



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Friday morning, March 20, 2020

Day 11

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

### The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Friday, March 20, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Hon. members, prior to moving to Members' Statements, I understand that it's possible that there may be some agreement amongst the House to provide the opportunity for all members to sit and speak and vote from any location inside the Chamber to provide the opportunity for more social distancing where necessary. It's my impression that there is that desire. Perhaps the hon. Official Opposition House Leader might request unanimous consent for that to happen.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the Assembly that members may be able to speak and vote from any chair within the Assembly for this day only.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Members' Statements

#### Home Education

**Ms Hoffman:** Now is a scary and unsettling time for a lot of us. Adults are navigating the new normal and are trying to figure out how to pay the bills when many are being laid off. Some relief initiatives were announced on Tuesday, and that is good, but many are still trying to figure out how to navigate this and adjust. As most parents are dealing with the pressures on them, they're also dealing with their families and doing everything they can to help create a sense of calm and stability for their kids. Children and, frankly, most people often do better on schedules with a sense of purpose. I've seen many parents develop timetables for the day or reach out to one another for resources regarding home education, so I thought I'd share some of their ideas with you.

Ask your kids what they understand about the pandemic, and then ask them if they have any questions they'd like you to answer. Acknowledge that their routines have changed and that it's difficult. Develop a new routine that helps them know what to expect during their day. Ask your kids to help you keep each other safe. At any age they can help wipe surfaces and light switches.

Even though the libraries are physically closed, the Edmonton public library and the Calgary public library have online tools and supports. Adults can still register for a library card for e-content to support them and their children.

Many schools are posting resources through their internal websites like SchoolZone or Google Classroom. Try the 30-day Lego challenge; it is a lot of fun. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* is a great resource. Many Canadian museums are offering virtual tours, and several of them are linked through the CTV website. The

government of Canada website has science resources, and they even have an ask-a-scientist section. Author-illustrator Mo Willems, one of my favourites, is doing a daily art session through the Kennedy Center website. Read. Read anything, and read together.

Finally, to the parents who are at home with their kids right now, I know many of you didn't choose to become home-schooling families. Be kind to yourselves. You don't need to be perfect. Your kids want to feel loved and safe, and we know that you are trying your best.

### COVID-19 and Mental Health Supports

**Ms Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, in recent days the daily routines of all Albertans have been fundamentally disrupted. In a period of less than a week people province-wide have had to find new ways to work, socialize for the sake of public safety. The idea of health is on everyone's mind, but health is not purely physical. Indeed, as we take actions to protect the physical health of our communities, mental health can quickly worsen. Although we have to keep our distance, no Albertan needs to feel alone in these difficult times. As the chief medical officer of health and the Premier have both highlighted, there are resources available to Albertans to help them cope with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic. Help is available through the mental health helpline 24 hours a day by calling 1.877.303.2642, and children and teens can also access the Kids Help Phone by calling 1.800.668.6868 or texting CONNECT to 686868.

We can also do many things to support one another in the days to come. Small gestures like checking in with friends and neighbours via text or video call can make a real difference in someone's life. There may be difficult times, but Albertans are resilient. By coming together and supporting one another, we can get through the months ahead. There are no easy solutions to the situation we are in. To quote Dr. Deena Hinshaw, "We need to face this . . . together and respond to this extraordinary crisis with extraordinary kindness."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge everybody in this House and across our great province to approach every situation they face these days with extraordinary kindness, and if you need help, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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

### COVID-19 Community Response

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've seen so far this week, extra measures are required provincially and federally to help control the spread of COVID-19. From the public health emergency that was declared in this province just a few days ago to the closure of the Canadian-U.S. border to nonessential travel, conditions are changing rapidly. None of these decisions have been made lightly. We all know how important recreational areas, shopping malls, local restaurants, and other gathering places are to our everyday life. However, these restrictions are necessary to control the spread of illness. Changing our daily routines and staying home will save lives. Now is the time for actions. Albertans each have a role to play by practising social distancing, practising good hygiene, and checking in with those in our communities who are most vulnerable. It is these community actions, not panic-purchasing goods, that will help us prepare for the challenging period to come. We are in an unprecedented time but not an impossible time.

Every day I hear new stories of people and businesses stepping up to help their community. It is in these challenging moments that Alberta's spirit of community truly comes to light. Not only Alberta's spirit of community but the strength of Alberta's families

and individuals are fully shining. From grocery store owners reserving specific hours for elderly shoppers to get the goods they need to Alberta restaurants still offering take-out and curbside pick up options for their devoted patrons, I could not be more proud of the residents of Lethbridge or the people of Alberta in how they choose to handle today's new normal.

I would also like to send a message of positivity and encouragement to the many families who are practising self-isolation or social distancing. As a father of five I know first-hand what it feels like to have kids get a little stir-crazy and bouncing off the walls on a snow day, so hats off to all the parents who are keeping their children safe and occupied at home for 14 days. There are no restrictions on happiness, on kindness, compassion, or optimism during this time even if we need to practise it a few feet apart.

Thank you.

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

### Trucking, Shipping, and Delivery Industries

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the midst of this global pandemic I'm grateful for the collective actions that Albertans have shown by practising physical distancing and, when necessary, self-isolation to contain the spread of COVID-19 and flatten the curve. It is evident by looking at the lack of traffic on the roads and in our communities and on the highways connecting them that Albertans are taking these measures seriously. Today I want to take a moment in this Chamber to recognize and thank those who are still on the roads doing essential work in the trucking, shipping, and delivery industry. In these anxious days knowing that we can count on essential materials such as groceries, sanitizers, and medical equipment to be delivered and accessible has provided an anchoring and comforting support. Travelling and working through regular demands of shipping is challenging, but it's more difficult now. Moving through borders is more complicated, stopping to eat and rest requires more precautions, and being away from friends and family is harder now in these uncertain times.

10:10

No one should feel wrong for having feelings of worry or fear. Truck drivers face an added fear as they continue to travel and move while most travelling and moving around in the world is being stopped. However, by hearing and knowing the steps that drivers are taking to ensure that they are personally safe, I have every bit of confidence that they will be able to continue to do the essential work that they are doing. I believe I can comfortably and proudly speak on behalf of all members in this Assembly in saying thank you to truck drivers. Their bravery and courage should not go unnoticed. Today I also call upon the government and the Minister of Transportation to make sure these drivers are supported and safe as well as continuously encouraged and to thank them for the work that they are doing.

Thank you.

### COVID-19 Information

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, the coronavirus pandemic is changing the daily lives of people across this province. With community events cancelled, many public facilities closed, and children home from school, the impact of this outbreak cannot be ignored. My constituents in West Yellowhead feel this impact in everything they do.

In times of crisis accurate information is our greatest weapon against fear. Here in Alberta there are several tools to get accurate

information about public health measures being taken here in Alberta. At [alberta.ca/covid19](http://alberta.ca/covid19) Albertans can get the most up-to-date information on confirmed cases, advisories on gatherings and travel, and resources on how to prevent and prepare for coronavirus spread. The information on this site is part of the efforts by public health officials to keep information as transparent as possible during these uncertain times.

AHS has launched a self-assessment tool to guide Albertans who are worried they may have contracted COVID-19 to the resources they need. It can be found at [ahs.ca/covid](http://ahs.ca/covid). Since the first day of this tool being available, over a million people have completed this self-assessment. The self-assessment is reducing burdens on Health Link 811, allowing this service to focus on directing possible coronavirus cases to the appropriate screening facility.

As conditions relating to this outbreak change, so too will the guidelines and tools available to Albertans. I encourage all people in this province to look to resources through the Alberta government's website to stay informed and prepared in these challenging times.

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

### COVID-19 Response

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are at an unprecedented time in the province of Alberta. The COVID-19 epidemic has altered the normal course of events for almost everyone. The normal patterns of everyday life have been set aside, and instead we are all engaging in behaviours not simply directed toward our own need and desires but a set of behaviours directed toward the common good.

It has been said that pandemics are the most universal of circumstances. Everyone is affected no matter how wealthy or poor, no matter how educated or skilled, no matter how much power or dispossession defines your life, and because of that universal character, COVID-19 has some lessons for us all. It demands that we set aside our particular desires for thoughts about how we want to live in relationship with each other, it requires us to think in terms of the community rather than the individual, and it highlights the need for governments to act on behalf of all citizens, knowing that to ignore some would endanger all.

We succeed only to the degree that we make the choice to treat everyone as valuable in this enterprise that we call society. If we allow inequality to widen, we risk one group's vulnerability, which, in turn, threatens the vulnerability of others. If those people who live paycheck to paycheck are not able to self-isolate because of the need to provide their families with the necessities of life, then they become the gap in the plan, and if the plan fails, so does the health of all of our citizens, who are all in this together.

But we know that pandemics are not truly universal. They affect individuals differentially. Some amongst us are more vulnerable, and as such the need to protect everyone necessitates a differential response, and it highlights for us the role of government in ensuring that no one is left out. In circumstances like these you cannot have a virus-free society unless you ensure that all citizens are protected from the virus. It is time for us to ask ourselves about the role of government in society. Do we understand the importance of government in ensuring the reduction of inequality? Do we understand the need for government to have a differential option for the poor? Do we understand that governments need to stand with the vulnerable and not solely with the wealthy and powerful? As a society we stand together.

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

### COVID-19 Information

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week our province has been faced with rapidly evolving developments in an unprecedented situation. In a matter of days the prospect of a coronavirus pandemic in our province went from if to when to right now. These are, without a doubt, challenging times. Albertans are resilient, and they are level headed. However, this pandemic has led to consistent and drastic changes to public health measures, and Albertans are struggling to feel comforted. People fear what they do not know, and efforts to soothe their anxieties have led to constant streaming of news coverage and scrolling of social media. Continuous bombardment of inaccurate COVID-19 narratives inevitably ramps up the fears people are trying to ease.

One of the greatest tools that we have against the fear is consistent, reliable information. On behalf of all Albertans I would like to commend the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, for her calm, measured demeanour throughout one of the most challenging periods in our province's history. As we adapt to the new normal and pull together to combat COVID-19, Dr. Hinshaw and her team are providing Albertans with many resources to help them feel prepared and not panicked in times of uncertainty. Knowledge is our strength, and as of March 18 the AHS self-assessment tool for COVID-19 has been accessed 1.3 million times since its launch and has been used to help other provinces develop their own self-assessment platforms. This tool is being used to guide unwell Albertans to the help they need and to provide peace of mind to others.

This pandemic is moving quickly, but so is our province's response. Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all public health officials for their rapid response to the coronavirus outbreak. We are truly fortunate to have them.

### COVID-19 Response

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, in recent days our government has demonstrated its willingness to take necessary action to protect Albertans in my riding of Sherwood Park and throughout our province from COVID-19. Our government has made the necessary decision to declare a public health emergency and move the Provincial Operations Centre to level 4, the highest level of emergency preparedness. In further efforts to protect Albertans, we have ordered the closure of bars, nightclubs, casinos, and public recreation facilities. We have banned gatherings with 50 people or more and made the difficult decision to close schools among the many other important public measures we have taken. None of these decisions were made lightly because our government understands that for each decision made, Albertans are affected in some way.

Yesterday our government announced additional measures we would be taking to aid those affected by COVID-19. We recognize that many Albertans who are unable to work from home and cannot earn an income due to no fault of their own will worry about how they will make ends meet. Mr. Speaker, our government listened to those fears. We have established an emergency isolation support program to help bridge the gap. We have ensured that treasury branch customers have the ability to apply for a deferral of ATB loans, lines of credit, and mortgage payments for up to six months, and our provincially regulated credit unions will have access to a variety of programs and solutions designed to offer relief as well. Our government has established a utility payment holiday, which allows residential, farm, and small commercial customers to defer bill payments for the next 90 days to ensure Albertans are not cut

off from their electricity and natural gas services regardless of the service provider.

Mr. Speaker, through these difficult times Albertans can know that our government will be there each step of the way, providing leadership, support, and assistance as we navigate COVID-19 together.

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

### Essential Service Providers

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has been the cause of an ever-evolving, constantly fluid series of events that will forever be in the history books as part of our generation. Today I want to address the many Albertans who are being called to the front lines and say: thank you for your great contributions to our province.

Thank you to the health workers for all that you are doing to care for Albertans through COVID-19. Each day you are faced with long hours, uncertainty and are pushed beyond your limits to care for complete strangers, and for that we say thank you.

I also want to thank the truck drivers, who are also working long hours and without whom our stores would be empty and our economy would grind to a halt.

Thank you to the workers and the volunteers at our homeless shelters, our emergency shelters, our places of worship, grassroots organizations, and organizations like Meals on Wheels, who are caring for our most vulnerable and also coming together and creating virtual communities as we learn to navigate COVID-19.

Thank you to the business owners, who are taking thoughtful, caring approaches to ensure our people have access to purchase the goods that we need. So many people and so many groups of people are doing so much to come together in this time of need, and I want to thank everyone for their efforts.

**10:20**

Many of us are being called to stay at home and practise social distancing and social isolation, and that, too, has its challenges and sacrifices. Thank you to all who are taking these necessary steps in an attempt to flatten the curve and work towards ending the pandemic. We as Albertans will come through this defining event stronger than ever, and it will take each and every one of us working together to combat this global pandemic.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 10.A. the daily Routine business consists of items set out in Standing Order 7(1), with Oral Question Period commencing at 10:20 a.m.

### Oral Question Period

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the entire NDP caucus I want to begin by sending my sincere condolences to the family of the Albertan who was lost yesterday to this pandemic. Our thoughts are with you, and we are very, very sorry for your loss.

### COVID-19 and Homelessness

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the mayor of Edmonton said that he was pleading – pleading – with the Premier to support the city in their work on more shelter space. If the virus spreads in the homeless population, some of our most vulnerable Albertans will

be at risk, and the pandemic will get worse. The mayor asked for help; he asked for a decision. Will the Premier be making that decision and offering that help today?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. the Leader of the Opposition for the very thoughtful question. The government shares her concern and that of the mayor of Edmonton about the unique vulnerability of the homeless with respect to this pandemic. I'm pleased to inform the House that the Emergency Management Cabinet Committee accepted recommendations this morning to work with the cities to provide services at and funding support for alternative locations for the homeless shelters as well as backup locations for prospective quarantine for the homeless.

**Ms Notley:** Well, that is good news. Just to get some clarification on it, though, because we do know that it is a desperate humanitarian situation, as described by the mayor, and we know that it appears to be a block with respect to access to AHS health care staff who will be dispatched: to be perfectly clear, is the Premier prepared to say today that AHS front-line health care staff will be dispatched to support the city as they establish additional spaces for homeless people in Edmonton?

**Mr. Kenney:** The answer is yes, unqualifiedly yes, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank officials who've been working very diligently over the past few days to come up with a province-wide plan, working with municipalities and the homeless shelters here in Edmonton. We understand that the expo centre will be used as an overflow location, and the city of Calgary has identified backup locations. Alberta Health Services will provide medical support, public health support, and Community and Social Services as well will be providing support to these backup homeless locations.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's good news. The concern that we have, of course, is that this problem is likely about to get much worse. In particular, we're hearing from more Albertans who can't work, who can't as a result make their rent, who are being threatened with eviction. All of us can stop this. We've already taken steps to protect homeowners; we need to be protecting home renters. Will the Premier work with us on an accelerated basis to pass legislation to ban evictions? We don't have a lot of time. Rent is due in 11 days.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Leader, for the thoughtful question. We share the concern. First of all, let me commend the many responsible landlords who have already indicated that they will suspend evictions such as Mayfield Management Group, Parkbridge as well, and others who have said that there will be no evictions for nonpayment of April's rent at this time. We'd be happy to have conversations with the opposition. I just want to raise the fact that landlords will still need the ability to remove irresponsible tenants who might be engaged in criminal activity, vandalism, grow-ops, and things of that nature, so we do have to be careful about the way we approach this.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those are accommodations that can be made within the context of passing the legislation that ensures nobody is evicted for nonpayment of rent, so that is the thing we need to see.

### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Ms Notley:** Today DBRS downgraded Alberta's credit rating. Of our budget they said, quote: the economic assumptions and pricing assumptions that this plan was based on in this environment are no longer valid. That's a fancy way of saying that the Premier's budget doesn't hang together, that it's not real. To the Premier: why exactly did we attack democracy just so that we could force through a plan that everyone knows is pretend?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, I believe it was expected, frankly, that we'll see credit downgrades given the rapidly deteriorating economic circumstances, Mr. Speaker, with the collapse in energy prices and the global recession. As I said in this House earlier this week, we are looking at a contraction in the second quarter of this year that's certainly in the double digits. If we follow the projections for Europe, it would be north of 30 per cent. The human and social consequences of this are painful to contemplate, but regrettably this also affects the fiscal capacity of the province. There's no way around it.

**Ms Notley:** None of those facts are in contention. What is in contention is the fact that the current plan lacks a, quote, full fiscal policy response to what we are dealing with now, so it's not worth the paper it is written on. Now, the Premier is required by law to provide a fiscal and economic update by the end of August. Will he commit to coming back to this House before then to present a real, amended budget such that we can debate it and it can be transparently shared with Albertans before August of this year?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I'll provide a qualified yes to that question. As I've indicated before, it is the intention of the government to provide a comprehensive fiscal update once we have some greater sense of the impact of these global events. Because this Assembly will be sitting on a limited basis in the weeks to come as we cope with the crisis, I do expect we may have a longer summer session, in which case the Minister of Finance would have an opportunity to provide a robust and detailed financial update that would include additional fiscal measures.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our financial security depends on the government having a credible plan to present to global financial markets, especially at a time when we will have to borrow so much to support Albertans in a crisis. The normal quarterly update that we would see in August does not provide for anywhere near the level of detail, oversight, transparency, or debate that we would normally expect to see with a budget. Just to be clear, to the Premier: is he committing today that in the summer we will come back here and have a budget-level conversation about their revised fiscal plan? Yes or no?

**Mr. Kenney:** Again a qualified yes, Mr. Speaker. I say "qualified" because we're not going to draft multiple budgets this year. The circumstances are changing by the hour, and that may continue to be the case, quite frankly, for months. Every government of every political stripe in every jurisdiction is facing this challenge of extreme flux in the financial world right now, the economic world. However, we will certainly come forward with a robust financial statement, a financial update to the House, and that will include, I am sure, supplementary estimates and perhaps additional ways and means on which the House would vote.



### Hospital Ventilator Availability

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deeply appreciate the work being done by public health officials to address the COVID-19 pandemic, but questions about our readiness remain. A report from the National Institute of Health reported that as of 2015 Alberta had the lowest number of ventilators, at 10.1 ventilators per 100,000 people, while Saskatchewan had 22.8 per 100,000. Could the Premier please confirm the current number of ventilators available in Alberta and where Alberta currently ranks per capita with other provinces at this moment in time?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are over 500 available, several dozen specifically for children. I want to commend AHS officials who, when they saw the coronavirus manifest in China in January, placed an immediate order for an additional 50, that are en route. AHS officials assure us that, based on their modelling, they believe we will have adequate ventilator equipment and other medical equipment, PPE for example, to deal with the peak of the infection, which they expect in a few weeks' time. We are working with the federal government and other provincial governments on additional domestic procurement efforts.

10:30

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, earlier this week the Premier told the media that Alberta had the second-highest or the highest number of ventilators in Canada, but there are some good reasons to believe that that may not be true. We've heard that Ottawa, however, has a national stockpile of ventilators that are available to be shared with the provinces, based on need. I believe that Albertans need to know that we're properly securing enough critical medical equipment to prepare for this pandemic should many people require hospitalization or need the use of a ventilator. To the Premier: how many ventilators have we requested from Ottawa, how many will we be receiving, and what is the backup plan if we do not have enough?

**Mr. Kenney:** I just want to supplement my original answer with some precision, Mr. Speaker. There are 477 adult critical care ventilators at key AHS and Covenant Health sites now, with the additional 50 en route. There are 78 pediatric critical care ventilators available. This means that we will have an inventory of 527 adult critical care ventilators. When I said one of the highest levels, I meant per capita.

I was on a call yesterday with the Premiers across the country, and Alberta offered its financial support to efforts led by Ontario to procure additional ventilators. We don't think we'll need them, but in an excess of caution, we will participate in that program.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier just mentioned 477 adult ventilators. There have been reports that we have between 527 and 597 and, as you noted, about 78 pediatric. Now, according to an Alberta Health Services spokesperson the reason for perhaps this difference in numbers is that a number of pieces of equipment are in the process of being replaced by newer pieces of equipment, meaning that some of our stockpile is likely near the end of its operational life or undergoing maintenance. Could the Premier please confirm, if he's aware, the number of operational ventilators currently available – that's perhaps 477 – and are we taking any steps to ensure that all of that equipment is in working order to potentially save the lives of Albertans?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, we were briefed on this as recently as a couple of hours ago in the Emergency Management Cabinet Committee. We were advised by the president of Alberta Health Services that those ventilators are available to deploy for critical care. I want to add a caveat. Our officials stress that their concern is not about the scarcity of relevant equipment like ventilators but, rather, trained personnel to operate the equipment at the peak. That is one of the reasons we invoked a public health emergency, to give our AHS managers the capacity to manage HR so that we can have those people available.

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

### Physician Compensation Framework

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, speaking of health care professionals, this week the Health minister partially restored the contract with Alberta doctors that he tore up back in February. To quote: we are halting this change so that doctors can concentrate on the critical tasks at hand. We had coronavirus cases in Alberta for 12 days before this minister acted, 12 days that were vital to containing the spread of this virus. Why did it take the Premier and his minister 12 days to see common sense and partially call off a war on doctors during the crucial first weeks of a deadly pandemic?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, recently we announced, so that our physicians in this province can focus on a response to COVID-19, that we will not be proceeding with one of our proposals, which was to reduce a 15-minute complex modifier to \$9. We want our physicians to be focusing on serving patients in this province. That was not in the agreement with the AMA, as the member well knows. We're going to continue to listen and meet with the AMA. We met with them as recently as yesterday. They continue to give feedback on changes that might be needed to fee codes.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, 12 days after the first case of coronavirus this government is still proceeding with 10 other attacks on doctors, including a plan to make doctors take a pay cut for the privilege of showing up to work in a hospital in the face of a pandemic. At a time when we should be getting more doctors into hospitals, this government seems still committed to driving them out. Will we have to wait another 12 days before the minister admits that that plan also needs to go?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we're in the middle of responding to a pandemic, a global pandemic. None of that was true, and it's totally irresponsible for that member, in the middle of this response to this pandemic, to perpetuate this myth that physicians may not be paid or may be paid a lesser amount when they go and serve patients in hospitals. If doctors have overhead, they get to use fee codes to allow them to get paid for their overhead. It's so disappointing, again, to perpetuate this fear among our physicians when they need to spend their time serving patients during this pandemic.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Speaking of doctors wanting to serve their patients during the pandemic, these primary care doctors are on the front line, yet the government is still complicating their work. Doctors consulting with patients on the phone to preserve social distance and keep them out of clinics, as recommended by the chief medical officer, have been given a billing code that is currently the lowest in

the country, a rate that actually penalizes them for not seeing patients in person. Meanwhile this government is sending public dollars to a private corporation to provide walk-in medicine by phone. Why are the Premier and this minister nickelling and diming Alberta's primary care doctors and disrespecting their work, seeing their patients, in the middle of a pandemic?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we got the feedback from our physicians that they wanted us to reactivate a fee code that was used in the H1N1 response. We quickly took steps to reactivate that code. The member is correct that it is a \$20 amount. We're getting feedback from the AMA on how we might be able to activate other codes, create new codes, and be able to work with them and make sure the amounts are correct. We're happy to get that feedback from them. That's why we're continuing to meet with them. Unlike other provinces that might have a higher amount, we also don't have a minimum amount of time that the physicians can spend with those patients for that fee code.

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

### COVID-19 and Homeless Shelters

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 outbreak is impacting vulnerable Albertans and those who care for them. Health experts have stated that people who rely on shelters in our province are often at greater risk of health complications from the virus due to their underlying conditions. The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to include self-isolation and social distancing, but not everyone has the opportunity to self-isolate, especially those who don't have a regular place to call home. So how is this government responding to the urgent need for facilities for the homeless and others who will need extra assistance to self-isolate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are working around the clock to ensure that vulnerable Albertans have the supports that they need. This includes co-ordinating with the 25 agencies that operate adult shelters in eight communities across Alberta to ensure that they have plans to respond to the recommendations from the public health officials that are leading the pandemic response. For the past week I have been receiving ongoing updates on the COVID-19 shelter plans. We are making our decisions based on expert advice from our officials and current evidence. We will not rest until the job is done.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that we have just been told that this House has been working with shelter providers and communities across the province on pandemic response plans for COVID-19 and given that our government must work together with community organizations to address the unique and specific needs of our populations who are most vulnerable by virtue of their transient state, can the same minister provide us with an update on the status of this work?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House, \$60 million is being provided to municipalities and community organizations to enhance social support for vulnerable Albertans during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes \$30 million in funding for homeless shelters and women's emergency shelters to address measures detailed in the guidelines from Alberta Health. I can also report that

we are in continuous contact with shelter providers in the province to understand their emerging needs and to respond accordingly. Albertans are known for their dedication, and we will work together to respond to this pandemic.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Well, given that cities such as Edmonton are identifying an urgent and expressed need to establish additional capacity for homeless shelters and given that the COVID-19 situation changes not only by the day but frequently by the hour and knowing that we must do our best to combat and aid all Albertans to prevent the real risk of far-reaching spread, what is this province doing to respond to this request from our cities and local shelter providers?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for this question. Mr. Speaker, by working closely with public health officials and the city of Edmonton, we have made an arrangement with the city to open the Edmonton Expo Centre for this very purpose. Staffing will be co-ordinated by Homeward Trust, with health services provided by AHS. Shelter providers such as Hope Mission and the Mustard Seed currently plan to maintain regular operations in their existing facilities.

I want to thank all of our partners for everything they're doing to ensure that vulnerable Albertans are taken care of.

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

10:40

### Property Taxes

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I joined Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and called on this government to work with municipalities on a plan to defer property tax payments. This pandemic is challenging for all Albertans, but for some a tax bill of hundreds of dollars will cost them groceries for the family. We can't ask them to make that choice, and this government can make sure that they don't have to. Will the Finance minister commit to introducing a plan to allow municipalities to do this, and will the province step up and backfill the funding to keep municipalities fiscally whole?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Municipal Affairs minister will be hosting a town hall later today with over 150 mayors and reeves . . .

**Mr. Kenney:** On the phone.

**Mr. Toews:** . . . on the phone to address some of those concerns. Our Premier has been in touch with the mayors of the big cities. We're looking at measures that we can put in place to take pressure off municipalities, off businesses, and off Albertans.

**Member Ceci:** Great. That's great. Given that this government has already hiked the education property taxes by over \$100 million, Mr. Speaker, and given that this government has spent months downloading costs onto municipalities and that Budget 2020 is going to leave many municipalities with no choice but to hike taxes municipally and increase fees and that this was before the chaos caused by the pandemic, to the minister: will you at least keep your promise to not raise taxes on municipalities and cancel your property tax increases, please? Thank you for the information about the municipal meet.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we've been in close contact and continue to work with municipalities to identify their needs and their challenges and those of their constituents. We're looking at every measure, including the measures that the member opposite has raised. We will be making future announcements in the very near term.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Here's another idea that will probably come up in the Municipal Affairs phone call later today, that this government has also rolled back the grants in place of taxes program last year and this year. Given that this means that the province won't be paying a record \$81 million in property taxes to municipalities for their own buildings and services to those buildings this term, to the minister: if you won't defer property taxes, and it sounds like you may, and if you won't stop hiking education property taxes – I know that you may – at least can you start paying your own property taxes on those buildings?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, if you may.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I may. Again, we're working closely with municipalities. We recognize that municipalities are challenged with resources at this point in time, as is the province, but we are working closely with municipalities to ensure that collectively we can assign our resources to the greatest need for Albertans, for Alberta businesses to ultimately ensure that we can manage through this in the best possible manner.

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

### COVID-19 Research

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. The development of a vaccine and treatments for COVID-19 is a critical priority for all. Alberta is home to some of the best medical research facilities in the country if not the world, and cuts to postsecondaries have researchers working with shrinking budgets while they're racing against the clock to develop treatments and vaccines for this deadly virus. To the minister of postsecondary education: can you please commit to restoring funding to Alberta's postsecondaries so that they can carry on with this critical research?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address that question. The member is correct, of course. Many of our postsecondary institutions, primarily the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, are engaging in a variety of different research activities so that we can work at contributing to the development of a vaccine as best as possible. I know that we have incredible experts in both of these institutions and in others who are doing their utmost to provide as best as possible a solution in terms of a vaccine, and government is doing what we can to assist them and support them in those efforts.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. Thank you for that. Given that the University of Alberta, as you say, and the University of Calgary have state-of-the-art research facilities, given that the national

centre of microbiology is seeking assistance from universities and research centres across the country, including the University of Alberta, to make sure they have the supplies they need for wide-scale COVID-19 testing, again to the minister: is there emergency funding coming to ensure that labs supporting COVID-19 vaccine research and testing have all the supplies that they need?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as the member knows, this is a very fluid and dynamic situation and one that we need to take day by day. Top priority, of course, at this point is to ensure that our students are safe. We know, of course, that there are students in programs and in residences, so the priority is to make sure that they're able to continue their programming as best as possible in a safe and secure manner. We're working through that. The points that the member has raised are indeed important, and we are working with our institutions to, again, assist them with this research activity as best as possible.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for that response.

Given that COVID-19 testing is also necessary life-saving work and given that university laboratories have the equipment and the materials that are needed to test for COVID-19, it is inappropriate to cut funding to universities during this crisis. Again to the minister. Both you and I know that the budget that was passed last week did cut universities, including research. Please, could we see that we can restore the funding so that we can carry on with this important research here?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear. Of course, research funding to our institutions continues. In fact, in terms of some context the Alberta provincial government provides a disproportionately high amount of research dollars to our postsecondary institutions in comparison to other provinces. Those research dollars, of course, that are provided by Alberta Health and other departments and divisions are continuing so that our institutions can continue the important work related to research, particularly in this challenging time.

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

### Support for Business

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in a truly unprecedented time for our province. It is impossible to ignore the very real and significant impacts that this crisis is having and will have on businesses in our province. With the declaration of a state of public health emergency many more businesses have been forced to close for the foreseeable future. Many business owners and employers today are questioning how they will survive the next few months during this economic and public health crisis. To the Minister of Finance: can you please tell this House what relief is available to businesses during this pandemic?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We recognize that businesses in Alberta are just beginning to go through a period of great challenge. We know that many have had to close and many others are continuing to operate and finding ways to do so safely, but it certainly affects their costs. The Premier announced earlier this week a number of

measures that will be supportive of businesses. One of those is the ability to defer utility bills for 90 days. We know that this will provide relief to virtually every business across the province. There will be additional announcements to come.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the upcoming tax season is adding extra pressure to business owners in a very difficult time and given that our government has been committed to supporting job creators and business owners since coming into office last year, can the Minister of Finance tell this House: how is our government addressing the rising liquidity crisis caused by public health measures and poor economic conditions that are greatly affecting all Albertans?

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

10:50

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta businesses, many of them, are facing a cash crunch at this point in time. One of those measures that the Premier announced was, in fact, that Alberta will allow corporations, businesses that work as corporations, to defer corporate tax payments and corporate tax installments until August 31. That will free up about \$1.5 billion worth of cash for Alberta businesses.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the current public health crisis is expected to last for several months and we are unable to predict the toll it will have on our province and given that protecting the health and safety of Albertans means taking aggressive measures that have required many businesses to close their doors and given that our government is providing support to workers and employers affected by this pandemic, to the same minister: what other options are being researched and considered to support Alberta businesses in the challenging months to come?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the other measures that the Premier announced, relief measures, was the fact that the Alberta Treasury Branches and credit unions will be offering deferrals on loan payments and mortgage payments for Albertans and for Alberta's small businesses. They will show flexibility in extending lines of credit through this very taxing time. We're also considering a series of other measures that we will be looking to introduce in the days and weeks ahead.

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

### COVID-19 and Workplace Safety

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While everyone works hard to follow the recommendations of Alberta's chief medical officer of health to flatten the curve of the coronavirus pandemic, it's important to ensure Albertans are protected in the workplace. Will the minister of labour share specific measures as to how occupational health and safety has ramped up to support workplaces, both employers and employees, impacted by the pandemic?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of labour.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. As the hon. member is aware, we have a team of trained occupational health and safety officers that

perform inspections to assist workers and employers to identify and address workplace hazards. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic we are focusing our investigations on health care facilities to ensure supplies and appropriate personal protective equipment is available to protect health care workers and ensure that they are able to serve Albertans who may be sick. We are also focusing inspections on senior care facilities and assessment centres.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. The minister has anticipated some of my further questions.

Given that front-line health care workers are putting themselves at risk every day as they work to keep us and our loved ones safe and healthy in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other health work sites, can the minister of labour tell us more about how proactive inspections are happening right now at hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other health care settings?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated, we are focusing on public health care facilities and private health care facilities as well as seniors' centres and assessment centres. We have officers that are trained specifically in unique hazards found in health care centres, and we will be adding additional staff, as required, to perform those inspections.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is such a difficult time for everyone impacted and it's important that Albertans are taking the necessary precautions while they do their jobs to keep each other safe during this crisis and given that I've heard concerns from health care workers like nurses raising concerns around personal protective equipment here and in other provinces, to the minister of labour. I'm interested in knowing if OHS has received pandemic-related unsafe work refusals. What should Albertans do if they are concerned about their health and safety at work?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most recent statistics we have: as of Wednesday this week there were 36 COVID-19 inquiries relating to work refusals. Occupational health and safety officers provided information to employers and employees, and they will be able to address their concerns on their own. At this time OHS is not actively investigating any unsafe work refusals. To assist, given these unprecedented times, we have resources online that both employers and employees can access. They can go to [alberta.ca/covid19](https://alberta.ca/covid19) or the OHS resource portal, and we're asking that employers and employees work together.

### COVID-19 and Grocery Store Worker Safety

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, we've seen a number of businesses shut down or significantly reduce hours to protect workers and prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, vital services such as grocery stores remain open. Grocery store workers are putting themselves in potential danger in order to keep our province fed in this crisis, and for this they do deserve our praise, but they also deserve to have their health and safety protected. Will the government step up its efforts to ensure grocery store workers and the public are being properly protected with protective equipment and cleaning procedures?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, we are urging all employers and employees to work together to identify risks and put mitigation in place. As indicated previously, there are online resources available that employers and employees can go to: again, [alberta.ca/covid19](http://alberta.ca/covid19) or the occupational health and safety resource centre.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are currently under a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that grocery stores need to stay open with grocery store workers putting themselves at risk of infection and given that gatherings around the province are limited to 50 people and we have seen overflowing stores due to the pandemic, is the government considering limiting the number of customers in stores at one time?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, on the broader issue of people in the private sector, like those working in grocery stores and truckers, we have the Alberta Emergency Management Agency focused on what we would call critical economic infrastructure, and we need those folks to continue working safely. At this point we are not considering that limitation. I see that Loblaw's and other grocery chains have now begun putting a limit on the number of customers in their stores. We would prefer that those voluntary efforts – we'll monitor those voluntary efforts and see if we need to go further with government limitations.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Premier. Given that many grocery store workers are putting themselves in harm's way to keep our province fed and the seriousness of contracting COVID-19, which in some cases can cause death, and given that the Workers' Compensation Board has taken a position that grocery store workers are not high-risk jobs yet these workers could come into contact with somebody with COVID-19 in the line of work, will the government change grocery store work to be considered a high-risk occupation while the pandemic is ongoing?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member raising these thoughtful questions, and I will take that under advisement. I mean that quite seriously. We do have officials looking at questions like that more broadly to other sectors of employment.

Let me just stand here and say: thank you. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people who never get much recognition or gratitude, and we're realizing how important they are to the safety and functioning of our society: the truckers, cleaning personnel, janitorial services, the folks who stock our grocery shelves. I think now more than ever we should all learn to appreciate the great work that those people do.

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

### Easter Celebration

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For faithful Christians the celebration of Easter Sunday is the highest feast and most important day in the calendar. After 40 days of self-denial and Lent, Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, believe in his death and resurrection, conquer death itself, reconciling us to God. Given that this week in Alberta many denominations have cancelled their liturgies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving hundreds of thousands of faithful concerned they will not be able to celebrate Easter, is it the intention of this government to prohibit the faithful from celebrating the most important liturgy of the year?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify. I know that religious communities are a source of strength and a source of comfort, especially in times like these. The current ban does not prevent gatherings at places of worship. Mass gatherings are simply required to be limited to no more than 50 attendees and to take the appropriate precautions.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given how many faith leaders are trying to balance public health and spiritual health of their congregations and given that Easter is the absolute highest religious significance for practising Christians and given this government's commitment to religious freedom, can the minister propose ways that faith communities can both hold paschal liturgical celebrations and at the same time stay within the best practices of the recommendations of our public health authorities?

11:00

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Organizations should take all necessary precautions such as social distancing, asking those who are sick not to attend, ensuring that hand sanitizer is available. This is a rapidly changing situation, as everyone knows, and we cannot speculate on when the current restrictions will need to be changed or lifted. Albertans should prepare for restrictions to be in place for some time. Again, I assure all the faith communities in the province that we know your faith is essential to you and to your communities, subject only to the measures needed to protect Albertans from this global pandemic.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister, through you. Given that the chief medical officer's recommendations and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been rapidly evolving, minute by minute, and given that many major denominations have had limited contact with Dr. Hinshaw or her office, can the Minister of Health encourage the chief medical officer and her office to work closely with faith leaders in Alberta in order to find the most appropriate path forward for Christian communities to celebrate their liturgies this Eastertide?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Peace River for raising that important question. I know that many faith communities are understandably distressed with the protocols that are now in place, so I would undertake to organize through my office an outreach, a province-wide teleconference with faith leaders and perhaps make available individuals from public health Alberta so that we can clarify the public health protocols as they relate to liturgies and worship services. We want people to be able to continue to celebrate their faiths while at the same time staying safe.

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

### COVID-19 and Public Service Workplace Safety

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've always believed that the government of Alberta should be a good employer, one that serves as a model to other employers in the province. During this outbreak we know it's critically important that everyone, employers and employees, work together to follow the directions of the chief medical officer. We also know that Dr.

Hinshaw has asked repeatedly for employers to exercise flexibility as we all strive to flatten the curve. To the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission: why is the GOA telling workers able to do their jobs from home that they must come into the office during this pandemic?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member opposite for the question. I've been in regular communication with Public Service Commission officials, and certainly they have been advising public service employees to work from home wherever possible. There are some duties and tasks that simply require public service workers to come in, but we're monitoring it constantly, and our plan is to work at home wherever possible.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that provincial legislation requires employers to do everything they reasonably can to protect the health and safety of their employees and given that Dr. Hinshaw has said that the ability to work from home is going to become more important for those in occupations where it is possible and that she also said, "Take this seriously; stay home unless it's essential for you to go out," and given that that today there are workers who have come in to work-site locations around the province despite having the ability to do their job from home, will the minister please explain when these workers will have work-from-home policies in place?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly we'll continue conversations with officials at the Public Service Commission. Again, wherever possible our instruction has been for public-sector employees to in fact work from home. We do recognize that in the effort to deliver services to Albertans at this very critical time, in some cases employees will have to come in. But, again, we're taking the advice of the chief medical officer.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, as we understand it, only 5 per cent of Alberta public service employees are currently able to work from home and given that those who are part of essential tasks may not have the ability to work from home at all, like the members of our Alberta wildfire crews – there can be unique difficulties for people who are working in work camps, challenges with social distancing and strict hygiene not only for our wildfire crews but also those working in oil and gas – I would like to ask this government: what are they doing to protect work camp workers from potential outbreak?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Again, we are working very hard with employers and employees to identify workplace hazards and ensure that mitigation is in place. Based on the recommendation put out by the chief medical officer, I've been speaking to both employers and unions over the past week. They're telling me that items are being put in place to ensure that for work camps different scheduling techniques are being put in place to limit individuals coming into contact with each other to protect workers and employers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a question to ask.

### COVID-19 and Correctional Facilities

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the COVID-19 outbreak one of the most important things that Albertans can do to protect themselves and each other is social distancing and isolation, but some prisons, especially remand centres, are beyond capacity. These pressures have been building for decades, but they've become extra hazardous in the last few weeks. To the Solicitor General: what specifically is being done to ensure the safety of staff and inmates at correction centres, and is there special cleaning and personal protective equipment being made available?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, effective March 16 family, professional, and volunteer visits to all Alberta provincial correctional facilities and young offender centres have been suspended. Of course, that measure has been put in place to practise social distancing and limit interactions there. Furthermore, if defence counsel – I think it's an important message to ensure – require in-person meetings with individuals, arrangements can be made and should be made, of course, dependent on operational hygiene and other safety considerations.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that no matter how thorough the cleaning or how many steps are taken, proximity of inmates to each other and to staff at the Calgary Remand Centre is a fundamental hazard and given that many jurisdictions are taking steps to reduce the corrections populations at this time, are steps being taken to reduce the number of nonviolent people remanded or given custodial sentences or sent to jail in any way for the duration of this outbreak?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know, as the member opposite knows, of course, that the situation is changing rapidly. I know that officials within Health and Justice and Solicitor General are closely monitoring the situation and are informed in terms of their operational decisions by the recommendations of the chief medical officer. We're continuing to monitor that situation very closely and take appropriate steps where needed.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the safety of employees, inmates, and the public is a top priority but given that once an individual is remanded or sentenced, they must be admitted and once an individual sentence has ended, they must be released, to the Solicitor General: what is being done to ensure that individuals who may be exhibiting symptoms are isolated from staff and other inmates when admitted and to ensure that those exhibiting symptoms on release have somewhere they can go to self-isolate?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that correctional services staff, working very closely and in collaboration with Alberta Health Services, will continue to provide support and health services to inmates and to youth in Alberta

provincial correctional facilities and young offender centres. Furthermore, of course, if individuals in remand centres are exhibiting symptoms, the appropriate steps will be taken to employ social distancing as best as possible, and I know that appropriate hygiene steps are also being put into place as we speak.

### Agricultural Concerns

**Mr. Loewen:** Farmers across Alberta are feeling the effects of COVID-19. Uncertainty in the markets where they sell their products is high. They have also felt the effects of multiple harvests where excessive rain has made their harvest difficult if not impossible. In fact, 25 per cent of the crops left in the field over the winter are in the central Peace. With COVID-19 there is ever-growing concern over the ability for inspectors to get out first thing in the spring, assess crops and for farmers to receive payout for their losses so they can plant their crops in the spring. To the Agriculture and Forestry minister: how is the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, or AFSC, ensuring that assessors will have assessments done in a timely manner in the central Peace in light of the interruption that COVID-19 has brought about?

11:10

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. AFSC offices will remain open, and we are working with them to develop a plan so that the surge demand that will happen for area farmers, especially in his area, will have the crop adjusters there when they need them.

I would like to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank all the farmers and ranchers that are still out there working every day. They do a great job. They employ lots of people in rural Alberta. They produce safe, high-quality food. Although it might be easier to practise social distancing in the cab of a tractor or driving through your pasture, it's something that we should really recognize, the important work that our farmers do.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that COVID-19 has created financial instability in all aspects of farm life and given that when crops are left out over winter, wildlife can wreak havoc on them – in fact, I have personally seen over 200 elk in one field eating a crop that was left out – and given that AFSC does the assessing for wildlife-damaged crops and farmers who were planning on feeding their crops to their livestock this winter are out of pocket for feed costs and now can hardly hang on financially until spring, to the minister: how is this government helping farmers who have been hit with the effects of COVID-19 and crop losses to access the compensation they need when they need it?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's estimated that about \$700 million still needs to be paid out to farmers due to the effect of the last difficult harvest, but AFSC is looking at, with its lending clients, having interest-only payments, payment reamortization, and payment deferrals. Also, with farmers that have insurance through AFSC, they're actually working with the federal government to consider extensions to insurance deadlines. That's what AFSC is working on. We as a ministry are also working with them, but market access and our supply chains are very important, and we're doing everything we can to maintain them.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that COVID-19 will be affecting the movement of people across Alberta as more and more people are in

self-isolation, and this will affect farmers who work to help support their farms, and given that the cross-border movement of people and goods has been severely curtailed so that the agriculture inputs for not only grain and cattle farms are affected but also bee farmers and given that bee farmers across Alberta have suffered from cold, wet weather and some have lost 30 to 40 per cent and even more of their honey production, what is your department doing to help beekeepers who have had an incredibly bad year and will have the compounded effects of COVID-19?

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

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bee farmers are an important part of our agricultural mix that we have here in the province of Alberta. The honey insurance program paid out \$2.3 million. The bee overwintering insurance program last year paid out \$160,000. We won't know the effect of that yet, obviously, for spring. I know the member opposite is very interested in bees. He's a bit of an enthusiast. It is something that we're doing everything we can to review AFSC programs for beekeepers as well going forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to thank everyone for their participation in the first Oral Question Period on a Friday since Friday, September 10, 1993. A special guest on that day was His Excellency James Blanchard, the United States ambassador to Canada.

In 35 seconds or less we will proceed to the remaining of the Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 10 for the period until March 26, 2020, the notice provision under Standing Order 39(1) does not apply to members of the Executive Council who wish to introduce a bill after providing to the Speaker and the Official Opposition House Leader a copy of such notice. I have and the Official Opposition has received such notice. Therefore, I would now call upon the hon. the Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### Bill 9

#### Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the first time I've done it this way. I request leave to introduce a bill, being the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved first reading of Bill 9, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any tablings today?

Seeing none, I have several tablings this morning. First, in my capacity as the Chair pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table the requisite six copies of each of the following orders approved at the March 18, 2020, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Executive Council salaries amendment order 13, being order MSC 02/20; members' allowances amendment order 36, being order MSC

03/20; and members' committee allowance amendment order 15, being order MSC 04/20.

Next, I have six copies of the following memo from the Government House Leader: a memo dated March 19 regarding extended sitting days, received in my office at 9:05 a.m.

From the Official Opposition House Leader a memo, also dated March 19, acknowledging the Government House Leader's memo that the House remain adjourned that day, received my official notice at 10:34 a.m.

From the Government House Leader, also dated March 19, a memo confirming the continuation of adjournment for yesterday.

From the Government House Leader, received in my office this morning, March 20, at 8:20 a.m., a memo outlining the name of Bill 9.

A memo from my office dated March 19 to all members of the Assembly outlining the extended sitting days per discussions with the House leader.

And a second memo from my office dated March 19 to all members with an abbreviated revised projected sitting date calendar for March 20, 21, and 22, 2020.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta annual report 2018-19.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, responses to questions raised by Mr. Schmidt, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar; Mr. Getson, hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland; and Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, on November 19, 2019, Ministry of Environment and Parks 2019-20 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** I will provide notice to the Assembly that earlier this morning we did grant unanimous consent for any member to sit and speak and vote from any seat in the Assembly, so if anyone would choose to move around the Assembly, they'd be welcome to do so.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

**The Speaker:** Now I'd like to recognize the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a point of clarification on process. Do I need to ask for consent to move to second reading? That's what I thought.

I rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) in order to proceed to second reading of Bill 9, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.

11:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just to provide some context for those who may be following along at home, the hon. Government House Leader has asked for unanimous consent to proceed to multiple stages of a piece of legislation in the same day. He has done that by requesting the waive of a standing order. I will ask only one question.

Is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent for such? If so, do so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Bill 9

#### Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 9, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, on behalf of my friend the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 9 amends the existing act, and it clarifies the responsibilities and ensures that local authorities remain responsible for emergency management in their communities in the event of a disaster such as a wildfire or a flood if a provincial state of emergency is declared. This is separate and distinct from the public health emergency currently in place in Alberta to address the impacts of COVID-19.

In light of the COVID-19 situation an amendment to the act is required as under the current act a provincial state of emergency automatically nullifies a local authority's state of local emergency. Municipalities deserve the freedom and the opportunity to make the choices that fit them best based upon their detailed knowledge of their communities. Local authorities like municipalities are responsible for overseeing emergency responses by declaring a state of local emergency unless the provincial government takes control by declaring a state of emergency. Currently a province-wide state of emergency cannot exist at the same time as a state of local emergency. Some municipalities have declared states of local emergency in light of our battle against COVID-19.

This amendment would change three things that I know will help all municipalities across the province. One, it will enable states of local emergency, which are declared by local authorities, and the state of emergency which is declared by the province to exist at the same time. Two, it would enable local emergency management agencies to co-ordinate and implement plans and programs at the local level when a state of local emergency and state of emergency have been declared. And, three, it would clarify provincial and local emergency responses as needed.

I believe that these changes will eliminate potential disruptions to local response if any event changes from a local emergency to a provincial state of emergency. Municipalities know what is best for their residents; we are simply getting out of their way and letting them do it. If passed, I believe this legislation will ensure emergency management is handled in the best possible way.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

With that, Madam Speaker, I ask for the support of the Chamber.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 9, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, and the amendments proposed in this 24-page document that we have before us.

Before I begin, I'd just like to echo the leader of our party, who sent, earlier, her deepest sympathies to the family and loved ones of the Albertan who passed away in our province, the first COVID-19-related death in this province. I just want to also say that, you



know, we're all in this together. Our hearts go out to that family for their loss. We continue, as we all do across the aisle here, to join hands and say that our health care workers, who are working so tirelessly to get us through this pandemic, deserve our support and appreciation.

We have looked at this bill, and thank you to the government for your briefing earlier today with regard to the aspects in it that are very shortly to be amended. It seems like it's a reasonable change to expect that the government of Alberta work closely in partnership with local municipalities and First Nations across this province in managing an unprecedented situation, which is a pandemic.

Earlier today I also reached out to representatives of the AUMA to find out their view with regard to the recommendations being brought forward in Bill 9, and I can tell you that the briefing they had supports what the House leader was saying in terms of that this is to assist local governments and enable their actions in concert with the provincial government in the public health emergency that the government has called, and they believe it to be a co-ordinating issue as well as clarifying responsibilities.

I didn't have the opportunity, unfortunately, to reach out to members of RMA, and I was wondering if members of the government have had that opportunity and what their response was from that organization, which looks at supporting and has membership of about 96 rural municipalities and other entities around the province.

The reason that this bill is important at this time, obviously, Madam Speaker, is that because as of yesterday, March 19, there were 18 local states of emergency throughout the province that had been declared by local governments and five First Nations states of emergency. In other words, there are many municipalities that have already declared their local states of emergency, and they want to maintain those because, as the House leader said just a few minutes ago, local governments really get and understand what their residents, their taxpayers, stakeholders need, so better co-ordinating with those existing local states of emergency at the provincial level is in order.

It should reduce disruptions of service. We don't want there to be gaps in addressing this pandemic, and this amendment, this Bill 9, that has been brought forward is a way to ensure that there's clarity amongst our municipal partners and the province of Alberta. It also makes clear that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can put in place a managing director in charge of a local emergency should that be needed. So instead of local states of emergency automatically ceasing to exist, this amendment that's before us here today will make it so that they only cease to exist by order in council. As we know, that would only take place if there was a need for it, and the order in council, as a result of a cabinet decision or the minister's decision, would be something undertaken with significant gravity.

It also clarifies that the person designated by the minister supersedes local authorities in the case of conflicting directions, and this is something, as I said, we don't want to see. We want there to be a hand-in-glove operation between the provincial government and local municipal governments across this province.

I won't go into the specifics of the parts that are being amended. That may be something that somebody else wants to do. But in addition to those things, I think I'd like to also say, in sum, that the bill gives cabinet more flexibility about the consequences of declaring a state of emergency in terms of how that impacts local emergency responses and responsibility and how it impacts local states of emergency. I take the words seriously from the House leader, that we want to enable local governments to work better with their provincial partner, the government of Alberta. We want to ensure there's greater co-ordination every step of the way, and we want to clarify who has responsibility for what. Those are the

aspects that I understand that this bill will endeavour to allow greater clarity around.

My question, still, to the House leader, if he knows, or other ministers who may take the opportunity to speak to it, is around feedback from the RMA with regard to the changes: do they feel similarly as the AUMA in this regard?

11:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his constructive remarks. I can verify that I personally consulted with the president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, His Worship Mayor Barry Morishita, as well as their worships the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary. They all express support for this measure, and I'm advised by the hon. Government House Leader that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta have also been consulted and have expressed support for the provisions contained in this bill.

If I could, just to amplify what has already been said, we believe that it is not necessary at this point, but given the crisis it is possible that officials will recommend that the Lieutenant Governor in Council authorize an order in council to invoke the Emergency Management Act, but we would not want to subordinate already existing municipal emergency management plans with respect to COVID-19. This is, I think, a very discrete but useful amendment that would allow provincial and municipal emergency management plans to coexist and operate concurrently.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to also add that the mayor of Calgary, in particular, has proposed some other prospective amendments to the Emergency Management Act – I'm sorry; I'm a bit sleep deprived – and we are actively considering those. Those were not on the floor today, but it is possible that the government will come before the Assembly in the days or weeks to come with some additional, fairly technical amendments to ensure the modernization and more efficient operation of the Emergency Management Act. I just thought I would give the House a forewarning of that or advice about that, and we will be continuing to consult with municipalities in that respect. As mentioned during question period, the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be joining mayors and reeves from across the province in a teleconference, and I hope to join that. This would be one of the items on the agenda.

Let me close by saying that we appreciate the very close co-operation and strong leadership of our municipal governments in helping Alberta to cope with the coronavirus crisis.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We find ourselves living in an extraordinary time. This is obviously an unprecedented situation with the global pandemic, and that requires an unprecedented and extraordinary response, indeed, a response in many senses, I think, that runs counter to many of our instincts as human beings, a response that requires us to fundamentally alter how we live and how we operate as a society in our communities.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As those entrusted, I think, with the real and concrete privilege of representing the communities and individuals in our province, we're empowered here with a very unique responsibility to very carefully weigh how we can best move forward to protect those that we are serving in terms both of their health and, I think, in managing some of these inevitable social and economic impacts that are going to affect us in the face of this pandemic. I would say that chief

amongst those responsibilities for us as leaders is ensuring that we're communicating and, indeed, personally modelling and following the recommendations of the chief medical officer, a public officer who, I believe, should absolutely be considered the expert and authority in guiding our behaviour and our response to this pandemic, including as legislators.

Indeed, I'd like to just take the opportunity to remind everyone of those terms, being that: if you are indeed sick, please stay home; wash your hands; maintain social distancing; cover coughs and sneezes, which I admittedly failed to do a moment ago – we are all human; avoid touching your face; monitor for symptoms and, if they develop, take the self-assessment tool that is available and, if necessary, call 811. Of course, it's incredibly important that we maintain that social distancing, which is difficult, I know, and indeed that we are ourselves making somewhat of an exception to here in this House today. But it is still important, I think, that we recognize that these are the standards and that we follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer.

We do find ourselves here today in what is a very exceptional sitting of the Legislature to provide and amend some exceptional powers to allow the provincial government to respond and collaborate with some of our partners in municipal government. We recognize the importance of that, and we recognize the extraordinary power that the government has granted itself in this Legislature in order to be able to accomplish these sorts of exceptional things. These are the reasons why we have granted ourselves this ability to set aside some of the recommendations of the chief medical officer, so that in times such as this, when there are important pieces of legislation which must be put in place for the management of this pandemic, we're able to meet in this Legislature to do so. Or, indeed, as the government had indicated with their budget, for which they used again those extraordinary powers to move through this Legislature at quite a rapid pace, that that was in order to ensure that we would be able to best follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer in perhaps abridging the sitting of this Legislature.

Of course, those are the parameters under which I'm sure we will be considering what steps we will take in continuing to meet in this House. But for today I think it is reasonable that we are here and that we are meeting to consider this legislation which is important, again, in terms of allowing the government to better collaborate with our municipal governments, recognizing their important place and the place of respect that we should indeed hold them in as partners and collaborators with provincial government, not simply bodies that we would dictate to but folks that can help us accomplish some incredibly important goals and with whom we will be working together to manage this global pandemic and indeed the impacts as we continue to manage with social distancing, as we continue to find ways that we can still deliver the important municipal services that are needed and that we ourselves as legislators need to continue to recognize and to model.

So I support the government in this legislation. I am happy to be here today to participate in this process. I thank them for this leadership. I look forward to the further steps I know they will be taking to protect against evictions and some of these other important pieces that other jurisdictions have had the opportunity to put in place. We as legislators can work together to ensure we are protecting not only the health in the moment during this global pandemic but indeed the recovery of our province and all those we represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, anyone wishing to join in the debate this morning of Bill 9 at second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'd like to thank our hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. I know that he's been working hard. He's one of the individuals within this Legislature who had come in from out of the country and therefore, unfortunately, had to be put into self-isolation of course, following the necessary rules put forward by our chief medical officer and the outstanding work that she has been doing. It is really wonderful to see how people have been following her direction and, quite frankly, watching her and her department and the people behind her being able to adapt, again, to such a fluid situation.

I'd like to thank the members, of course, in the opposition for their co-operation in regard to, it appears, this particular bill. You know, I know that the Premier had mentioned a level of co-operation between the province and the municipalities to make sure that in emergency management situations these sort of things tend to flow, which I think is very important. Again, I know that with these dynamic and fluid situations it is important that you have a structure where there is a central point of command and that, whether it be the province or the municipality or to a certain extent folks within the federal government, they know that they can work in co-ordination with each other to achieve the goals that they are trying to achieve.

11:40

In this particular case, obviously, it's to be able to contain this virus and protect the citizens of Alberta. I know that it's such a multilayered approach with mechanisms and, you know, everybody is trying to co-ordinate and do their part. I see from an emergency management perspective that if there is a piece of legislation that is able to assist and try to make a system a little bit more fluid than what it was before, it is wonderful to see the level of co-operation between the government and government members and, of course, Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

I want to thank again, Mr. Speaker, everybody within this Legislature. I know it's a Friday morning. From my understanding talking to people within the government member side and the Official Opposition, I think everybody does have a complete understanding of the exigency of these circumstances that we are in today, and I know that everybody does understand that the primary goal, I think, of any government is the protection of life. Everybody, I believe, has that intention to do whatever means are necessary and invoke whatever measures are necessary to ensure that lives are protected within the province of Alberta.

From what I have seen, you know, although it is, again, a dynamic and fluid situation, Alberta has been for the most part, in several different categories, leading the way. I mean, I know that there was some talk even just in regard to testing that is being done, and certainly Dr. Hinshaw has indicated the number of tests that we've done and the number of people that have been identified and the precautions that are being taken to take care of those people, which I think is outstanding. You know, like any of us, we watch television in Canada, the United States, and around the world. Certainly, what I feel is that in Canada and specifically in Alberta we have taken a step in the right direction, and I believe that we are certainly doing our best to protect the citizens of Alberta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak. I certainly am in complete support of this bill, and I thank everyone for their co-operation on this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to add a comment on the bill?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question, although the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs could close debate should he wish to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I'm good, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

### 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 9 Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 9, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020. As I understand it, this particular piece of legislation makes changes to the Alberta Emergency Management Act, the bill giving government the option to leave municipalities with more flexibility and authority. In other words Calgary, Edmonton, and other municipalities would be able to maintain their local states of emergency, where they are declared, and the province does not automatically take over operations. Now, certainly, there are a number of other details in this legislation, which I'm sure some of my colleagues will get into in a little bit more depth.

I just wanted to say that on behalf of municipalities like the city of St. Albert, the community that I represent, I am quite certain they are thankful that the government is recognizing the importance of coexisting and that levels of government work together to do what is in the best interest of all Albertans. I certainly do appreciate that.

I appreciate the commitment made by the Premier, when he rose earlier to talk about this bill, to commit to ongoing consultation with organizations. I appreciated his comment when he said that he looked forward to hearing more about recommendations like, for example, the ones that were made by His Worship the mayor of Calgary. Although it's really important to begin to establish a framework to deal with the challenges ahead, I'm encouraged by the government's commitment to ongoing consultation to ensure that we all get this right. I think the goal that we share is that we want what's best for our people, for the people of Alberta.

Madam Chair, I'm happy to support this piece of legislation. Before I take my seat, I just wanted to take a really quick moment, as many of my colleagues have done, to offer my assistance wherever it is needed, but more importantly I wanted to thank the men and women all over this province that are being tested now, certainly, and that will continue to be tested in the months to come. I thank them for their incredible skill and expertise and experience and knowledge. I thank the doctors and the nurses and the personal-care aides and the lab techs, radiologists, the pharmacists. I thank the community disability workers, who are often unsung heroes. I thank our first responders. I thank our paramedics, respiratory techs, all of them. There are too many for me to name, but I want to just commend them.

I think all of us have likely spent time, you know, imagining what a health system at capacity would look like, and I think I feel comforted knowing that we have some incredible men and women all over this province that have always been there for us and that will continue to be.

I'm encouraged by the commitment to ongoing consultation and re-evaluation, and I guess that's what good emergency management is. You think you have the best plan, but then you stop and realize what's happening, and you just might have to tweak it a little bit or move. I think the best way to do that is when we listen to our partners, the people on the ground, the experts.

I also want to encourage all Albertans. We have some amazing leaders in this province; let's be honest. I think Dr. Hinshaw in the last little while has demonstrated the value of a chief medical officer. I'm incredibly grateful for her leadership and her grace and her transparency, actually. I truly appreciate that. I want to encourage all Albertans to not just think about her advice and possibly follow it. Follow her advice. She's brilliant. She's smart. She's being honest with us. She's saying: "Take this seriously. This is not a drill. Do everything you can to support our health care workers. They need us all."

Madam Chair, with that, I will take my seat. I thank the government for their work. I wish them well in the coming hours, days, weeks, months. I am certain they will be tested as well and challenged.

Thank you.

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

11:50

**Member Ceci:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I just rose because when the emergency was called earlier, it talked about the Public Health Act, and, you know, I got to know it a lot as a result of the emergency being talked about as a public health emergency. I thought as a former municipal councillor that it would have been under the Emergency Management Act, but it's gotten me into reading the Public Health Act as well. Section 52.21(1) is "significant likelihood of pandemic influenza," and I imagine that's the section that was used by the cabinet to call the public health emergency.

When I was talking to the government earlier today on the phone in terms of the briefing for this legislative amendment – in the Public Health Act there's very clear information about compensation to those impacted, those local governments impacted, as a result of actions taken under the Public Health Act – I asked if anything was changing with regard to the amendments being brought forward to the Emergency Management Act around the compensation that local governments can anticipate to receive if a local emergency is called in their community and the changes that are being brought forward with regard to the co-operation between the provincial government and the local governments. I was assured that, no, there are no changes to any of the compensatory agreements between local governments and the provincial government. I was gratified to hear that, Madam Chair, with regard to the amendments being brought forward.

I would say that many municipalities around the province have of course declared local states of emergency in the past. As a local city councillor I was involved in at least one, perhaps two, with my colleague the Minister of Transportation: in 2010, I think, the flooding in Calgary – there were two floods in Calgary that we were both involved with – and then, of course, the massive flood in all of southern Alberta in 2013, and numerous local states of emergency were called in that case. I don't think a provincial state of emergency was called.

Anything that co-ordinates orders of government – as well, we have to recognize that there's also the federal order of government, that is working diligently to ensure the protection of all Canadians through this pandemic. I wonder how that's going, just generally, with regard to this provincial government and their operations with the federal government. But I'm very happy to see that the Public Health Act declaration matches up with the Emergency Management Act and the amendments being brought here today as well as that the compensatory arrangements stay in place for local governments to ensure that they're not out as a result of the state of emergency being called.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of Bill 9 and thank the government for bringing this forward. Certainly, these are unsettling times, challenging times, and Albertans are looking to their government to take the steps needed and necessary to help them get through this pandemic. The change that's been brought forward: it's my understanding that it will ensure that wherever the local emergencies are in place, they remain intact. In fact, Calgary brought in a local emergency a few days ago and has taken steps to ensure public health and safety.

I think it's, as I said, difficult times, challenging times. Yesterday I spent all my day at home, which is quite difficult, but I took time to reach out to my friends, family, constituents, stakeholders wherever I could. Everywhere I think there are two or three things that people are discussing, that people are concerned about, and I will briefly touch on that and how this action or further action from the government is important in this regard to address the challenges we are facing.

First and foremost, I would say that everyone I talk to is concerned about their health and well-being, about the health and well-being of their loved ones and that of the community. For that reason, I think it's very important that we take this pandemic seriously – it's a serious public health threat – and that we take the advice that we are getting from Dr. Hinshaw, Alberta's chief medical officer, seriously. I think it's worth repeating what the chief medical officer has been saying: if you are sick, you must stay home; wash your hands; maintain social distance; cover coughs and sneezes; avoid touching your face; monitor for the symptoms; self-isolate; call 811; call for help. At the same time, as we try to follow this advice, we do know that people may get sick, that people may need assistance, so that's why it's also important that we thank those who are on the front line of health care providing necessary supports, providing medical and health supports to those who need that.

We can thank them in many ways. One way of thanking them that's incumbent on us is that we make sure they have all the resources they need to deal with this public health emergency. The second thing: I've been also hearing from many different communities the need for a consistent message, because in the age of social media there are so many videos. So many messages are floating on social media. All these letters are coming out of emergency rooms from Italy. This is coming out of Toronto. I think it's very important as government that we make sure that there is an absolute consistency in the message that Albertans will see, and in particular, because I represent a constituency where English may not be the first language for many of them, I would also urge the government to make sure that the message from Dr. Hinshaw, from Alberta's chief medical officer, is available in multiple languages

so that people can get that message and, I guess, do the things that they're supposed to do during this public health crisis.

I think this change in the Emergency Management Act will also necessitate that there is still some co-ordination between these local emergencies and at the government level so that, at least on the basics, we are doing the things that are recommended by and that are in accordance with Dr. Hinshaw's advice as the chief medical officer.

The second thing, I think, that I heard from many of them was that people are concerned about their jobs, their livelihoods, their businesses. This is the time, I guess, when people need their government the most, that if they're not able to work from home, that if they have to self-isolate or quarantine, there are supports that are available to them to get through this. My understanding is that both levels of government, provincial and federal, have come up with that, and people certainly feel somewhat relieved to hear those announcements that their government will be there. At the same time, the supports that were announced were more towards people who own their homes but not so much towards those who are renting their places. There is still a need that we address those challenges as well.

**12:00**

Also, in my constituency, in my area there are many people who drive cabs, who drive Uber for their living, so they are also at risk of exposure to this coronavirus. At the same time they may or may not be covered by the supports that are in place, so there is a need for more clarity for those who ordinarily would not be covered under EI and all of those programs.

With respect to businesses I spoke to quite a few of them, and most of them are already saying that their sales have dropped more than 50 per cent, so that 10 per cent cash-flow help from the federal government may not be enough to sustain that. Clearly, there is a need that government should step up to provide those supports so that they can stay afloat.

The third thing I think I want to highlight is that people are generally concerned about the overall state of the economy or overall health of our economy, with falling oil prices and slowing demand. The Alberta economy will be challenged. We do know that oil and gas play an important role in our economy. But at this time I think we need to make sure that government comes up with induced investment, that government steps up with investment in infrastructure not only to create jobs but also to help attract other entrepreneurs in the medium and long run and be able to diversify our economy.

In short, I think the steps government has taken are much appreciated. There are still things that Albertans want more clarity on, that Albertans want support on.

One thing I would say is that during this time, leadership will be tested. We are all public office holders; we will all be tested. After talking to so many Albertans, constituents, friends, families, one thing for sure is that at the end of the day this government will not be judged on whether they left their books in black or red; this government will be judged on how they responded to this pandemic and whether they provided all the needed and necessary supports that Albertans need, whether they took all of the steps that were at their disposal to help Albertans. On behalf of Alberta's Official Opposition I will say that we are here to work with the government to help Albertans get through it.

Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to briefly speak in support of what's before us. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo said, I spent a few years on city council in Calgary and eight of those nine years on the Alberta municipalities board, I'd like to think, working with and learning the concerns of rural Alberta as well as the big cities. This piece of legislation, I think, really respects the expertise of the municipalities, who have up till now been in a position – they do, as required, declare states of emergency, and they have tremendous local talent, knowledge, access to, I would say, the goodwill of citizens in each of their municipalities as well.

I think this legislation probably hasn't been put in place before because it hasn't been deemed necessary. There have been many, many disasters and urgent events, but there hasn't been a single overarching situation such as COVID-19 in the past. I think it's timely. For any municipalities watching or paying attention to this: I don't think they will, but I would hope they wouldn't take this as any kind of slight but, rather, as a recognition that we're better together and that their amazing efforts in the past, their amazing efforts now, their great expertise are going to be needed. If there was ever a time in history we need to work as a team, that time has arrived. This will allow the provincial government as well as each municipality, as each of them deems required in their own area of responsibility, to declare those states of emergency without tripping over each other and without being at odds.

I'm very pleased to support this, and I thank the Government House Leader and the other folks and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for putting this together. I certainly thank the opposition for being supportive of us bringing this together and helping this get passed quickly. Thank you, folks. Thank you, folks on all sides. Yeah. I just thought it was important to show some appreciation to the municipalities as well as people on all sides of the House.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of the amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, does the Assembly agree in the report? If so, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) in order to proceed to third reading of Bill 9, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 9

#### Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move third reading of Bill 9, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, on behalf of my friend and colleague the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I don't have much to add that I did not already say at second reading, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to take a moment in reference to Bill 9 to recognize the Official Opposition, as my friend and colleague the hon. Minister of Transportation just did in Committee of the Whole, and express our appreciation for your support. I think it's an important moment such as this that shows the value and the importance of the Chamber of democracy inside our province. Often, as Mr. Speaker knows, the partisan process of our system comes out a lot, and I know that it will continue to during this crisis and after this crisis – that's how our system works – but I think it really shows that all 87 members of the Chamber know that we have important moments like this where we can help people outside the Chamber who are fighting this crisis. This is one of them, so I do appreciate the Official Opposition helping the government to be able to get this done for the people of Alberta today and thank them for that.

With that, I look forward to hopefully finishing this up shortly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 9? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take an opportunity, as this bill passes third reading, to thank everyone involved in joining together to create safety in our society on behalf of all people. As the Government House Leader has just said, the co-operation across the floor is essential.

**12:10**

Of course, the role of some of the nonlegislative officers, such as Dr. Hinshaw, has been crucial to making sure that this is a pandemic that is well addressed in this province and speaks to the need to have province-wide structural systems in place to ensure the safety of all of our citizens, to ensure that all people are protected and that there is no separation between those that have and those who do not. In a situation like this we truly believe that everyone is of equal importance and everyone's well-being contributes to the well-being of the province of Alberta.

We'd like to thank all of those people who have in the past not often received the recognition that they might rightly deserve for doing their part in the larger collective of well-being in this province, everyone from, of course, Dr. Hinshaw and the staff of AHS through to all of the service workers who provide us with the services we need in a time of crisis, like the grocery workers, the taxi drivers, the cleaners, all of the people whose jobs, sometimes we forget, are actually fundamentally important to the well running of this province.

We'd like to take this time today to thank them and to express our appreciation, that I'm sure is shared across the floor.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to third reading? Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to advise the Assembly of something, but just before I do that, to you first: I'd like to thank you for your hard work, you and your entire team, this week to facilitate the legislative process as well as, of course, the Clerk, all

of the Legislative Assembly table officers, everybody who was involved. I have to say a particular special mention to our unique pages/security staff this week, who I think have done a good job. Some of them don't slip behind the chairs as easily as the usual pages, but we do appreciate all their efforts, I think, on all sides of the aisle on that.

Mr. Speaker, just before I say what I officially have to say, through you to all members of the Assembly I wish safe travels back home. Thank you for all your work. Godspeed and travel safe.

I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i) the public interest requires that the Assembly adjourn until Tuesday, March 24, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:14 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i)]

## **Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 2nd Session (2020)**

**Activity to Friday, March 20, 2020**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

### **Bill 1 — Critical Infrastructure Defence Act (Kenney)**

First Reading — 4 (*Feb. 25, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 12-18 (*Feb. 26, 2020 morn.*), 96-98 (*Mar. 2, 2020 aft., adjourned*)

### **Bill 2 — Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Amendment Act, 2020 (Hunter)**

First Reading — 30 (*Feb. 26, 2020 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 3 — Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020 (Glubish)**

First Reading — 30 (*Feb. 26, 2020 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 4 — Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020 (Toews)**

First Reading — 62 (*Feb. 27, 2020 aft., passed*)

### **Bill 5 — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020 (Toews)**

First Reading — 110 (*Mar. 3, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 224-232 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*), 222-223 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*)

Committee of the Whole — 232-233 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 234-241 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 241 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 242-248 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House Sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2020 c3 ]

### **Bill 6 — Appropriation Act, 2020 (\$) (Toews)**

First Reading — 215 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*), (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*)

Second Reading — 216-222 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 222 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., deemed passed on division*)

Third Reading — 222 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., deemed passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 20, 2020; SA 2020 c1 ]

### **Bill 9 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (Madu)**

First Reading — 276 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-280 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 280-282 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 282-283 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 20, 2020; SA 2020 c2 ]

### **Bill 201 — Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act (Gottfried)**

First Reading — 62 (*Feb. 27, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), 136 (*Mar. 5, 2020 aft., reported to Assembly*)

**Bill 202 — Conflicts of Interest (Protecting the Rule of Law) Amendment Act, 2020 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 136 (*Mar. 5, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)







## Table of Contents

Prayers.....	267
Members' Statements .....	267
Home Education .....	267
COVID-19 and Mental Health Supports.....	267
COVID-19 Community Response .....	267
Trucking, Shipping, and Delivery Industries .....	268
COVID-19 Information .....	268, 269
COVID-19 Response.....	268, 269
Essential Service Providers .....	269
Oral Question Period .....	
COVID-19 and Homelessness.....	269
Provincial Fiscal Position .....	270
Hospital Ventilator Availability .....	271
Physician Compensation Framework .....	271
COVID-19 and Homeless Shelters .....	272
Property Taxes.....	272
COVID-19 Research .....	273
Support for Business.....	273
COVID-19 and Workplace Safety .....	274
COVID-19 and Grocery Store Worker Safety.....	274
Easter Celebration .....	275
COVID-19 and Public Service Workplace Safety .....	275
COVID-19 and Correctional Facilities .....	276
Agricultural Concerns .....	277
Introduction of Bills .....	
Bill 9     Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.....	277
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	277
Tablings to the Clerk .....	278
Orders of the Day .....	278
Government Bills and Orders .....	
Second Reading .....	
Bill 9     Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.....	278
Committee of the Whole .....	
Bill 9     Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.....	281
Third Reading .....	
Bill 9     Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.....	283

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