question: like, will Elections Alberta pay for it? I'm searching through this bill to find out if that's a commitment here. I know that municipalities are stretched, and when they bring forward their own elections, they need to budget far in advance to make those contributions to their elections fund happen.

In Calgary's case there was an additional requirement put on by the previous government to make sure that the Olympics were something that people supported in terms of a referendum. There are not only, you know, elections municipally and for trustees that happen on a four-year cycle now, but there are things to take advantage of, potentially an Olympics in this province. We put the requirement on that municipality, that they bring forward a referendum for people to make a decision on. There's a cost to that as well, Madam Chair. Of course, it was cost shared. No, it wasn't, actually. It was \$2 million by the province of Alberta in that regard.

You can see how the costs do mount quickly, if you were to talk about senatorial elections throughout the province, in each jurisdiction in this province – and there are hundreds and hundreds of them – you know, the fact that that has to be paid for, when we have far, far, far more pressing issues in this province to deal with; namely, the impact of climate change on our communities and making sure that they're resilient and can withstand the vagaries of climate when climate events happen throughout the province. There are important local issues that need to be addressed as well. That's what a once-every-four-years mandate does for elections in terms of the election cycle in this province.

I think, Madam Chair, the work that the previous government did to enhance democracy in this province is more germane than a Senate elections act. I know that you've got the numbers to essentially bring forward and pass this bill. I know that there are many, many people on the Conservative side who have let me know that they're interested and want to be appointed as Senators. I know that the Liberal government in Ottawa probably won't follow through with that. It has been followed through with before, but it required a Conservative Prime Minister to make it happen.

I just don't see the sense in following through with this. It'll cost more money for Alberta. It will defocus on the important local issues in our communities. That's not what citizens need at this

time. They need focus on the important issues like climate change. How are we going to ensure that employment gets fully realized for people who are able to work in our province? You know, just making sure that the trustees address the education needs in our province, throughout the province, and through the elections: those are the things that we need to focus on repeatedly. Those are the things that are identified in our amendment in terms of removing this from municipal election cycles, and those are the things that I will continue to focus on when I'm in my community, my riding.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment in regard to Bill 13. You know, I must say, in a more global sense, that I'm not that supportive of the Senate in general, so I have to try to think through that initial prejudice that I have. I think a lot of Canadians have the same feeling, right?

That being said, you know, in the interest of democracy I do want to explore this bill generally, and then this amendment, I think, helps the bill considerably. I don't have to repeat what the hon. members from St. Albert and from Calgary . . .

5:30

**Member Ceci:** Buffalo.

**Mr. Eggen:** . . . Buffalo mentioned. I always know where you come from, Calgary-Buffalo. Don't you worry about that. Absolutely.

Actually, you know, one thing that you mentioned that's very interesting that I just wanted to point out is that we did have that referendum on whether to have the Olympics in Calgary just recently, and now the International Olympic Committee is considering that to be a global prerogative, to insist that candidate cities have a referendum as a law, based on what they had seen take place here in Alberta and in Calgary. That's kind of cool, I think. Certainly, I mean, that underlines the importance of having elections in the broadest possible way, the broadest possible offering for elections in any given jurisdiction, Alberta here specifically. We want to encourage people to vote and get engaged in the issues of the day that affect themselves and their communities and their families, and all of those are very, very good things.

But also in the evolution of elections, be they municipal, provincial, or senatorial, is the importance of continuing down the direction of ensuring that big money does not dominate electoral politics here in the province of Alberta. Money and donations are an important part of democratic processes. We need money to run campaigns. You know, people make donations to who and what party they might favour, and that's all well and good, but it's absolutely essential to put limits in place and to keep those limits modest and in keeping with what is affordable and reasonable for the vast majority of Albertans.

You know, we managed to stake a beachhead on the reduction in getting big money out of politics here on a provincial and a municipal level, but, lo and behold, we have this proposal that would overstep any of those gains that we might have made in regard to having fair, reasonable election financing laws in place by this suggestion here with Bill 13, which puts a lot of money into elections and, I believe, will distort the integrity of municipal elections by having otherwise pretty modest campaigns for individual councillors and, as you say, summer communities and Métis settlements – a lot of these elections are just really down-to-earth, grassroots affairs which have very modest spending limits in place that these candidates have to adhere to. Then suddenly this thing rolls in – right? – potentially, which is a senatorial race, a

whole different level of government, and exponentially larger amounts of money can be spent on those senatorial elections.

You know, Madam Chair, I really think that this goes against what we've been trying to achieve. I know that everyone here in this room was carefully adhering to the provincial spending rules that were in place through Elections Alberta, and I think that it worked out okay, right? Here you all are, and you won your respective constituencies, and you didn't have to spend a million zillion dollars.

I've run a number of times, and before we put these spending limits in place, you would see individual MLAs in constituency races spending more than \$100,000, \$120,000, up to \$180,000. I saw \$180,000 dollars being spent on one of these 87 seats to become an MLA, and that's such an obvious distortion of the principle of democracy, right? Then suddenly here we are again, now debating whether to allow the floodgates to open again and have considerable money being spent, more than \$100,000 per candidate, on these elections for senatorial seats in the province of Alberta. Honestly, I don't think that it's a good idea. It sends the wrong message, you know.

Again, I always am looking for the letter of the law but also, you know, what direction we are going in, right? I know that Albertans are starting to pay attention to improprieties in regard to election financing. The appointment of a special prosecutor from outside of Alberta to deal with the perception of impropriety in leadership races here, I think, has pricked people's ears up, quite frankly, and the idea of a lot of money changing hands and with the lack of transparency around those things: it's poison, Madam Chair, in electoral politics. It's certainly poisonous to a party that might engage in those things.

It does not help the democratic process in general, either, to have big money floating around. What it does – it sends a message that the average person says: "Oh, yeah. You know what? These Senate races and so forth are out of my range. 'Senators' sounds like some kind of big shot, big money thing, and it's happening outside of my life." Not only is somebody being costed out of ever running for those things, but they get tuned out with all of these large numbers as well, saying: this isn't my thing. And the population starts to look more cynically at the process in general. You know, we don't want any of those things, I think.

This amendment that is brought forward to make sure that we separate at the very least Senate elections from municipal elections, I think, is eminently reasonable, and I encourage everybody to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment proposed by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning with respect to Bill 13. I just want to echo some of the comments made by my colleagues.

To begin with, I believe my approach with respect to this bill is simply that, as raised by a number of my colleagues, there are significant concerns that I have about the efficacy and the value of what's being put forward with Bill 13. In particular, you know, I actually somewhat sympathize with the sentiment that I believe is behind Bill 13, which is that there is frustration with the way the Senate operates, so I understand that the government feels that frustration. I believe a lot of Albertans do.

While I might sympathize with that sentiment, I still believe in good public policy-making, and I still believe in effective use of public dollars. I don't believe that this bill achieves those ends, primarily because there are fundamental issues with the Senate, and

this bill does not address them. What it does do is allow for a process that I think bestows some legitimacy upon an institution that, quite frankly, doesn't have that legitimacy right now for most Albertans.

To imply that having an elected Senator or a number of elected Senators from Alberta somehow makes the Senate more democratic simply is not true because we know that, to begin with, as a basic principle, whoever the governing party is, the federal governing party at the time, there's certainly no obligation upon that party to select from the list of elected Senators from Alberta. The exercise of electing Senators really does not in any way guarantee that an elected Senator will end up in the Senate representing Alberta.

Now, I understand – I'm presuming that the government is presuming that they know who will be the next federal government. They seem to be campaigning quite heavily for one federal political party, and I appreciate that they certainly have a hope and desire as to who will be the governing party in the next federal election. But the reality is that, again, our job here is to do good public policy-making. Making changes, putting in place a process that is costly, that is time intensive on the hope that one party might stay the governing federal party forever simply is poor public policy-making. For one thing, you know, there's no guarantee that this process will in any way change the face of who is representing Alberta in the Senate.

5:40

It also doesn't change the very antidemocratic process that is involved with Senators. Simply because an individual is elected in Alberta to be a Senator-in-waiting, even if chosen to be a Senator, they don't have to face re-election. They remain a Senator until they are 75 years old. Again, if we're talking about democracy and elected officials, I don't think that anybody in this House can stand and say that an appointment until you're 75 years old is true democracy. There's no process for recall. There's no process by which that person has to be re-elected. Again, we're seeing a bill that might have at its heart or intent some sort of democratic reform, but the result is not actually aligned with democratic principles.

I believe that several members on this side of the House and I know that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition have made comments several times that one of the key issues with the Senate is that we have six Senators for all of Alberta whereas there are Maritime provinces with a fifth of the population of Alberta who have the same number of Senators. We are underrepresented in the Senate. There is no doubt about that. Based on population, it's quite clear that Alberta's interests are not adequately represented in the Senate, yet again these proposed changes do nothing to affect that. They do not change in any way our ability to be represented properly based on our population and our interests in the Senate. It simply continues to legitimize in some respect a process that is antidemocratic.

Now, there's a long history, as many people know, about the Senate and the role of the Senate. You know, I think we could have a healthy and spirited debate about that topic in and of itself. I don't think that's the role of today's debate on Bill 13, but I will say that if we are seeking to change the way the Senate operates in this country, which there could be merit in doing, this is not an effective way to do that. It's simply not going to achieve that end.

With those overarching comments with respect to my concern, what I am fearful of, in particular, is that by going through this process of electing Senators, we are misleading Albertans. We are misleading the public about what that process really is about and what the outcome of that will be. I think there is already a lot of confusion about the role of the Senate, and by going through this, frankly, it's a bit of a charade when it comes to going through a

process of electing somebody when there's no power to recall, who has a lifetime appointment and does not need to be chosen to sit in the Senate. I think we are somehow going to give some confusion to Albertans.

Just to the amendment, I want to say that I believe the municipal election process is already quite confusing for a lot of individuals. My background is with school board elections. School board elections are always held at the same time as municipal elections, and we see all kinds of confusion around that as it is, how those are administered. To that end, you know, I don't think we need to add further confusion by adding a partisan senatorial election process to that.

To that end, I'll take my seat, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I just want to provide a brief response. Hopefully, after that I'll seek to adjourn debate on this one and move to a different bill. The intent here is to uphold the flexibility to hold Senate elections as needed. That's why we've provided flexibility in this bill. Depending on when Senate vacancies may arise, now or in the future, the intent here is to make sure that we can hold these elections to make sure that Albertans' voices are heard and so that we can have democratically elected people representing us in the Senate as vacancies come up. We need that flexibility. A perfect example of that is that the next vacancy is scheduled to happen in 2021. We have one person remaining on the Senate nominee list that we put forward, Mike Shaikh. After that point in time there will be nobody remaining on that list.

The next available opportunity to hold an election that we think would be reasonable as well from a taxpayer's perspective would be in line with the next municipal election here, Madam Chair. The intent of this is not to impact municipal elections. Municipal elections will continue to go on as they have in our province. The intent here is just to allow for flexibility for elections to be held for the Senate as needed.

Again, Bill 13 is based on the historical act that we've had here in Alberta, but it also builds in concepts that were actually brought in by the NDP under the last government, concepts around donation limits, other things like that. I've heard many commentaries from the other side, basically comments around their own amendments. They're not happy with their own legislation that they drafted, but here we are trying to build a concept consistent with existing election finance laws here in Alberta.

Madam Chair, the intent here is to allow us to hold Senate elections. We think it's very critical that we have Senators that are elected to represent us. Over half of the Senate nominees that have been brought forward by Alberta have been appointed to the Senate, and those have been some of the strongest advocates for our province.

With that, I'm going to move to adjourn debate on Bill 13.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Chair, I think we've made some excellent progress so far here today. I would propose that we rise and report progress on bills 8, 12, and report Bill 13.

**The Chair:** To clarify, we are going to rise and report progress on Bill 8 and Bill 13, and we are going to report Bill 12?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Correct.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Milliken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the

following bill: Bill 12. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 8, Bill 13. Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Madam Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress at this point in time here today. Given the clock and where we're at and noticing that folks might be a little bit hungry, I would propose that we adjourn until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]





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