



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 8, 2020

Day 16

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
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Reid  
Stephan  
Toor

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Ganley  
Glasgo  
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Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
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Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
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Sabin  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a statement to make.

#### COVID-19 Information in Rural Communities

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world changes very quickly. Only a month ago our province looked very different. While there was some worry about coronavirus with the first few cases slowly trickling in, businesses weren't closed, and the streets were still busy. It only took a couple of days for all of that to change. While many of us have kept up to date with the changes our government and the government of Canada have made – we've done that through social media or alerts on our smart phones – there's a sizable contingent of Albertans who rely on traditional media, particularly weekly rural papers, to inform them of the goings-on in the world.

The small rural weeklies in my riding of Livingstone-Macleod have stepped up to that challenge incredibly well. Whether it be the *Clareholm Local Press*, the *Crowsnest Pass Herald*, the Fort Macleod *Gazette*, or one of the other half-dozen print or broadcast organizations scattered across Livingstone-Macleod, all of the local media organizations I get to interact with have done an incredible job of making sure that all Albertans, no matter how remote the community, have access to critically important information, including current public health orders and emergency programs rolled out by our government. In many of my communities Internet access is still an issue, and many farms and small towns simply don't have access to high-speed Internet. In cases like this, our newspapers become more important than ever.

In the last few years small local media has had a tough time. In January the *Lacombe Globe*, a paper older than Alberta itself, announced that it was shutting down. Despite these tough days for the industry, so many small papers all across the province are working harder than ever to ensure that critical information reaches all Albertans. To them: thank you for all that you do, for the incredibly valuable service you do Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has a statement to make.

#### COVID-19 and the Alberta Arts Community

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on the arts and culture community. In return, the arts community has become an invaluable positive impact around the globe. Please take a moment to think about how the arts community has had a ripple effect on your own experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Have you watched a movie or a television show recently? Have you watched a live streamed concert by your favourite musician, singer, or orchestra? Have you started doing more crafts with your children, family, friends, or roommates while in isolation? Have you gone for a walk and noticed public art pieces in the community or children's artwork in their windows? Have you been attempting

new recipes? Have you been practising makeup tutorials, and are you seriously concerned about your next haircut? Have you or your little ones watched the many YouTube and Facebook videos of our community leaders and actors reading stories to us? Have you been working on fashion ideas, sewing techniques, or helping the cause by sewing masks? Have you noticed the absence of sports, all sports? This is all part of the arts community.

We are collectively experiencing trauma. As a result, we have turned to the arts community to help process this new world that we are living in. We have all collectively turned to the arts to bring a smile, to engage the kids while you work at home, to help us process this news, or to simply cry. Life is tough right now, but the arts community has made it just a little bit more bearable around the world because the arts community is so accessible and creative.

As you can see, art matters. Alberta art matters. The arts will get us through this pandemic, and we need to be there for them so that they will survive after this pandemic. We need to step up and show our gratitude by financially supporting the arts at this time, urgently and swiftly, for the mental health of all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

### Truckers

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 global pandemic has really shone a light on what the transportation industry brings to the lives of all Albertans. I want to recognize the hard-working women and men that work around the clock delivering goods to keep our province and country and economy in motion.

It always amazes me that my brother-in-law Earl wakes up at 1 a.m. to ensure he gets all of his daily deliveries done so he can be at home with his family at a decent time. Growing up, I witnessed first-hand the long hours and sacrifices truckers like my dad, Jack Armstrong, made to ensure deliveries arrive at their destinations on time. To this day I remember my father's tired, glassy blue eyes and him making every effort to find time for his children before he was back in the hammer lane.

This pandemic has added many new, additional barriers, making truck drivers' jobs even more challenging. Mr. Speaker, it is important that truckers know that the Alberta Motor Transport Association has their website up to date with comprehensive information about what restaurants, hotels, and rest stops are operating and the hours and the services they can provide. I want to take this time to say thank you to those restaurants that are stepping up with their options such as curbside delivery, making their restaurants more accessible to truck drivers. I also want to highlight a movement on social media, #thankatrucker, for all they do to keep our supplies moving to where they're needed most. Whether it be on social media or simply giving them a wave as you drive by, please take the time to acknowledge their critical efforts and show support.

I want to dedicate this member's statement to the heroes of our highways and the critical work they do to keep our supply lines open. I want to salute our truckers that are called out and miss special occasions like birthdays and Christmas concerts to ensure that our society has the goods it needs, and I hope that we remember our truckers and all they contribute, now and going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm sure all members of the Assembly join you in thanking our truckers.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

### Emergency Isolation Support Program

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, through this House, I would like to raise the concerns, frustration, and disappointment expressed by a large number of my constituents of Edmonton-Meadows in regard to the way the current UCP government ran the emergency isolation support program and also is handling the current COVID-19 pandemic.

There are thousands of Albertans who could not access the one-time funding because they could not access the website, and when they tried to call in, many times they could not get through. The reality of the matter is that the system was broken. This UCP government asked Albertans to be patient and keep revisiting the website many times a day. While this government was incapable of hiring the adequate IT staff needed to handle the website, this resulted in vulnerable Albertans not getting financial support which they expected from their provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to stress that my riding of Edmonton-Meadows is very ethnically diverse, and there has been a huge lack of accessibility to information for my constituents, especially those who currently have language barriers. Because of this, these constituents lost their only chance to secure provincial funding as they might not even qualify for other financial support programs. These hard-working Albertans and seniors were abandoned by this UCP government and are now left to be bailed out by Ottawa.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the hard-working public- and private-sector workers who have been doing undoubtedly a fantastic job to ensure that we all are kept safe and healthy at a time of uncertainty.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

### Passover

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After sundown today the holiday of Passover will begin for the Jewish community. This year Seders will be celebrated not in large community groups but in small family groups in their homes. The Passover holiday commemorates the enslavement, fight against oppression, and eventual emancipation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The COVID-19 pandemic is limiting the size of the gatherings, but families are still finding ways to feast, share in thousand-year-old rituals, and retell stories of that long-ago Exodus. It was the first of many triumphs over adversity in the long arc of Jewish history.

From ancient times to the 20th century the Jewish story has been one of struggle and, more importantly, of liberation. May Passover remind us all of the freedom we enjoy as Albertans, which binds us together whatever our differences, and may the inspiring story of Exodus encourage us as we preserve that freedom of faith, of thought, and of enterprise. Let us make sure that we take these lessons as a springboard to increase our connections with those who are isolated and with those members of our community who need assistance and support. In the future many will recall this year's Seder and tell their children and their grandchildren about the importance of connection and community and how we cannot take these concepts for granted.

I wish all who celebrate a happy Passover. [Remarks in Hebrew]

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

1:40

### Trust in Government

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on October 30 the disgraced Health minister committed to bargaining with the

Alberta Medical Association in order to negotiate a new master agreement; on February 20 he broke that commitment. On March 13 the Premier committed to providing 14 days of paid job-protected leave for Albertans who had to self-isolate as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; on March 18 he broke that commitment. On March 15 the Minister of Education committed to maintaining education funding during this crisis; on March 28 she broke that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, at a time of global crisis it is more important than ever that Albertans can trust their government. People look to the provincial government as a source of consistent, reliable information, yet throughout this crisis this government has consistently misled Albertans about the fiscal realities and about their decisions. This is not about politics; this is about honest leadership. Albertans know that the government must make difficult decisions. They don't expect to agree with every one of them. They don't expect to agree with the disgraced Health minister's relentless attack on physicians, for example, or with the Minister of Education's decision to lay off more than 20,000 people with a tweet. They don't expect to agree with housing homeless people in human warehouses or with constructing an emergency isolation support benefit that excludes many of the people who need it most. But they do expect to be able to trust their government to be honest about these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether they agreed with their politics, Albertans understood that they could trust our last Premier. Unfortunately, with the new Premier, that's not the case. Isn't honesty the least we should expect from a government leading us through an unprecedented global crisis?

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

### Sikh Heritage Month

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every April Sikh Heritage Month is celebrated in Alberta and all across the world. This is an annual celebration of the important role Sikh Canadians have played in our province's past, present, and future.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the vital contributions that the Sikh community has made to our province. In the times of crisis such as our society is facing now, Alberta's Sikh community has always been a pillar of support. There are countless examples of altruistic actions taken by good Samaritans all across the province. Currently many gurdwaras and Sikh organizations all across the province are providing free meals to young families, domestic abuse survivors, seniors living alone, truck drivers, and those laid off due to this pandemic.

This month also marks when people from the state of Punjab in India celebrate the harvest and start of a new agricultural year in addition to Sikhs commemorating the founding of Khalsa. Khalsa represents service and social justice as defined by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699. Vaisakhi is one of the most important celebrations in the Sikh faith. Taking part in the celebration is an excellent way to promote inclusivity, embrace multiculturalism, and increase the understanding of Alberta's diverse cultural traditions and perspectives.

On behalf of the entire UCP caucus I want to thank the Sikh community for their selfless service in these tough times and encourage everyone to learn about some of the contributions that Sikh Albertans have made to the province's future, economy, and society, both in the past and present.

Thank you.

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

### Passover

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For more than 3,000 years Jewish families have gathered to celebrate Passover with ritual foods, stories of the Exodus, music, and song. Over the next seven or eight days that tradition will continue despite a global pandemic that has touched all Albertans' lives with travel limitations, the practice of social distancing, and self-isolation.

Celebrations might be different this year, but it doesn't mean they can't be just as special. Jewish families and communities will find creative ways to celebrate this religious holiday and remain connected while prioritizing their health and that of others. Because it's so important to listen to the advice of our chief medical officer and be mindful that gatherings may put our loved ones at risk of COVID-19, I know that families will get a bit creative with video conferencing or putting live videos on Instagram or Facebook to share with multiple families and friends. I know, however, that watching your grandmother's latkes cook and hearing them sizzle on video isn't the same as being there, but next year, hopefully, we can actually smell them cooking.

Let's always continue to cherish these moments and celebrate our shared values of freedom, sacrifice, and hope. Let's remember that staying connected during these challenging times is so important. I hope that community leaders are able to continue to reach out to vulnerable members in the Jewish community who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and continue to share valuable mental health resources online.

Let's also remember our front-line workers: grocery store clerks, truck drivers, delivery men and women, and health care workers who continue to keep us safe with their essential services during this religious holiday. We thank you.

The days when we can attend special prayer services, have big, boisterous family dinners, and have lots of latkes will return. Until then we'll forge new ways of getting together and adapt to preserve our traditions so memories can still be made.

Stay positive, stay safe, and above all, stay healthy. We're in this together. On behalf of our leader and our entire NDP caucus, to all Albertans of Jewish heritage, we wish you a happy Passover. [Remarks in Hebrew]

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

### Easter and COVID-19 Response

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later this week Christians across Alberta will celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday. This year, like so many other things that have changed, Easter celebrations will look a bit different than usual. While COVID-19 changes our Easter, it will certainly not break our faith. This year we will not get together around the dining-room table to eat Easter dinner with our extended families, grandparents will not get to watch the kids scramble in the yard searching for Easter eggs, and churchgoers will not line the pews at their local chapels. All of these forgone activities are a sacrifice for the greater good as we work together to flatten the curve and stop the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta.

Over the course of His life Jesus demonstrated a sacrificial generosity and lived a life of service to others. Albertans are reflecting these values by demonstrating service and generosity during this pandemic. Every day we hear of Albertans taking the initiative to provide help to one another in new and creative ways. One example of generosity that stood out to me this week was an offer from the Sorensen family from my constituency of Grande Prairie. Shelly and Willy Sorensen offered to donate the hauling of

goods for Alberta's bits and pieces program. This program is named after an initiative launched by the federal government during the Second World War and is designed to assist our government to meet the enormous demand for items like face masks and other personal protective equipment. I am proud of how the majority of Albertans, like the Sorensen family, have responded to this crisis.

As Easter approaches, I think of the hope that fills Christians as they celebrate the hope of the world in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us put into practice the teachings of Jesus and the real reason for Easter. It is not about the chocolate, the egg hunt, or the food; it is about honouring His sacrifice given for all of us. This holiday celebrates a powerful victory. Love defeats hate, hope defeats fear, and life defeats death.

To all Albertans this Easter weekend, on behalf of the UCP caucus, please stay safe, stay healthy, and have a happy Easter.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I just might remind all members that we are efforting to keep the doors open outside the Chamber to allow free movement from the opposition and the government lounges to the Chamber. I will just remind members, if they are in the south members' lounge, to keep their conversations a little bit quieter so as to not disrupt the proceedings of the House.

### Oral Question Period

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

### COVID-19 Related Health Care Resources

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by thanking the Premier for sharing the modelling numbers with Albertans. Yesterday he told us that Alberta could see as many as 800,000 cases of COVID-19 under the better of two scenarios. Our current hospitalization rate is 6.6 per cent, but we also know that that's low as many of the long-term care residents who have been infected are not hospitalized. All of this would suggest that we need more beds than we are on target to open. To the Premier: what is the government's plan to ensure that we have beds to meet the demand?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can report that there are typically approximately 8,400 acute-care beds available in the health care system in Alberta. We are expanding significantly the number of beds that are available for individuals who are confirmed as having been infected by COVID-19. Our expectation is that by the middle of this month – I don't have the exact number in front of me – we'll be in the range of 2,400 beds available for COVID-19 patients whereas right now we have only roughly 130 who are hospitalized.

1:50

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we actually have 8,400 beds that are available right now; I think we have 8,400 beds in the province.

Now, I do know that the Premier had said last week that we'd have 2,250 beds open and available by April 15, but in B.C. they're already holding more than 4,000 acute-care beds open right now even as their hospitalized cases remain at fewer than 150. This comparison suggests that Alberta's need will outpace availability. There might be a gap. To the Premier: what is the backup plan if we

can't open new beds fast enough and the modelling ends up being incorrect?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I'll be giving a presentation to Albertans later today with details about the efforts to expand the availability of both acute-care and intensive-care unit hospital beds as well as access to ventilators. I can report that we are confident that even under the most problematic scenarios of our modelers, we will have significant flex capacity both in terms of acute-care beds generally and intensive-care unit beds in particular.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the modelling has a huge range of variability in it, and the concern here is about planning for the worst-case scenario. Now, the Premier's plan is to have 925 ventilators by the end of the month although we have just over half that right now. Again, looking at the projections that the Premier spoke about yesterday, it is very possible that we will need far more than 900 ventilators in order to make it through the summer. To the Premier: what exactly are the efforts that are being made to get additional ventilators if, in fact, we need them?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can speak exactly to that. I'll be releasing those numbers more precisely later today. I can tell the hon. the Leader of the Opposition that we have currently 314 ventilators that are set aside for COVID patients, an additional 14 COVID patients who are already occupying ventilators. Sorry; actually, we currently have 372 available. The numbers are changing day by day. We expect by April 29 to have 761 ventilators available, so we'll be well below the peak.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** Well, I will say that I'll ask more later because that is about 200 less than we heard about last week.

#### COVID-19 and Care Facility Staffing

**Ms Notley:** On a different topic, the B.C. government has been praised for their steps to identify and then slow the spread of infection in their long-term care sector, yet Alberta continues to be hands-off when it comes to staffing. Whereas B.C. has taken on a co-ordinated staffing strategy, Alberta has left it to individual centres to make decisions. For example, it only became mandatory for these centres to report cases to AHS last week. To the Premier: when will this government step in and take a more aggressive approach to managing the spread of this infection in long-term care?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, first of all, I reject the assertion, Mr. Speaker. On ventilators the fact that the projection is lower than it was a week ago is primarily because we've discovered that the number of ventilators which we thought were available through the national stockpile are not actually available. However, on the good-news side we are making real progress with domestic procurement efforts for ventilators being built here in Alberta prospectively as well as Ontario and British Columbia. With respect to continuing care we've taken enormous measures, all upon the advice of the chief medical officer, and are working with continuing care facilities on handling the labour shortage that they're currently facing.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, B.C. banned workers from working in more than one facility weeks ago, and experts say that's why they are being successful at bending the curve. Nonetheless,

yesterday we stood with a family who lost a loved one at McKenzie Towne, and they asked this Premier to do more to avoid that kind of thing happening in other centres. Right now there are nine other centres with outbreaks. When will the Premier listen to these families and stop staff from working at multiple centres?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it was deplorable to see the Leader of the Opposition try to politicize the tragedy occurring at the McKenzie Towne long-term care facility, but I must admit that it was not surprising.

We followed the advice of the chief medical officer, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, in this respect, who on March 20 made it clear through a public health order that only essential visitors would be admitted. On March 25 we announced a series of mandatory standards for risk reduction at the continuing care facilities, on April 2 mandatory standards in the event of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to stand up for the concerns that Albertans come to us with. That is absolutely our job.

Now, at McKenzie Towne we heard about residents going 15 hours without being helped to the bathroom. We heard about residents going weeks without a bath. These are real things, and they deserve to be heard about. They were not prepared for the dramatic loss of staff that they are experiencing. We can't see this repeated in other centres, so again to the Premier. We need a well-funded and co-ordinated approach to hiring and training staff in these centres. Why don't we have one?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is never the job of elected leaders to politicize tragedies and deaths. Shame on the Leader of the Opposition.

When the leader of the NDP asked us I think two weeks ago to impose restrictions on continuing care workers working in multiple facilities – we have in fact imposed that restriction with respect to any facility where there's been an outbreak – at that time I raised the point that this would cause very significant problems in terms of the availability of labour in those centres. We're working, for example, to get students in the health care aide program available to those continuing care facilities.

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

#### Health Care Worker Access to Personal Protective Equipment

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that Alberta has about a one-month supply of various and sundry personal protective equipment for front-line workers, but we also know that many front-line care workers who care for COVID patients who are already diagnosed don't have access to this personal protective equipment. For instance, nurses and aides looking after COVID patients at McKenzie Towne don't necessarily have access to them. To the Premier: is this one-month supply projection based on those who have them now, and what steps are being taken to better ensure that those who should have that PPE will ultimately get it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to be honest with you, we will follow the advice of the chief medical officer, not the leader of the NDP, when it comes to these matters. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday demanded that we provide N95 masks to everybody in a continuing care facility. That is not the advice of our medical professionals because we have to be prudent about the consumption rate and the burn rate of that equipment, which must be prioritized for people working in ICUs and for COVID patients. Now, I was



briefed as recently as an hour ago by the Deputy Minister of Health that PPE is being made available to those at continuing care facilities.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as of a couple of days ago there were 85 infections in that centre. If that's not a priority, I don't know what is.

Now, we talk to front-line health care professionals constantly. They're concerned. Right now the numbers released by the Premier have us planning for mass transmission, but when it comes to PPE, particularly in health care, we know that universal precautions are the only way to ensure people's safety. However, we're not adopting those principles because we don't have enough supplies. So what is the Premier doing to make sure that we have what we need to protect these workers? We're not there yet, but that's what we need: universal precautions.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I just have to come to question period to hear what CUPE thinks. Let me tell you what the public health authorities think, that we are providing all of the necessary equipment to the continuing care facilities. They are in constant contact with those facilities. We are following the advice of Dr. Hinshaw in this respect. We also have a separate procurement strategy being led by the Provincial Operations Centre to ensure even greater availability of supplies to nonmedical workers, including workers in our continuing care facilities.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it would help the folks over there if they did actually hear from front-line staff. Now, just this week they were told that instructions were coming to help show staff how to properly wash and reuse their N95 masks. That sounds like shortage planning to me. Here's the thing. This kind of medical sterilization must be done by outside companies to properly kill bacteria. It takes gamma radiation. Even then they wear down. So, Premier, why is AHS instructing front-line workers to wash their own masks?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not the responsibility of individuals in this place to dictate protocols for the utilization of personal protective equipment. In fact, just last week Alberta Health Services issued a joint statement with unions representing nurses about the appropriate use of what kind of equipment during the COVID crisis, so there's been great ongoing dialogue and co-operation in that respect. Let me say: of course there's a shortage. We believe we have enough equipment to deal with the peak, but there is a massive global demand for this equipment, so we need to be careful in how quickly we use it.

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

### Mask Use Guidelines

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic Albertans have heard a lot of talk about the use of masks. That advice has evolved over time, and many people are confused despite the excellent updates that we receive from the chief medical officer of health. Now, we all want to be safe. We don't want to use up supplies of masks that are needed at the front lines. We also know that the improper use of masks can actually increase risks. To the Premier: what is the government's advice regarding proper mask use for the general public, and will he commit to publishing some clear direction, maybe a fact sheet, public advertising, on this important question this week?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can advise that our ministry is preparing and going to be providing fairly soon some recommendations for the general use by the public of masks. I look forward to being able to provide that information both to this House and to all Albertans. We will be providing that answer as soon as we can.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear that.

I've been approached by many Albertans working at the front lines of health care who feel they have not gotten a straight answer on what mask they should be wearing and when. Some suspect the advice they have been given is driven more by inventory shortages instead of clinical evidence. Now, we've also heard from families of seniors with a positive COVID diagnosis who are being cared for by staff without masks. Again to the Premier: what is the government's advice to front-line health care workers on their mask usage, and will he commit to publishing a fact sheet or a poster, some form of communication, on this as well, including the appropriate mask type for each situation?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'll just say this, that AHS has worked throughout the health system to be able to provide, whether it's our primary care physicians and their offices, whether it's continuing care facilities and their workers, whether they are AHS facilities or otherwise, the PPE throughout the health care system, and they have been making the clinical decisions about the appropriateness of those masks and making it known to the facilities and the employees throughout the health care system on the appropriate use of those masks. I'm very happy to say that AHS has been working very hard to be able to provide that information to our front-line workers.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say that staff continue to reach out to my office. If they knew clearly, I don't believe they'd need to do that. It would be helpful to see this in writing.

We expect mask use will be rising in the coming weeks. We've heard troubling reports about shipments from the U.S. being blocked. In order to prevent panic buying, hoarding, and improper use, Albertans need certainty about our provincial stocks. That applies to all kinds of life-saving equipment, including in hospitals, long-term centres, and elsewhere. Will the Premier commit to publishing a weekly update on the province's personal protective equipment inventory, including our current stock, our rate of use, and our incoming orders to help reassure Albertans and keep stability in the system?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, later on today we are going to be providing to Albertans more detail not just about our modelling and specific numbers regarding our modelling but also specific numbers regarding our capacity. That includes our burn rates for our PPE, our current inventories in the province and our expectations on how the burn rate is going to go through what our current is, and the orders that we have in place that we hope to be able to be receiving in the next couple of weeks. As the hon. member knows, that information will be provided later on this afternoon.

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

### COVID-19 Protective Measures and Economic Recovery

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many Albertans, I watched the Premier's address to the province last night. It was important for the government to be transparent with Albertans, present our plan to fight the virus, and plan to deal with the economic challenges we face. One question I've heard from Albertans is: what did the Premier mean when he said that we'd be using technology like smart phone apps to ensure compliance with quarantine orders? Could the Premier clarify what the government is doing in this regard and what steps will be taken to ensure the privacy of Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I was very clear that we intend to follow the lessons learned from successful countries like Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea to more quickly reopen our economy, and the relaunch strategy involves in part the limited and appropriate use of wireless apps, of smart phone apps, for individuals who are under quarantine order. You might imagine somebody flying in from overseas from a country with a high rate of infection. We want to know if that person is actually going to go home and stay home, and if not, we can deal with that individual before they spread the virus.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you for the clarity, Mr. Premier. Given that another item that came up in last night's address was the prospect of enhanced border screening as part of the relaunch program, can the Premier tell Albertans what the province will be doing to bolster the border screening as we move forward?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was disappointed with how long it took the government of Canada to finally close the borders. I quite frankly think that they were following wrong-headed advice from the World Health Organization. I think there has to be some accountability for some of the advice that they have provided. They were in, frankly, denial about even human-to-human transmission about this as late as late January. We will be putting in place elevated screening at our international airports and ports of entry. If the federal government will not do it, we will.

**Mr. Getson:** Given that Albertans will be eager to learn more about the details of the relaunch program to get us through the other side of this public health emergency, can the Premier tell us if the plan is to relaunch things across the province at the same time, or will there be regional considerations given that some of the impacts have been larger in other areas?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, as part of our relaunch strategy we do plan to take a smart regional approach. If there are regions where there have been very low levels of infections or viral spread, we will be opening up businesses to function in those regions before we do for areas where there have been much higher levels of viral spread. To put that in concrete terms, I fully expect that most areas of rural Alberta will see a relaxation in the public health orders and social distancing measures before Calgary, for example, with the highest level of infections.

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

### McKenzie Towne Care Centre COVID-19 Outbreak

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first express my condolences to the loved ones of those who have died at McKenzie Towne long-term care centre as a result of COVID-19.

Yesterday our leader and I joined the family of Doreen Gauvreau, who passed away Monday. The family is seeking leadership from the government. However, we've received no specifics, no staffing plan, no surge funding, none of the things our opposition has asked for on behalf of Albertans for weeks now. To the Premier: when will you step up and protect the residents of McKenzie Towne and other seniors' housing centres across Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, the issue here is about how we reduce risk and protect the seniors in our continuing care facilities. The chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hinshaw, as well as AHS are taking the issue very seriously. Dr. Hinshaw, as I mentioned yesterday, has issued four orders on continuing care. There was one that was issued just yesterday. Those orders set out the specific standards for infection control during the pandemic and in the event of an outbreak at a specific facility as well. Those orders are being followed, including at the McKenzie Towne facility.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Health's press secretary offered little in the way of specifics or compassion when speaking to the *Calgary Herald* yesterday and given that he said that "continuing care providers will face exceptional costs" and claimed that government would do what was necessary to protect residents but given that everyone that we have spoken to with loved ones living at McKenzie Towne say that their concerns have fallen on deaf ears and they fear for the safety of the residents and the staff, to the minister: what are you doing to help McKenzie Towne? Please provide very specific answers.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed to see the NDP choosing again to play politics with this issue. But as the Premier said, that's very clearly par for the course here on this issue. As I said, the issue here is about clinical infection control. It's an issue that is occurring in continuing care facilities throughout Canada. Providers across Canada, the chief medical officer of health, and AHS, as I said just previously as well as yesterday, are providing very close supervision to every facility where an outbreak is suspected or confirmed.

2:10

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. Given that the family of Doreen Gauvreau is living through a nightmare, especially considering that they have two other relatives living at McKenzie Towne, but given that they're most concerned with preventing outbreaks at other continuing care centres in Alberta and given that some good ideas such as hazard pay for staff and protocols around personal protective equipment are ones that came from them and given that they reached out to the Official Opposition to help them because they heard nothing from the government, to the minister. This family deserves to be heard. Have you reached out to them? If not, why not?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, it's disappointing that the NDP are choosing to play politics, especially with an issue like this, in

particular with these families, in particular with the horrible loss that these families have had to go through. Our hearts on this side of the House go out to all those families. I think it's disappointing that the NDP continue to choose to play politics with this issue. I have reached out. A friend of mine has loved ones, two loved ones, who were in that facility. One is negative for now, and, quite frankly, the other one has recently himself just passed.

#### Emergency Isolation Support Program

**Mr. Nielsen:** Quote: it took six days to actually get on the website. It kept saying unavailable or won't load. I finally got in and I was number 37,000 in line. End quote. This is the experience of one Albertan and so many others trying to access the emergency support money promised by this government. The program was shut down abruptly Monday, and the Premier gloated about how he had doubled funding. Still, fewer than 100,000 people received the money, Mr. Speaker, but we expect that twice as many, perhaps three times as many need the money. To the Premier: why did you gloat while so many Albertans suffer?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to helping Albertans get through this pandemic. We recognize there were some issues associated with this program, but timeliness of delivery of funds was key. We set this up quickly, and during this program more than 94,000 Albertans were successfully approved. We acted quickly to get money into their hands, and this was done often within hours. More than \$108 million was allocated, and this was more than double what we originally anticipated for the program.

**Mr. Nielsen:** More than 100,000 probably got left out.

Given that one Albertan told the Huffington Post that the program seems like throwing \$100,000 in a pit and whoever can grab a \$5 bill gets it and given the Premier closed the application site Monday with no warning and given that the site crashed repeatedly and that we heard from Albertans who were waking three or four times in the middle of the night, hoping to successfully log in, to the Premier: why will Albertans now pay the price because you couldn't figure out how to run a website, or will you say that you didn't anticipate such demand? Are you really that oblivious to how Albertans are . . .

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, the intent of this program was always a temporary program to bridge the gap from when it was announced to when the federal program took place. It was announced week 1, week 2 we put it up, and in two weeks we distributed over \$108 million to over 94,000 Albertans. This was a bridge program. The federal program is now in place, and it is retroactive to March 15. We urge all Albertans to apply for that if they're eligible.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given the Premier promised Albertans a bridge to federal support and given he decided to let that bridge fall down and given that the federal program may take several days still to deliver money to a majority of Albertans and all of this is adding stress for Albertans already isolating during this unprecedented pandemic, to the Premier: will you do the right thing, reopen the emergency program today so Albertans can get the financial support that you promised?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that the hon. member is – he won't take what amounts to yes for an answer. If somebody

applies on the federal program, it goes back to March 15. If they applied for the provincial program, essentially it goes back to March 15. He ought to take yes for an answer, especially after he's been given the yes. We advise Albertans that to do – the best thing for them today is to apply for the federal program, which amounts to the same benefit over the same time period. You heard yes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### COVID-19 and Employment Standards

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public health crisis COVID-19 has been difficult for all Albertans. In my riding of Sherwood Park I have heard from employees who are worried about their jobs and from business owners who are finding it difficult to operate under the current standards during these difficult times. To the Minister of Labour and Immigration: can you advise what temporary actions you are putting in place to provide for greater flexibility for employees to be able to take the time they need to deal with the impacts of COVID-19?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We are doing everything that we can to ensure Albertans can care for themselves and their loved ones during this pandemic, and we recognize the need for greater flexibility for both employers and employees. On Monday I announced that, effective March 17, employees who need to care for their children who are impacted by daycare and school closures or who are caring for an ill or self-isolated family member would be entitled to unpaid job-protected leave. We have waived the 90-day employment requirement for this leave to be effective, and this leave can be extended to the extent that it is needed to be for the chief medical officer.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you to the minister. Given that as this pandemic evolves, our government continues to strive to adapt to give employers the ability for their businesses to survive and given that with the unpredictability of COVID-19 many employers are finding that their workforce needs are rapidly changing from one day to the next, can the minister please advise what temporary changes have been put in place to give employers greater flexibility to adjust their schedules?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that employees and employers want to work together and continue to work together to provide the vital services that Albertans need during this pandemic. We made changes to the Employment Standards Code to provide flexibility in scheduling for employers to ensure that they have the employees that they need to do the work. Businesses will still need to give notice to employees as soon as possible. In addition, we also deferred WCB payments to put more money in the pockets of employers so they can continue to employ employees, and we are also providing payments for small and medium-sized businesses in this regard.

**Mr. Walker:** Given that these are unprecedented times and given that the effects of COVID-19 continue to cause drastic reductions in our workforce and given that our government wants to ensure that every worker that is able to remains attached to a job, can the minister advise what temporary measures we are putting in place to give employers the flexibility they need now and that will get

Albertans back to work faster when we begin to recover from this public health emergency?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our focus is on supporting employees and employers through this pandemic. The current COVID-19 emergency is very unusual in terms of the impact it's having on the economy and the impact it's having on both employers and employees. To address this, for the employees who, unfortunately, have been laid off, we have increased the maximum time for a temporary layoff from 60 to 120 days. This change is retroactive to March 17, and this will allow employees to be able to stay attached to their workplace so that when the restrictions come off, they can get back to work quickly and keep working.

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

#### COVID-19 and Agricultural Workers

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans owe much to the hard-working women and men who built Alberta's agriculture sector into the world-class industry that it is. We recently learned of a COVID-19 outbreak among temporary foreign workers who work in the agriculture sector in West Kelowna in British Columbia. There are measures that can be taken here to prevent similar outbreaks amongst our 2,700 or so temporary foreign workers who work in our agricultural industry and that we rely upon each year, including extra bunkhouses to allow for social distancing and to isolate the sick. Is the minister of agriculture able to ensure that Alberta farmers are in compliance with federal regulations regarding . . .

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the important question. Let me be clear. This government respects and knows the need for agriculture. They're keeping us going, right along with truckers, who are getting food to all the grocery stores. The minister of agriculture is working very, very hard on that. He's had town halls. He continues to interact with the agricultural community. He's taking every step necessary, in partnership with the chief medical officer, to make sure that our agriculture industry, which is an essential industry, is able to continue forward.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, we need some serious details on those plans, though.

Given that this government has yet to offer substantial support to our agricultural sector during this pandemic and given that the workers in this area cannot take a break or stay in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic – bluntly, we need them to keep putting food on our tables – to the minister: should we suffer work shortages during this pandemic, what plans are in place to attract Albertans to step in as replacement labour?

2:20

**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. In regard to the temporary foreign workers we are working with the federal government and the ministry of agriculture to ensure that as temporary foreign workers come into this province to support the agriculture sector, they comply with the chief medical officer, and we are also working with agricultural producers to ensure that health and safety

measures are in place, under the guidance of the chief medical officer, so that they can work safely.

In addition to the question that the hon. member just asked, we are also looking at ensuring that there are enough workers, both temporary foreign workers and others, to be able to support the ag sector.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've heard that the pandemic in the United States is extremely severe and having an impact on available workers for agriculture there and given that this may cause losses in the types of produce and other goods we can import and given that the temporary foreign workforce we rely upon here may also be impaired, to the minister: what efforts are you making to ensure that our supply chain is intact and that we avoid a food security crisis or an extreme rise in prices for produce that we rely upon?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for the question. Our focus is on ensuring that our ag sector has the trained people that it needs to be able to bring in the crops. This is an essential service as part of the entire supply chain providing that. We are looking at a number of measures to be able to address this, not only having temporary foreign workers come in here but also to be able to provide training and other measures for employees and students who are laid off during this time to be able to work in the ag sector and provide this critical service.

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

#### Correctional Facility COVID-19 Preparedness

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An outbreak of COVID-19 in our correctional facilities would be catastrophic. Recent statistics from the Correctional Service of Canada revealed that three inmates in Edmonton Institution had been tested for COVID. While two cases were negative, one remains outstanding. As the minister is aware, a COVID-19 outbreak would pose a serious threat to both staff and inmates. To the Minister of Justice: what are the steps that would be taken in the event of an outbreak in a correctional facility?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd also like to thank all of our correctional facility officers and our law enforcement personnel across this province for all the work that they're doing here today on behalf of Albertans. I also want to thank the member opposite for her collaborative approach over the last few weeks in working together to make sure we have informed discussions about, you know, the challenges in the Justice department.

We're working closely with Alberta Health Services to make sure that we have the ability to quarantine and isolate people. We're in an envious position in the country. Right now we're operating at about 60 per cent capacity in our correctional facilities. This gives us flexibility to move people from one area to another within our correctional facilities.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that fulsome answer. Given that ensuring the safety of inmates, prisoners, and employees as well as visitors is key to broader containment of COVID-19 in our province and given that those in prison often have limited access to the Internet or other tools to gather information, to the minister: what is being done to educate incarcerated Albertans about the dangers of COVID-19 and the steps that they can take, and how exactly is physical distancing achieved?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We're continuing to work with Alberta Health Services to provide education services to inmates at correctional facilities across Alberta. We're providing additional resources for cleanliness – hand sanitizer, soap, services like that – and additional protocols as well around cleaning across the correctional facilities in Alberta. We're making sure we keep everybody as informed as we possibly can on the ground to make sure that we have best practices here in the province of Alberta.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that personal protective equipment, PPE, availability is a constant source of concern for front-line staff across the province during the COVID-19 pandemic and given that in many cases physical distancing is not possible for correctional staff given the procedures they have to do, can the minister share details about the availability and use of PPE and steps being taken to ensure that it is available?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just talked to my department yesterday about this issue. We have about a 30-day supply of PPE for our correctional facilities in the province, based on current utilization rates. We're monitoring this on a facility-by-facility basis to make sure that we don't run short in any one area, if we're using more in one space. We're making sure that we watch this. We're working as well with health services, making sure that we continue to procure additional PPE. Like any other department, we know we have to make sure we do that to keep our front-line workers healthy.

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

### COVID-19 Testing

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been leading the country and many parts of the world in testing for COVID-19. We are currently testing workers in health care, group homes and shelters, and first responders, including firefighters, law enforcement officers, and correctional facility staff. However, the general public can no longer request a test. To the Minister of Health: how will the limitations on testing affect our province's ability to track the virus?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. Alberta has one of the highest testing rates in the world. We're testing for three purposes. First, we're testing to diagnose and treat individuals at greatest risk; second, for tracing the spread of the virus so that we can take steps to limit the spread; and third,

for determining how well our public health measures are working. Now, we're focusing on those who are at greatest risk of severe illness as well as those who are playing critical roles. These numbers give the most accurate picture possible of COVID-19 spread while still using our existing resources as effectively as possible to protect Albertans.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Canadians and permanent residents are continuing to return to Canada from countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and further given that Calgary was one of the last airports in Canada accepting international flights, to the same minister: what is the reasoning for international travellers to not be included in testing for COVID-19?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we're doing all the tests which we can but also being purposeful in our testing. We're asking all Albertans who return from outside of Canada to self-isolate, and that's the most effective way to limit the spread of the virus and protect other Albertans. We've shifted testing to protect those at greatest risk of exposure and of poor outcomes if they get sick. This is consistent with the approach taken across Canada. Our new approach is based on a simple point: the most important thing you can do if you have mild symptoms is not to get tested; it's to stay home and to self-isolate.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that there are limited supplies and resources for COVID-19 testing, given that the number of cases continue to rise in our province, and further given that it would be impossible to test every single Albertan for the virus, to the same minister: does Alberta have the capacity to continue with the same criteria for testing or to increase its capacity by allowing the general public to be tested for COVID-19?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are indeed a world leader in testing, and that's a credit to our health system here in Alberta, one of the many areas where we're leading in response to this pandemic. We expanded our testing last week to include anyone age 65 and over with symptoms, among others. Now, we continue to monitor the situation closely. The groups who are eligible for testing will continue to evolve as we track the pandemic and we adapt as a province. AHS has ordered a shipment of new hand-held rapid testing devices, which can give results in less than one hour. We're hoping to get approval to get the devices in the field . . .

### COVID-19 and the Alberta Arts Community

**Ms Goehring:** The arts serve as the very heart of our communities because they literally bring people together. It's not safe to do that right now, and Alberta artists and cultural groups are in serious trouble. Musicians, dancers, actors, and the many skilled technicians and craftspeople who support them cannot work and have no prospect of working for many months to come. To the minister of culture: are you preparing a package of support specifically to provide relief to Alberta's cultural sector, and when will it come?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said last night in his address and has said in this Chamber many times, we are headed towards a very long road to be able to recover. The reality is that Albertans of all stripes, from all aspects of life, and in all industries are struggling. This House, in partnership with the House of Commons and the federal government, will work to be able to help Albertans get through that. This province is going to have to work together on many of those issues.

As for specifics about each industry, ministers will have more to say in the coming days. But Alberta will work together, and together we are going to overcome this virus and the economic situation that we find ourselves in.

2:30

**Ms Goehring:** Given that the film and television industry is a major employer and investor in Alberta and given that this work has also come to a halt during the COVID-19 pandemic and given that the competition between jurisdictions to secure film and television projects is fierce, what specific measures will the minister commit to taking in order to keep these projects in Alberta after the danger has passed?

**The Speaker:** The minister of tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We committed to implementing a film tax credit in our platform and converting the Alberta screen-based production grant into a tax credit that brings us in line with other provinces. Promise made, promise kept. The tax credit will help attract medium and large productions to our province to create jobs, investment, and more business opportunities. However, the film industry, like all industries right now, is following the advice from our Health ministry, which is to self-isolate and distance from each other, which means film industries and productions across Alberta and across the country are presently on hold.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has promised a massive infrastructure spending program to spur economic activity after the pandemic and given that Alberta's cultural sector is an important part of our economy that has been hit especially hard, will the minister commit that Alberta's postpandemic infrastructure program will have dedicated streams to support artists and cultural groups?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. The Premier has indicated that there will be stimulus spending at the right moment but also that we will be working with our partners in the federal government and our counterparts as ministers in the federal government. I am happy to inform the House, Mr. Speaker, through you to them, that the minister has been working with her counterpart and that the federal government is working on a package for the arts community.

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

#### Translation of COVID-19 Related Information

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's crucial that all Albertans can remain informed about the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic and the measures that we all need to follow to stay safe and protect our friends and loved ones. We are concerned to hear from a number of support agencies that language and cultural

barriers could be preventing some Albertans from being able to access critically important information. Will the Minister of Health commit to providing translation of the daily briefings of the chief medical officer so that all Albertans are able to do their part to help flatten the curve of the pandemic?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS, even before the pandemic, had done a lot of work to be able to expand the translation and interpretation services that they provide to all Albertans who are newcomers or who speak different languages as a first language. They're continuing to do that work to provide that information throughout the province, throughout our facilities, throughout AHS. We've also done quite a bit of work as a ministry as well to be able to also help that effort that is being doing through CPE, the community and public engagement arm of the government, and AHS to make sure we're reaching those Albertans.

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

**Mr. Deol:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we recognize and appreciate that Alberta Health Services has developed some information sheets relating to social distancing and self-isolation in 15 languages but given that the daily update given by the Alberta chief medical officer of health is not being translated into other languages, which some fear could leave members of those communities vulnerable to contracting or spreading the coronavirus, will the Minister of Health commit to providing funding to hire cultural navigators to provide support to those who feel marginalized by not being able to access information in their languages?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the updates that the chief medical officer of health is providing extemporaneously are being provided to all Albertans through American sign language as well, but also I think that that information is being translated in seven languages and provided to Albertans. I'm happy to continue to support both the ministry and AHS as well in continuing to expand our translation and interpretation services.

**Mr. Deol:** Given the critical importance of ensuring that all Albertans can access the information about the public health crisis and given that it shouldn't be a partisan issue to fill in this gap in language that has concerned Albertans, will the Minister of Health or Community and Social Services commit to meeting with the Official Opposition to discuss the status of improving our supports so that all Albertans can do their part in the fight against the coronavirus?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in this House, I think our office has provided the opposition multiple briefings on our response to the pandemic. I'm happy to make sure that those briefings continue to be offered to the opposition so that they as well as all Albertans are going to be aware of our response and the steps that we've taken to be prepared to respond to this pandemic. I'm happy to make sure that those briefings are going to continue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

#### Personal Protective Equipment Availability

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing the potential for the COVID pandemic to reach us here, emergency preparedness

officials ordered 50 additional ventilators in February. As the pandemic outbreak reached more serious levels, further measures were taken to ensure our province was prepared in terms of resources. This went even so far as to close provincial parks facilities to divert their needed PPE to the front lines. Additionally, thousands of generous Albertans have donated to the bits and pieces program. To the Minister of Health: how is our government positioned to ensure that health care professionals have the PPE that they need for both themselves and their patients?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been preparing for this pandemic at least since January, and this includes an early order of PPE which was placed in late January. AHS is leading Canada in the distribution of PPE to health care professionals across the province. They're sharing supply with continuing care facilities, as I said earlier today, physicians' offices, shelters. The reality is that global shortages are affecting all health systems all over the globe. AHS continues, though, to work with the provincial and federal governments to obtain additional PPE to ensure that we have enough supply for the response to the pandemic and into the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that most Albertans are rightly staying at home and only venturing out when necessary and given that people still need essential services such as pharmacies, grocery stores, and community services that support our vulnerable populations and further given protecting our food supply workers to keep them working, like the amazing workers at JBS Canada in my constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat, to the same minister: how is our government supporting essential workers in ensuring that they, too, have the PPE required to keep them safe and healthy?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. I'm happy to answer this on behalf of my hon. colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Provincial Operations Centre, or POC, is working to procure and distribute PPE to nonmedical workers throughout the province. Now, we've established the Alberta bits and pieces program so that the private and nonprofit sectors can help us meet the enormous demand. We're also working to procure PPE where available so we can ensure that we're meeting our top priority, which is protecting all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that manufacturers such as Bauer have retooled their equipment to make face shields for front-line workers and given that 3-D printing companies across Canada have offered up their services to print much-needed parts for medical equipment and given that many brewers and distillers such as Grit City Distillery in Medicine Hat have shifted their focus to producing hand sanitizer to fill growing shortages, to the minister of economic development and trade: how is this government supporting Alberta manufacturers and producers in these sorts of initiatives?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the question. Our government has seen a truly incredible response from Alberta's manufacturers and companies. The Premier and my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs have created the Alberta bits and pieces program, which is named after a similar national program during the Second World War. We've seen 3,000 companies submit offers of products and services, and as we speak, my department is holding a webinar with Alberta companies to tell them how they can help us combat this pandemic.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for question period. As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

2:40

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 13

#### Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)

[Debate adjourned April 8]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate on second reading of Bill 13? All right. The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Yeah. Okay. I am happy to rise and speak to Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2). I just wanted to touch on a couple of things. Mr. Speaker, I was on duty this morning when we started to stand up and speak to this bill and talked a little bit about some of the concerns and some of the things that we certainly agree with and understand. I just wanted to add my thoughts a little bit and why I think it's relevant to this particular discussion. Like my colleagues, I'm sure, on both sides of the House and all of the people that are here working today, I think that when we stood in this place and swore an oath to do our jobs, we all agreed – I know that I did; I took it very seriously, and I will always turn up when I'm needed. I will always turn up to represent my constituents.

But – well, maybe “but” is not the correct word to use. I feel that, for me, it's very important to put on the record that being here at this particular time – and I've heard probably every member in this place say that we're currently in unprecedented times, and certainly we are. I've never been through anything like this in my lifetime, where there is potential that my actions or inactions may indeed cause someone to get sick or to lose their life. So when I look at the work that I'm required to do as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in order to represent my constituents, I try to balance the advice that we're given by the professionals that work for the province, that work for the people of Alberta. Importantly, right now it's the chief medical officer.

Now, I certainly understand that this place has been given an exemption to do the very important work for the people of Alberta. I absolutely agree with that, that at any time where there is urgent legislation that the people of Alberta require to be safe, to be well, to be able to feed their families, to be able to do the things that are absolutely essential right now during a public health emergency, I will always be here, and I know that my colleagues will always be here. I have no doubt that the members opposite will always be here. But I think, Mr. Speaker, that it's very important to measure when that needs to happen. Now, I heard earlier this morning – I don't recall who it was exactly; somebody was enraged about something that somebody said. The member I was listening to was trying to explain what I'm saying right now, that I will always be here when

it's urgent, when it's important and vital to the wellness of the people of Alberta.

Now, why I'm standing to speak to this bill is that if indeed Bill 13 is the amendment that will absolutely keep the people of Alberta safe and there is no other way to do it, I am happy to stand in this place and debate for hours and hours and hours until we get to the place where it is the most effective piece of legislation possible. I'm happy to do that. But I don't believe that that is the case. In any event, that is not my call. I am not a member of the majority, not yet, but I am happy to stand in this place and do my best to add my thoughts about what I think we can do to make this better.

I would like to again frame this. For those people isolating at home with nothing better to do and kids are taking a break from home-schooling and so you've tuned in, I'm happy to give a bit of the background of this particular bill. Now, in my opinion – and again I have no doubt that somebody else will stand up afterwards and offer a different perspective, but here's my perspective. I do not believe that this bill is required for an effective pandemic response given the powers that were extended through the changes to Bill 10. That's really important to know, that this government has already introduced a number of changes that allow them to do many of the things that they're talking about that are lacking.

So the changes in Bill 10 to the Public Health Act, the emergency powers section, would allow changes through ministerial order. That said, the bill allows local states of emergency to last 90 days as opposed to seven, clarifies language that it is an offence to be noncompliant with orders made under the local and provincial states of emergency – fair – provides new powers for the minister to modify or disallow any orders made by the local authority. So that is a bit of the summary.

Now, one of the things I said earlier – was it this week? Actually, it probably was last week now. The days are all sort of starting to blend together. But one of the things that I have talked about numerous times is that I believe that the systems that support the representative democracy that we have in Alberta are essential. I think they're essential in good times, in sort of normal times, but they're more essential now. They're more important now, Mr. Speaker, than ever before. I think that we have to do everything in our power to uphold all of these principles and systems that we have put in place, not just us but that for over a hundred years all of the women and men that have been elected to this place have worked very hard to put into place. Of course, I'm going to be – maybe “skeptical” is not the right word, but I am going to question when I believe that perhaps we are going too quickly.

I think that in normal times – and I've said this before – sometimes the systems are a little bit slow and a little bit clunky moving, because some of them are quite old. But the way that we debate allows us the time to do the research, to speak to our constituents, to consult with stakeholders, and also to consult with each other. When we are in a place where there are just a fraction of us here because we need to keep each other safe and our support staff safe – there is just a tiny fraction of us here – I don't believe that we are doing justice to the democracy that we all took an oath to promote and to protect. I think that by taking an abbreviated time and saying that we must do this, that we must do this because we are in unprecedented times, that we have a pandemic – I understand that we have a pandemic, but we also need to balance that with our jobs, and our jobs are to do everything that we can to promote and protect our democracy. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, in a roundabout way, is that I will always support any changes to legislation that are essential.

You know, I'm frustrated. I find it very frustrating being here and trying to explain what it is that I think. I represent people, and they expect me to be here to do my job. They don't expect me to be here

for a reason that isn't essential. They expect me to follow the rules, just like every other Albertan, and that means doing everything we can to keep people safe. Right now my constituents, Mr. Speaker, expect me to be available to them. Actually, one of my colleagues earlier said that this week, for people watching, was actually supposed to be constituency week. I don't know about you, colleagues or other members, but I had things planned because there are a lot of stressed-out people in my constituency. I don't know why you find that so funny. That is just shocking to me.

I have constituents that are perhaps staying at home, trying to educate their kids. Their kids have disabilities, all kinds of things. I am here to do my job, but I want to say in this place that I do not believe that this government is using their best judgment when they look at the priorities of work that we all have. Again, I and my colleagues will always be here to support the government in every action that they have to take that is urgent to keep Albertans safe, but I also don't believe that we are being prudent in those decisions.

I'm sorry. That's all I have.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a lot to unpack in that speech that didn't seem to say a whole lot. I'm not sure if the member forgot her talking points or forgot what bill she was on, but the reality here is that I heard a lot of complaining about being in this Chamber when this is supposed to be a constituency week. Well, let me remind the member that for the rest of Alberta this is supposed to be a workweek, but unfortunately the circumstances have changed.

2:50

I also want to remind the member that while we're in this Chamber, while we're here working, it doesn't preclude us from answering e-mails from our constituents given that we're supposed to be social distancing or physical distancing. The argument the member opposite is making is that somehow it's impossible to be answering e-mails and making phone calls and doing video conferencing, that it's impossible. But while we're on that topic, I've been spending the time that I'm not in this Chamber responding to my constituents. When I'm in this Chamber, I'm not complaining about being in this Chamber. While the member opposite thinks that it's not essential for us to be here, to be debating Bill 13, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), that it's not an emergency, that it's not essential to be here debating this bill – that is preposterous, Mr. Speaker.

I can understand the concerns of the members opposite and the importance of maintaining our physical distancing with others and practising good health management skills and taking the recommendations of the chief medical officer, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, who, I may say for the first time that I have the opportunity to speak in this Chamber, is doing a tremendous job. I applaud her for her continued updates and her tireless work and the grace that she carries herself with and the composure that she maintains in such a tumultuous time, not only in the province of Alberta and in the country but in the world, Mr. Speaker. But for the members opposite to bellyache about being in this Chamber to do the job that they were duly elected to do is completely irresponsible.

Furthermore, to that point, to hear the members opposite in question period talk about proposed shortages in medical supplies – we know that we are equipped to deal with this pandemic, and we have been led by our Premier and Dr. Deena Hinshaw in the proper direction. To create that level of uncertainty and to, frankly, scare the population is, again, irresponsible. It's unconscionable. I



propose to my colleagues opposite that they really take stock of the things that they are saying in this Chamber, especially in this time, when we are facing this crisis, not to bellyache about being here but, rather, to come prepared to talk about this bill and make a substantive point of what we're actually here to do. In short, stop complaining, and let's get to work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are two minutes of Standing Order 29(2)(a) available if anyone else would like to provide a brief question or comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else that wishes to join in the debate on second reading of Bill 13? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy the opportunity to stand up and respond after that ridiculous diatribe by the Member for Cardston-Siksika, completely missing the point of the previous speaker and, you know, using it as an opportunity to assail a member of this House irresponsibly. I'm not quite sure why he chose to do that.

I see that we need to get on to talk about the bill and the reasons why there are concerns about whether or not we should be in the House. Now, clearly, it has nothing to do with anybody's work ethic. We are here because we understand the job that we have. We stayed very late into the evening last night to make sure that we are doing a good job, and we will continue to do that today. So to misinterpret the statements in a way to denigrate a fellow member of the House seems to me the height of irresponsibility. I think the issue is that we are in a particular circumstance in our world right now. We're all trying to find our way through this as best we can, and we all understand that we have responsibilities to the society that we are here to provide a service to.

One of those pieces of responsibility that we have is to ensure that we are following the advice of the chief medical officer, who that member has identified as a very experienced, skilful, dependable member of the public service in the province of Alberta. It is requisite for all of us to ensure that we follow the advice of that member, but somehow this Legislature has chosen to not completely do that. We clearly have more than the number of people that are supposed to be in the same room here now.

I understand that we need to give ourselves some leeway because sometimes we need to make decisions that are going to be important for the province, and it requires us to be here to do that. That's why we're happy to be here. But we understand that in being here together, we are actually endangering members of the health care profession by creating a circumstance where COVID-19 may spread and, therefore, cause them to be in danger of having to treat us, perhaps en masse here in this House. Now, of course, we don't wish that to happen, but given that we are by our mere presence here defying the logic that has been given to us by the chief medical officer and doing so for good reasons – I understand that. Our side is clearly prepared to stand up and be here and show that we are prepared to do the work. We should have, however, very good reasons why we are doing it this way rather than the alternative ways that are available.

And the point that is being made around Bill 13 is that, ostensibly, that is the reason why we came back into the House this week. It clearly wasn't for some of the other bills that are being brought forward, that don't have in their intent emergency legislation regarding the health crisis that we're in. This is the reason why we're being brought back, yet when we look at this bill, we say: does it have value enough for us to defy the recommendations of the chief medical officer? And that is a legitimate question to be asked in this House. To trivialize it by insulting another member

and suggesting they don't want to be here because they don't want to work or they can't manage their workload really is repugnant.

I think that, instead, we should be focused on what's happening with Bill 13. Is it providing to the province of Alberta a level of safety and public supervision of this crisis that is necessary for us to return here to the House? The answer has got to be, essentially, no.

What is it that Bill 13 provides to the government of this province that was not previously provided in spades under Bill 10? In fact, under Bill 10 they have given themselves such extensive powers that have not been seen in nonwartime legislation here in the province of Alberta. They have given themselves the ability not only at their will to modify any law but also the power to write and to bring into force any new law without legislative oversight. They clearly do not even need to be in this House to introduce the pieces of change to the legislation that are in Bill 13. They gave themselves the power last week, two weeks ago to actually institute those changes without bringing over a hundred people back into this room and into this building. I think that that's a reasonable thing to question, that we have a bill before us that does not do things that require us to be here doing it in this particular way.

I wish that they had put more into this bill. I wish that I was here celebrating the fact that this government is moving toward taking care of the province of Alberta in a good way, but I don't see that. I see them extending powers to Legislatures and governments, again beyond anything that would normally happen in a nonwartime situation in this country or in this province.

I have to ask: have they consulted legal authorities about the grabbing of this much power and bringing it into the hands of a few ministers who are unaccountable in this House, who don't have to actually appear here and hear the opposition's questions, to respond to the citizens of the province of Alberta? I think that is very important, that that member remember that the opposition has been given a job, too, not just the government. Our job is to ensure that when we come into the House, the government is doing so for good reasons, and they're not doing so simply to exercise power without a suitable end in mind.

3:00

That is the nature of the questioning that is being presented to them right now: is there a suitable end? Is there a reason for us to be concerned enough that we bring the House back, endangering the health care workers that may have to take care of us should we spread COVID amongst us by being here and defying the recommendations of the chief medical officer? I think that that's the basis of our conversation and our concern, and I certainly would like the government to take those kinds of concerns more seriously.

Now, we know in this particular bill that one of the things that they are doing is that they are extending, from one week to roughly 12 weeks, the amount of time that a state of local emergency can be in effect. We know that emergencies are dramatically significant times in the life of any province or any government. Because they are so significant, because they have so much effect on the citizens of this province, we have typically restricted the amount of time that a government can do that so that they don't turn a crisis into an opportunity to take privileges, powers, and rights away from the citizens of this province. That typically has been defined as approximately seven days. In this case this government has chosen to move from seven days to 90 days, more than a 10-fold increase here in terms of the power.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

That is something that needs to be challenged in any democracy, when government chooses to take rights away from citizens without

that kind of oversight that comes from being in the House. I think we need to be sure that when the opposition stands up and challenges the government on this, they are taking seriously the fact that they are actually removing rights from citizens and that, while we support the need to do that on occasion, we certainly think it is appropriate for the opposition to ask the question: is this the right time to be taking these kinds of rights away, and is this the right remedy for the problem that we have at hand? Very reasonable questions. I expect that the minister, given an opportunity, would welcome the opportunity to describe why that is important to do at this particular time.

We know that constitutional scholars have been looking at this bill and Bill 10 and saying that this seems to be a very serious overreach by the government at this particular time. As opposition we're willing to concede some need for the government to perhaps reach farther than they have in the past. We simply want them to be able to describe to us why it is that they choose to do it at this time. Why did they choose to do it in this way? Is there another way that we could have done it?

How have they ensured the oversight necessary to pull that power back from government when the time is appropriate? We know that they haven't, you know, cancelled the House. We're here now, not like any other Legislature in the country. Why do they need, then, to remove the oversight? If they're going to have us here, why don't we actually have the oversight occurring while we are here? Why do we need to give away the power to have that oversight for 90 days? We could have had it for seven days, and since they seem to be calling us back into the House anyways, we could review that on a regular seven-day basis. Or if that's too frequent because of the extreme demands of this extreme time, perhaps we could have made it 14 days or perhaps even 21 days. There are lots of choices available here. There are lots of things the government could have done, none of which they chose to do.

It is therefore requisite upon them to explain to us why 90 days is important to put into the act as opposed to choosing to perhaps pick 14 days or 21 days or 28 days. There are lots of different ways we could have approached this. The opposition is merely asking this government to stand up, to be accountable, and to show the people of this province that they aren't simply engaging in overreach because they can, taking powers and rights away from people because they like the idea of doing that. I don't think that in any democracy any one of us can support that notion, and I don't think that's where the government is going. I don't anticipate them standing up and responding to our questions by saying: we have the right to do it, so we're going to do it anyways; we don't care what you think. I anticipate that they've thought through this and that they have a series of good, strong reasons why they chose the particular length of time that they chose and why they have not introduced oversight into this process here.

I welcome the government to stand up and help us understand that. I would love to be able to stand up and support this legislation. I merely want to know why I'm doing what I am doing because that is the role of opposition, to ensure that there are good, solid reasons for the things that we're doing and that government is not overhanded in its behaviour and that they are not using a crisis to actually extend to themselves powers which would normally not be seen in a democratic situation. We worry all the time in democracies about the thin edge of the wedge, about beginning to crack open that space where government's reach is too strong, where government's reach takes away rights that should be invested in individuals.

But we understand that there are times when that is likely to happen. We've seen it happen before in this country. We've seen it happen in wartime, we've seen it happen during the FLQ crisis in

the 1970s under then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and now we see that Jason Kenney is using his good friend Trudeau's advice – sorry. My apologies. I ask that to be withdrawn. The Premier is using the example of his good friend Prime Minister Trudeau, the first, in designing his legislation now, which is just steeped in irony, frankly.

But I would ask, then, that this minister and this government please take the time to walk us through the process they have gone through, to actually help us understand how they arrived at the decisions they've arrived at and why those decisions are such that they cannot be modified or altered without dramatically endangering the well-being of the citizens of this province. Can this minister stand up and tell us: who, in the municipalities that he is granting this extraordinary power to, did he talk to? What kind of consultations occurred there? What kind of advice?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I saw the Member for Calgary-Buffalo stand first.

**Member Ceci:** Yeah. You know, I did hear a lot of concern from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I believe. You were referencing Bill 10 a lot – we dealt with that last week – the Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020, and characterized that as a serious overreach of ministerial powers, and you put this bill, Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), in that similar vein. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford wasn't here earlier in the day when we had an opportunity to speak back and forth with the minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member . . .

**Member Ceci:** Oh, I apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** . . . I would caution mentioning who may or may not be in the House at any given time. Thank you.

**Member Ceci:** I'll focus on my question.

There was a characterization from the other side that one of the powers that is being identified in Bill 13, the extension from seven to 90 days for a local emergency to be called and to be renewed, would be too onerous for local councils to renew. But they've also in this bill talked about the ability to do all of that stuff, all of those renewals or endings of local emergencies, electronically. Meetings can happen electronically. They also allowed that to happen in Bill 10, I believe, for council meetings, public hearings to be done electronically by councils across Alberta. Now, today, we're talking about that being similarly allowed for local councils in emergencies, as I said, to renew or discontinue local emergencies.

**3:10**

The characterization by someone earlier that it would be too hard for councils to do those meetings is patently not true because I know that in my own municipality's case they meet electronically almost daily to check in with each other, to talk about what next they have to do, and to line themselves up to support their administrations and their CEMA. I was wondering, Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, why you're so passionately opposed to the extension of many powers in Bill 13, particularly the 90-day one, when there's an opportunity for councils to meet electronically and not have a great deal of difficulty to do that. I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford could just expand on some of the overreach that he identifies in Bill 13.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to respond.

**Mr. Feehan:** Rutherford.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes, Rutherford. My apologies.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a little bit more about this particular bill. The fundamental underlying issue for me is not simply that I am stating that there is an overreach but that we haven't heard an argument from the government that would help us to understand the reason for this particular definition of overreach. There may be reasons for them to extend seven days to 90 days. I appreciate that. It seems that it is not supported by constitutional scholars generally in the community, who have been writing about this kind of behaviour by the government since Bill 10 but now including Bill 13.

Given that it has struck a nerve in the legal community, it seems quite reasonable, then, to ask the government to help us to get to a place of understanding why they chose what they chose so that we can be supportive. I mean, if there are very strong reasons, of course, I would say that we would wish to be supportive. The issue is that they haven't provided the reasons in a way that would allow us to support it because I don't hear an argument about why 14 days or 21 days would not be an appropriate period of time, particularly given the . . .

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

I shall address that the hon. minister cannot speak at this speaking time, but after the hon. Member for Peace River speaks, 29(2)(a) will be available. I am sure you will be able to respond then.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. friends across the aisle for doing their job in the opposition. They have the right and the responsibility not just to their constituents but to the province and, as the loyal opposition, to Her Majesty the Queen to address questions in the Legislature. That's respected, and that is why we are holding this debate. It is why the government has chosen to make sure this bill is debated publicly with the input from all members from all different persuasions. I think that's important.

I sensed from my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford an honest and sincere questioning, not, as the Member for Calgary-Buffalo implied, that he has problems with the bill, but he just wants more information. Ask and ye shall receive. Information shall be presented by the government. The minister, I'm sure, is eager to speak at the next opportunity. I will address some that I see from my side as a government backbencher on how I think this bill is important and necessary.

First off, the question focused on by the hon. member opposite is whether we do 90 days or 20 days or 14 days or seven days in a state of local emergency. I believe we're starting off in a position where everyone in the House can agree that states of local emergency are important. They're important, and they do not take away liberties. They preserve ordered liberty, Madam Speaker. That distinction is inherent in the very concept of these emergency orders.

The state of a local emergency just this last summer in my constituency – the hon. member will remember well – the moment of the Chuckegg fire: that was devastating. Dare I say that even more personal civil freedoms were limited because of that fire. People were demanded to move by order of law out of evacuated zones. We had the force of law with the RCMP and other authorities exiting individuals from areas. This is more drastic than the COVID-19 situation. As small as my little constituency may be – it is one of the most beautiful and most northern – it still is populated by Albertans with the same rights, liberties, and freedoms that every

other Albertan, including the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, cherish and have liberty and access to.

Nonetheless, no concerns were brought for a period much longer than seven days from the member opposite or any of the opposition when we had states of local emergency continuously renewed over and over and over again. So the question isn't: should there be moments where we have states of local emergency? That is not under debate. I think the opposition will grant me that premise. The question now is: how long should that last? When should it be renewed?

Now, the fire, Madam Speaker, is a very different problem than what we face right now. With the invisible enemy we face now, we deal with epidemiologists, with algorithms and tracking of data that gets put into projections, where we have a very solid idea with the R naught and the transferability of this COVID disease from individual to individual, the rate at which it spreads. When that is the case, the intelligible individuals can communicate how long this will last, the nature of this crisis, and local emergency in municipalities that have declared it or provincial health emergency as we see now declared across the province. It is predictable. There is something about it that we know to the end.

So if we're not debating the question of whether or not states of local emergencies or health emergencies or even provincial emergencies are an offence to freedom but instead are preserving ordered liberty, then the question is: how long? Well, the nature of this crisis demands that we have a fiduciary responsibility to those citizens to sit in this Legislature, have this debate so that we might pass legislation that allows us to preserve their health, preserve their personal freedoms, and, as best we can, prepare for the economic fallout and future growth that we will have in this province.

I understand concerns from the Member for St. Albert about why we are sitting here today. I believe I understand many of those concerns. I believe many of the concerns that my family and my wife share about us sitting today, but they understand as well the moral responsibility we have as leaders, as elected representatives to continue to do our job, to protect ordered liberty, and this bill, Bill 13, is a prime example of what that looks like. There is no debate about the need for states of local emergency being there. The debate only amongst this side, failing that, is how long it ought to be before it ought to be renewed. While modernizing this bill is incredibly important, it is important so that they can do it electronically. It is important so that they can do it for a length of time appropriate to the nature of the pandemic, crisis, flood, fire, public emergency that they are facing. That is why we are here today.

I think I might add, Madam Speaker, a few questions about – yes, I pay tribute to the role that the opposition is playing as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and the government has a responsibility as well, as I'm sure members opposite such as the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford have acknowledged. That is a special role that you have as members of the opposition. It is not to throw anything against the wall and hope it sticks. That is a time for opposition in other times. What we have now is a responsibility as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to not wait and see what you might get as a reaction with social media, not clip sound bites, not just filibuster, you know, days and days on end, adding amendments to bills you hope to vote for nonetheless, regardless.

No. The role of the opposition is to ask thoughtful questions, to contribute positively to that. Where we see that contribution and collaboration, we have seen a positive collaboration with this government. I dare say that we've seen many opportunities where the Premier, the front bench, and our cabinet, Executive Council, have taken much of that positively and tried to collaborate with the

members of the opposition. I request that members of the opposition ask to continue that instead of waiting to see what sticks against the wall. Dare I say, it's a tad short of political expediency and opportunism. It's not there yet. There's time to pull back. There is that opportunity.

3:20

I recognize the need from members opposite to ask the questions, and I think, as I acknowledged at the start, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford asked in sincerity and, I believe, is getting answers, not just from my speech but, more importantly, from the minister responsible for this legislation. But I think there are examples, and we don't have to look too hard in our memory to find them, where opposition members across the entire country, in this House as well, have sometimes confused the difference between Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and political opportunism, and I think this is a good cautionary moment for all of us, Madam Speaker, to reflect on how we operate in the Legislature in times of crisis. This is said with humility, understanding that even our government benches have made mistakes in many ways in how we react at times, and I think it's always a good chance for us to signal check and get a sense from our constituents, a sense from the public, take stock of where we're at and how we're reacting.

So on that short addendum to the content on Bill 13 and the necessity of extending to the 90 days for the nature of the pandemic and protecting order of liberty and also protecting the precious time and respecting the work that municipal leaders do on all of our behalf, I'll leave it, Madam Speaker, and I'm excited to look for more interactive debate on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Under 29(2)(a), I'm assuming?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I appreciate that. I appreciate the member opposite standing up and addressing some of the concerns that I have. I always appreciate answers to my questions. But there are a number of things here that, I think, need to be further explored because the primary answer that was given by the member opposite was that in the example of the fire in the High Level area, they renewed the emergency order over and over and over again. Then he says that in spite of having actually demonstrated that the process was working during a major crisis of a major fire and that the ability of the government to renew the orders was there, they were able to repeatedly renew that order without difficulty but with the obvious step of coming back for some oversight. He's now saying that they need to do something more, that the process that he himself has indicated worked extremely well in the previous crisis somehow is not going to work in this particular crisis.

Again, I was waiting. Why is this crisis different than that last crisis? If he's telling us that the process is already sufficient, the powers are already there, and it was perfectly legitimate to have it at seven days and that that allowed renewal – but, of course, the step of renewal always requires a re-explanation as to why you're adding on to that time. He then goes on to explain why the successful process which he was lauding is no longer going to be successful. In fact, he never actually addressed the primary question that I asked in my speech at the time, and that is: why 90? That wasn't even addressed once. There was no attempt to describe why we have to abandon what he has described as a successful process and instead institute a process for which they have no justification. He

said that he wanted to explain and give us a justification and then didn't even attempt to make a justification as to why 90 days. So I'm left wanting this member or perhaps another member of the government to actually address the question at hand.

Now, he took some time, of course, to kind of take those political shots and denigrate the opposition as the government, you know, seems to like to do. If we actually ask questions, if we ask reasonable questions, they like to imply or actually state that we are just using this as political opportunism, which seems to me an easy toss off for government to do, that any time you don't happen to like the question coming to you or you feel challenged by it or you realize you actually haven't answered the question and likely don't have an answer for the question, the thing to do is to not address the question but to accuse the opposition of engaging in behaviours that are somehow undesirable in spite of the fact that he acknowledged that the opposition actually has a role, more now than ever before, because we are in a state of emergency. When government enters into a state of emergency, they are doing something that would never be accepted outside of the state of emergency. They are taking powers into their own hands.

If there isn't a time for a strong opposition during that time, then there would never be a time for an opposition at all. This is a crisis at which it demands the opposition be stronger, be more clear about their questions than any other time because the government is overreaching, is extending beyond the typical reach of government. So, of course, opposition must stand up and ask these kinds of questions. To take this opportunity to say, "We are going to expand our powers and do all kinds of things that normally would not be expected and allowed by the citizens of this province, and you're not supposed to question us about that" is a very dangerous precedent in a democracy, something that we could not possibly stand up and allow to happen here in this Legislature.

We need this government to answer the question, so I put the question back to the government that I have asked before. Can you explain to us why the extremely successful process you describe is no longer . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the previous speakers, including my esteemed colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford, whom I always enjoy hearing from because he's a very learned man.

It's an honour to rise to Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, (No. 2). I've not yet had an opportunity to speak to it. I'd like to in my remarks share a lot of the comments that I've heard previous because I think it's important that we get them on the record and ask a number of questions as well. My hope, of course, in doing so will be that we shall find answers in asking said questions.

I would like to start, however, by just, you know, mentioning the fact that my heart certainly goes out to all Albertans who've lost loved ones due to COVID-19. I know that when I spoke to Bill 10, just highlighting the fact that when people ask for numbers and ask for deaths in sort of a raw count, it's quite troubling because these are real humans, and they have stories and lives. I think it's really important that we honour them. Just as well to put on the record that I want to thank front-line health care workers, who are of course working day in and day out to keep Albertans safe, not just those working in hospitals but, of course, shelter workers, homeless shelters, women's shelters, grocery workers, truckers, social workers, teachers. The list goes on. I always worry that when I start naming that I miss folks, but just, again, I know how hard folks are

working out there right now to support our province and under extremely trying circumstances.

We very much are committed to working with the government to pass reasonable legislation. However, you know, as we've seen in the last couple of weeks, we need to be assured as an opposition that any legislation that is brought forth meets a number of criteria. What are some of these criteria? Meaningful consultation.

Now, interestingly, for those folks who were tuning in late last night, as I'm sure there were many, a few of my colleagues and I were speaking to Bill 3 around mobile-home tenants, and one of the things we talked about there was consultation and the need for it. We could speak quite confidently in the House last night that the amendments we brought forth, which I believe there were five last evening, four last evening – as I noted last night, we didn't just pull them out of a hat. We brought them forth based on countless conversations with our constituents. I can say that it wasn't me personally because I don't have a number of folks impacted by mobile homes in my riding, but my hon. colleagues from Edmonton-West Henday and Edmonton-Gold Bar, for instance, do. They've been quite passionate about that issue. They knew that this legislation was coming, and they wanted to make sure that they could help to get it right. In the reasonable amendments they brought forward, that was what was reflected in there, the concerns of constituents.

I bring up this example because it's an important one. The government didn't support us in those amendments, and that was troubling because... [An electronic device sounded] Oh, goodness.

3:30

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

**Member Irwin:** It was troubling because we knew that those amendments were solid and were based on the feedback of constituents. One of the comments we asked today is: what consultation was done? I'm going to speak a little more about this in a little bit, but we want to be assured that we are here sitting in this Legislature in an unprecedented time, the language I've heard multiple times in this House, an absolute crisis globally, for sure. We're sitting here. We're doing our jobs as elected officials. Why not take the time to get legislation right? That's our concern and, as one of the members opposite talked about, our job as the Official Opposition.

What else? We want to ensure that stakeholders have their full support. We want to ensure that any new powers outlined are reasonable. We want to ensure that this cherished institution, that democracy is protected, and we want to ensure that there's government transparency, that there's government honesty. We can see upon our analysis of Bill 13, similar to our analysis of Bill 10, that these conditions have not been met. My hon. colleagues, including my esteemed Member for Calgary-Buffalo, have been on the phone nonstop talking to stakeholders.

**Member Ceci:** Nonstop.

**Member Irwin:** Nonstop.

I am quite confident, when he brings up his concerns, as he has today already, that I support him because I know he's done his homework. I know he's reached out to countless stakeholders. He's done that consultation required. Probably he would like to have had a bit more time. He probably knows that there's more to be done as well, but he's certainly being flexible given the circumstances of the day.

We need to know – and I spoke about this when I spoke about Bill 10, so I feel a little bit of déjà vu, of course, when I rise to speak

to Bill 13 because there are questions. It's interesting. I bet a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House have received a ton of e-mails on Bill 10 lately. There seem to be a few campaigns going – in fact, I meant to find out where some of those campaigns are coming from – basically a lot of Albertans coming together. I would think honestly that – like, you know, they might be talking about health care, they might be talking about education, and you might think that something like Bill 10 would sneak under the radar. I'm thinking that perhaps the government was hoping that it wouldn't have gotten the attention that it has, but, yeah, I'm getting countless e-mails from folks who are concerned about the powers.

I just touched my face again. Sorry. *Hansard*, I'm making it really tough for you today; sorry about that.

Folks are sending e-mails about their concerns around Bill 10, saying that they are alarmed by the powers that this government has given themselves under the guise of a pandemic. I've had actually a number of Facebook messages, too, from people saying: "Okay. Just to be clear here, this didn't actually happen, did it?" And I have to use my nonlawyer perspective on this and sort of simplify it to say: "Actually, yeah, it did. We tried to present on that bill as well reasonable amendments but were unsuccessful."

Our concern here – I mean, our job is to hold the government to account and to make sure that they don't go too far. As I spoke about with Bill 10, we see that – I won't go full former social studies teacher on you, but history shows that in times of crisis, governments have had a track record of restricting civil liberties. Our concern and the concern of many scholars, actually, is that this is starting to happen in governments around the world. So it's absolutely our job as the Official Opposition to caution against government overreach; hence the need to have a fulsome debate on Bill 13.

Now, I talked a little bit about consultation and the necessity to ensure that we're getting this legislation right, so I would ask – and apologies if it's been mentioned in this House before, because I haven't had the opportunity to watch every debate to date, but I would like to hear from the minister on who specifically has been consulted on this legislation. What is the perspective of various mayors, of various councils?

I found it interesting, my colleague's comments, my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo, that is. He noted that there'd been some concern highlighted around the inability – he can correct me if I'm not totally capturing his thoughts – of councils, perhaps, to hold meetings at this time. His point was a very valid one, saying that, you know, in fact, councils across our province are holding virtual meetings, so that seems like an unreasonable defence from the government on this. We see an incredible nimbleness from councils across our province, so I think we should respect that and honour that, that our councils are equipped to discuss and to be nimble as needed.

Who else was consulted? Local emergency management leadership? Obviously, we are again in the midst of a pandemic, so I'd be curious to know what sort of conversations happened with local leadership. Yeah. What about municipalities? I mean, again, I just would like to have a bit more of a deep dive into who specifically was consulted. Of course, you know, hopefully, maybe more folks from the opposition will speak on this bill as well because they might be able to bring some light...

**Mr. Carson:** The government.

**Member Irwin:** From the government. Pardon me. Thank you. It's been a long day.

You know, the government has an opportunity, the government members have an opportunity, especially, I'd say, some of those in

some of the rural municipalities. Perhaps they have spoken to their local councils. I would like to hear that because, again, I mean, this is your opportunity to get this right for your constituents as well. I welcome the government MLAs to speak a little bit more fulsomely on this piece of legislation as well. Perhaps the Minister of Transportation will speak as well on this one.

I would like to as well touch on the concern highlighted by a few of the previous speakers around the democratic oversight, around some of these fairly sweeping changes that we find troubling. As we know, the bill extends, from one week to roughly 12 weeks, the amount of time a state of local emergency can be in effect, which is an alarming increase in the amount of time. As my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford spoke about, you know, we can refer to a number of folks far more scholarly than I on this who would argue that that is an overreach. Absolutely. That is too far a time. Again, who was consulted on this? Did you speak to any academics, any scholars who might be able to weigh in on the necessity of such a significant, significant change? Who else was consulted? Anyone from civil society? Anyone from the judiciary? The list goes on.

Now, the other big concern that I and my colleagues have is just around, perhaps a simple one on the surface, the necessity of Bill 13. We know, to recap for the folks at home and maybe for some folks in this House as well, that with Bill 10 last week, the government gave themselves the power not just to suspend any law at their will, not only to modify any law at their will but also the power to write and bring into force any new law without legislative oversight, at the will of the minister. We wonder, then, given the sweeping powers now provided under Bill 10: why the need for Bill 13? Why at this time? It's likely not required for the response to the pandemic given the powers already inherent in Bill 10; for instance – I don't have Bill 10 right with me, but I have Bill 13 – the Public Health Act emergency power section, which allows those changes referred to earlier under ministerial order.

3:40

Of course, there are some pieces in the bill that are slightly different – we know that; I'm sure the minister has spoken about that – like allowing a state of emergency to last for 90 days, clarifying some of the language, although I must admit that on the language piece, that was one of our concerns about Bill 10, that without further clarity, without sort of a simplification of some of the language within Bill 10, we were quite worried about how some of the pieces of the bill could be interpreted. You know, I've said on the record probably too many times that I'm certainly not a lawyer, and I do worry, even after having some pieces of Bill 10 explained to me, that there's still a lot of room for interpretation without clear, plain language provided.

One of the things we spoke about as well under Bill 10 was, again, that reality that, you know, so many pieces were already in effect. For instance, some of you may remember that we talked about the increased fines.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to very quickly respond to the members opposite, especially the members for Edmonton-Rutherford, Calgary-Buffalo, and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, on Bill 13. You know, I want to commend my colleague the Member for Peace River for his brilliant remarks on why Bill 13 is needed at this point in time. It can be disappointing, sitting down in this particular House and listening to the members opposite. The question keeps ringing in your head as to whether or not they have actually taken the time to read the bill. With due

respect to each and every one of my colleagues opposite that have spoken, that really was the question I kept asking myself: have they really read this bill? There is nothing in this particular bill that seeks to enlarge the powers of the provincial government. In fact, it gives power to a municipal council. That's really nothing.

You know, on the proposed 90 days, which really seems to be the one that they focus more on, there is a right that a provincial government already has under the provisions of existing legislation, the Emergency Management Act. We have sought to extend that same right to our municipalities to make sure that the province and our municipalities are in a much, much stronger, better position to respond to this pandemic. Under the current legislation provision of the EMA the municipalities can renew. They can renew. They only have seven days while we as a province have got 90 days with respect to a pandemic. So we are extending that same privilege to municipalities.

Madam Speaker, if you take a look at the current provision, section 22(4), it reads, "A declaration of a state of local emergency lapses 7 days after its making by the local authority unless it is earlier cancelled by the Minister or terminated by the local authority or unless it is renewed by the local authority." Under section 6 of Bill 13 all that we are seeking to do is to say: strike out "7 days" and substitute "at the end of 7 days, or at the end of 90 days if the declaration is in respect of a pandemic." So this is really much ado about nothing for a provision that seeks to grant more powers to municipal partners, that they have requested, not taking anything away from them, not enlarging the powers of the provincial government, but making sure that municipalities who approach us – again, they talk about consultation. Madam Speaker, I can assure the members opposite that we have consulted more on Bill 13 than they consulted throughout their tenure with respect to Bill 6.

Madam Speaker, this request came from Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer. Plus, we took it to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association as well as the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, who combined represent at least 340 municipalities in this province. In this province. I had a town hall yesterday with at least 400 reeves, mayors, and not once did these concerns come forward. So I'm not sure who the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is speaking with. What I do know is that the members opposite, for them it's all partisan politics, looking for that gotcha moment that they are going to post on Facebook or on Twitter, not caring about the fact that this province at this point in time is dealing with a very serious matter. I would prefer to deal with the concerns of the people of Alberta.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 13, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2). I appreciate the conversations, for the most part, that have happened since the introduction of second reading of Bill 13 earlier today. I guess what would be my first concern, before we really look at what is in this legislation, is the fact that these are massive changes in terms of timelines of the ability of the minister. So, you know, when we hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs telling us that we're not asking the right questions or that our questions aren't valid instead of answering specific questions that we have, that's very concerning for me. The fact is that we've had a relatively short amount of time to, well, for one, consult with our stakeholders on this legislation but, two, myself, spend time reviewing it and having those conversations with my constituents and also digest the information or lack of information that we're actually getting from this minister.

So I have some concerns, once again, as has been stated over and over again by our opposition caucus in the NDP, that this is a continuation of what we saw with Bill 10 earlier this session in the overreaching powers that this government is willing to give themselves. I understand the circumstances that we find ourselves in with the COVID-19 pandemic, and I recognize that these unprecedented circumstances will call for extreme measures in some instances, but it is my responsibility to my constituents to raise questions. Whether the government thinks those are valid questions or not, the fact is that they should do their best to answer them and not simply attack us on the basis of them not feeling that our questions are valuable.

I would appreciate, instead of being heckled – I've heard the government members, specifically the Member for Cardston-Siksika, over and over again heckling our members while we're trying to raise these concerns that we have. I would appreciate it if they would listen and try and respond to our specific questions instead of attacking us for what they see as political partisanship. We have real questions, and they've been raised. Once again, the minister had the opportunity a moment ago to stand up. He did mention a few of the municipal stakeholders that he brought this legislation forward to, and I appreciate that. There are still more questions that need to be answered. I appreciate any opportunity that the minister takes to raise those concerns.

Now, once again I just want to point out the fact that in this legislation, even though the minister said he's not really changing anything, from what I can tell in the short amount of time I've had to review this legislation, the minister is giving himself the power to modify states of local emergency without having the approval of local councils across the province. So while the minister says that things are all good and no one has raised any concerns with him, I would like to hear that from those councils themselves: those town councils, those municipal councils, indigenous councils, and other organizations that will be affected by this legislation across the province.

**3:50**

The fact is that we saw the city of Edmonton asking for specific modifications to the local state of emergency in terms of being able to, I believe, house our homeless population, which is an extremely important issue right now. I know that the city of Edmonton appreciated some of those changes that we saw. But the fact is that the relationship between municipalities like the city of Edmonton and this minister specifically have been a rocky road over the last year that this UCP government has been in place.

The fact is that this UCP government campaigned on the big-city charter and ensuring that municipalities' funding that was committed under our government, under the NDP government, and was committed in the platform of the UCP would be protected. Unfortunately, they did one thing during the election and even before the election, and when they came into power, they did another thing, the exact opposite of what they promised. So I have concerns about how sure we can be that the word of this UCP government and of this minister is actually going to be the case as it plays out.

Now, something that we've also heard in these discussions and the discussions on Bill 10 was that the UCP said that they didn't want to make any changes without bringing it to the Legislature, but the fact is that the legislation before us in Bill 13 is actually extending their ability to make wide-ranging, sweeping changes without actually having to bring it back to us. I mean, they're giving themselves a 1,200 per cent increase in time for states of emergency. So once again on one hand we hear the minister saying

one thing and then on the other hand doing another. It's just another question that I have.

Once again, through Bill 10, through Bill 13, and even before the COVID-19 pandemic was before us we've seen this UCP government continuing to erode democracy, whether it be small changes in the Legislature like our ability to – once again, small in this instance, but how we support each other, whether we're allowed to clap or bang on our desks, changing parliamentary traditions in small ways like that but then moving further just over the last few weeks. I raised this issue yesterday in the Bill 3 debates. The fact is that I didn't have the opportunity to question my minister, the Minister of Service Alberta, in the estimates process.

Once again we have a government coming forward telling us that we should trust that their legislation is going to do what they promised it will do but on the other hand not living and dealing with the accountability that parliamentary democracy deserves in this province. So I'm once again not sure how I'm supposed to take their word for it.

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford raised a great point, that government members have explained how this process, the process that's in place already, has worked in the past, and we had UCP MLA private members stand up and explain that the process that's in place already has worked in the past. So once again I'm not entirely sure why these changes are needed if what was in place already was working.

Now, I think back – and I've raised this issue before in the Legislature. Whenever a piece of legislation came forward under our NDP government that required changes to be made through regulations, which is pretty standard across the board, there are things that have to continue to be consulted on. But when there are pieces of the legislation missing through regulations that need to be further consulted on, there is always a question of: what are those regulation changes going to be? We heard members of the UCP, when they were in opposition, over and over again rail against our government and attack us for the fact that that happened sometimes.

Once again here we are where they're making sweeping changes and giving themselves the ability to modify states of local emergency for councils across our province, and they're telling us to trust them. Through Bill 10 and Bill 13, while I once again recognize the extreme circumstances that we are in with the COVID-19 pandemic, I really think it goes against the libertarian values that the Wildrose Party once purported to uphold. I would be interested to see how their own members – well, I guess, I imagine that a lot of the Wildrose is still in the UCP. I would be interested to find out how those members are feeling about the overreaching power that this government is trying to give themselves.

The fact is that whether we were discussing Bill 6 or energy efficiency over the last term of the NDP government, the Wildrose stood up, I believe – correct me if I'm wrong – and discussed how they had constituents or members of their party that were concerned about the overreaching power that we might be giving to electrical contractors to come and change light bulbs or, you know, make a house more efficient, yet here we are. The minister is giving himself the ability to do – well, they've already given themselves the ability through Bill 10 to do whatever they want, but now through Bill 13 they extend that and change, modify states of local emergency for local councils.

Once again we see extreme, sweeping changes to the ability of local councils to do their work, which in many instances might be good, but that's why we raised our questions about: who, specifically, have you consulted? Like I said, the minister raised a few municipalities in his previous remarks. We would love to see a list of the total number of municipalities, specifically which ones, and town councils and indigenous communities as well. Those are

important questions that should be sorted out before they expect us to just give them the rubber stamp and say that things are good to go.

Madam Speaker, overall I am concerned with the amount of power that this government is giving themselves. I've seen through the changes that they made in the past and the way that they have proceeded in strong-arming their will through this Legislature, whether it be the erosion of our ability to go through the estimates process, whether it be the erosion of standing orders in this House. This Premier came to Alberta and said that he would uphold the parliamentary traditions of this province, yet he has done exactly the opposite since he's come into power. Whether it be the firing of the Election Commissioner after his party was being investigated for wrongdoing during the leadership race, once again whether it be the erosion of the estimates process for us, we see over and over again that this government is willing to walk all over democracy to essentially show that they can.

I'm not sure where I'm going to land on this, Madam Speaker. The fact is that I recognize, once again, that changes need to be made in these unprecedented times, and maybe this will, at the end of the day, help these municipalities if they are asking for it. I hope that the minister, once again, will table a list of consultations that he's had and specifically which municipalities have been asking for these changes.

With that, I suppose I will end my remarks. I imagine that some government member will have some very nice words to share with me.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I see the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I tried to listen carefully to what we just heard, the last couple of speakers from the other side, and I was kind of amazed. They talked about the bill. Let me just say that they talked about whether they had time to get through the bill. I just want you to know that while the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs was speaking – and it was 29(2)(a), so we know it was less than five minutes – I read the entire bill again. For the record I read the entire bill in less than five minutes.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Did you understand it, though? That's the question.

**Mr. McIver:** I'm getting heckled about: do I understand? Well, there are a few things I understand, having read the bill. One is that it strikes out "pandemic influenza" and substitutes "pandemic." In other words, we're making the legislation so it can be used for a different pandemic in the future so you don't have to have four pieces of legislation, one for an influenza pandemic, one for, I don't know, a skin disease pandemic, one for – I don't know what kind of other diseases will come along. And they don't trust that that's a good idea. That's okay. They don't have to trust that it's a good idea. They're the opposition, but they shouldn't embarrass themselves so much.

They talked about the sweeping power to alter the emergency order of a municipality. The Minister of Municipal Affairs already has the power to completely eliminate a state of emergency for a municipality. What he's actually done with this legislation, for those that might have bothered to read it: he's given himself permission to have less power by the ability to take apart only part of what a municipality has done in order that the province and the municipality can work together. They're scandalized by the Minister of Municipal Affairs demanding less power. Somehow they think that's the most terrible thing in the world. It's four pages. If they don't trust that we've called municipalities, pick up the

phone and ask them yourself. That's their job. They don't seem to have a long list of municipalities that don't like this, yet they're not willing to do the work. All I'm saying is: if they don't like the legislation, vote against it. But before they stand up and rail against it, perhaps they should take the less than five minutes that's required and read it and then maybe pick up the phone and ask a couple of people that are affected. Then maybe their debate would be a little more pointed and a little more useful and a little more helpful.

4:00

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just as an addendum to those comments from the hon. Minister of Transportation, I am just floored by the fact that the members opposite are so concerned about protecting power, as though the members opposite or this House itself are the guardianship of that power. We are devolving power to somewhere around 341 different municipalities and other jurisdictions like First Nations, Métis settlements that will have the same capacity. That is a total of somewhere around 4,000 councillors.

There are one, two, three, four, five, six members of the opposition who are guardians for all the Albertans who are afraid of this abuse of power. No. The true guardians are those elected representatives, who are duly elected, whom we trust to do their jobs.

Now, I see the member opposite is disagreeing with me, and I welcome him to call my elected representatives at the municipal level and tell them that we don't trust them with this power. We don't allow them the ability to have a 90-day period to deal with a pandemic that is lasting months on end. To bring them back again and again to do the same thing over and over again is the definition of repetition of red tape for these individuals.

This is not a question of taking some new authority and giving it to them; it's giving to them what they have and tailoring it to the nature of the problem they're facing. This is a tool in their tool kit. This is allowing our elected representatives at the municipal level to truly represent their constituents, their ratepayers, the individuals that live and work in their constituencies of their municipalities. I think that is a noble thing. I think that we can see over and over again with the comments from the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs how this is reasonable legislation. This isn't a moment just to throw whatever we can at the government and see what sticks and attack them.

I almost wonder, Madam Speaker, if the members opposite are filing in one at a time just to make sure they all speak at every single reading of every bill to fill time. I wonder sometimes if that's what's happening. But, no. I think they wouldn't do that during a pandemic. I take in earnest sincerity the questions coming across as ones that they truly care about, and I implore them to keep asking in sincerity because I know it's beyond them or any other elected official to spend time spinning wheels in what the Americans would call filibustering over and over again. Asking genuine questions, yes. I implore that. But taking turns to fill time in the Legislature, I think that would be beyond the members of the opposition, and I'm very glad that they're asking sincere questions here today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak for my first time on Bill 13, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), that has been proposed by the government. As we are in a state of emergency right now, looking at ways to best support Albertans during this



pandemic, I need to express my deepest gratitude to all of those that every day are doing work that is keeping us safe: our front-line workers, our social workers, our seniors workers, our doctors, our health workers, disability workers, the list goes on and on. While we're here debating what needs to take place regarding the emergency management amendment act, I would be remiss to not thank all of those people.

I have to say that I take great insult from the member that was just speaking and saying that we're standing here filling time. My job as an elected official for Edmonton-Castle Downs and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is to do just this. It's not to be seen as filling time. My constituents, Albertans, reach out to my office to be heard. I hear over and over and over again, Madam Speaker, that they live in other ridings, that they live in government members' ridings and don't feel heard. They write letters, they send their concerns in, yet they go unanswered. So my job is to represent their voice in here, and it is very insulting to hear that I am just talking. I know that that's how it's sometimes interpreted on the other side, that our position, Albertans' position, isn't taken seriously, and it's just unacceptable that that's the opinion of private members in government who are continuously heckling: backbencher, backbencher. It's just very insulting, I think, to all Albertans to hear that that is the opinion of what we're doing in this Legislature.

We are here to discuss Bill 13 and other pieces of legislation that have come forward, just like we were last week talking about Bill 10, which, in our opinion, resolved a lot of what they're asking to do in Bill 13. So to be able to stand here and ask questions of government and what their intentions are I don't believe is a waste of time. I believe that Albertans have the right to ask their questions, which they do through me as the representative for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

I heard the Minister of Transportation say that he had picked up this piece of legislation and read it in under 15 minutes.

**Mr. McIver:** Under five.

**Ms Goehring:** Under five. Sorry.

He clearly missed a piece. I'll give him some room because it was a five-minute read for him. He made a comment that this legislation actually allows for less power for government, which is absolutely ridiculous. When you look at section 8, it says that "section 24 is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.02) The Minister may, by order, rescind, cancel or modify any bylaw enacted, resolution passed, [or] action taken.

What that means is that the minister now has the sweeping power to make these decisions if he doesn't like what the municipalities in this province are doing. So to claim that they're giving more power to municipalities and taking less power away is not accurate. It says so in black and white in Bill 13, which he claimed to have read in five minutes. I would encourage him to maybe read it again and to perhaps understand what it means. It just doesn't make sense.

When we're asking questions of government, when we're trying to determine what the intention of this legislation is, I think they're fair questions that have been coming from all members on this side of the House about consultation and who they're talking to. Is this something that municipalities have asked for? Is this something that they felt wasn't covered under Bill 10, that this was something that was needed? Why is there not transparency in who they've talked to? Were there concerns raised with this? My understanding is that this came together quite quickly, so in order for there to have been some robust consultation and an intention to do what's being asked of them, I would suspect that there were perhaps some concerns or feedback. Is that addressed in this? We don't know because we

haven't heard from the minister or from the government about what kind of consultation took place and with whom and what the actual feedback was.

Now, the feedback that I'm getting from constituents and from Albertans is that they have some major concerns. This government has shown a history of perhaps not doing what they have said they would do. We've seen it over and over in this House. When constituents and Albertans come to us to listen because they feel that government isn't, we propose ideas. We propose solutions that are coming from Albertans as a way to perhaps make the legislation better. But they've seen over and over that that doesn't matter. It doesn't have an impact when we're pleading on behalf of Albertans for changes that could be potentially lifesaving, like under the GSA legislation. It fell on deaf ears. So there has been some concern that when these sweeping powers are being implemented, it's not in the best interests of Albertans and that it's perhaps being done in a way to say that it's due to the pandemic. But they don't have the answers. They don't have what they need in place to feel that they can trust what this government is doing.

**4:10**

Like the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I too have been inundated with e-mails and concerns from constituents about the government taking it too far. There are many people that have come from places where government took away most rights of people. There's that fear there that this is happening, that the sweeping powers that are being implemented under Bill 13 are similar to what they fled, quite honestly. To hear that and to be able to go back and reassure my constituents that this is something that's happening because it's needed: I can't say that. I don't have the information that's been presented to be able to confidently go back to my constituents and say: yes, they're asking for these powers, and here is why. They haven't been able to articulate that, so it's concerning to my constituents that I can't respond to why they want this sweeping power and legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We know that the municipalities already have the ability to do this work, and they're being very creative in how they're doing work. We heard members talk about the ability to do virtual meetings to make decisions, using correspondence that people all around the globe, quite frankly, are using right now in this time. It's a way to communicate. It's a way that has been accepted. So to have the argument that it needs to be extended just doesn't seem fitting in this circumstance.

When we're asking people to comply with things that the government is asking, there's absolutely merit in that. When we talk about the things that are in place for slowing the curve and the spread of COVID, we absolutely understand that and don't question that. What we do question is the means and how they would like to propose legislation in an attempt to create this power that doesn't necessarily need to be there.

When we look at this legislation, we have questions. We as an opposition are in support, absolutely, of decisions that are meant to assist during the pandemic. That is something that all the members in this House are here to do. However, with this piece of legislation that we're debating right now, it's confusing because we don't know who was consulted. We don't know if the municipalities fully support this bill and what their feedback has been and what concerns have been addressed. We know that this piece of legislation is not giving less power, like has been claimed by government. It provides more, sweeping power to just make decisions like: "No, I don't agree with that. I don't want to do that." I'm curious to hear what the municipalities would say about that in

terms of this piece of legislation because we haven't heard from them.

When we have so many people that are out on the front lines every day doing everything in their power to keep us safe and we have so many Albertans that are staying at home, that are doing what is asked of them, to have a government come in and provide this legislation that gives more power is concerning. We have a definite place in this Legislature to have fulsome debates and discuss concerns. We would like these questions answered. We've had it over and over that this information is still missing. What does meaningful consultation look like? Has this occurred? In the past, when we've had government bring forward legislation outside of the pandemic, they've made claims that they have done meaningful consultation when time actually permitted it, and it didn't occur. So I'm questioning their ability to have done it in a meaningful way now, and I'm questioning why they're making such big, sweeping, power moves in this. It feels like it's not done in an honest and transparent way, and that's concerning, Mr. Speaker.

We know that Albertans need to have trust in government and the decisions that are being made in order to keep us all safe during this pandemic. That is absolutely essential, going forward, in how we feel. When government is making these types of decisions, it doesn't create that kind of trust. It creates a mistrust and a fear when there's already so much going on, and there's already so much fear that's happening out there right now.

I worry about some of the spin that's happening on the other side about us standing here and questioning the legislation and questioning their reasons for putting this forward now, in the midst of this pandemic, when there are already avenues in place to address that. When we look at the reasons behind it, we're not hearing those answers. To be able to go back to my constituents and articulate the reasons for these sweeping changes, I don't have that information. We know that this allows more power for the minister to make those decisions, and it's concerning.

We know that there are probably many stakeholders that have a lot of feedback. Given what happened with Bill 10, there was the ability to have an appropriate response to the pandemic, and I believe that the powers that were extended in Bill 10 created that. So why Bill 13 is before us now is very unclear. Extending the emergency days from seven to 90 is something that doesn't make sense. Exerting more power into an already standing piece of legislation that was passed through Bill 10 doesn't make sense. It just is giving the minister more authority, more ability to modify any orders, as he sees fit, that are made by any local authority. I'm unclear, Mr. Speaker, about the purpose of this piece of legislation when Bill 10 already exists. There doesn't seem to be anything that is required at this time. We're in the middle of a pandemic, and I think our energies need to be focused on making sure that Albertans are safe and not providing more power to a government that already has the power currently to do what they're claiming they need to do.

I think that when it comes to this discussion and this debate, it would be wonderful to have some of those answers and for the government to be able to explain to Albertans the need for this piece of legislation in a really honest and transparent way. I can tell you that the feedback that I'm getting from my constituents is that there isn't a sense of trust with government. There's a lot of questioning of how they've proceeded in the past, and there's a definite fear of their intention behind this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. I see the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I just want to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs' comments with respect to Bill 13. I just want to reiterate my earlier comment and say that – and I completely agree with my colleague the Minister of Transportation – if the members opposite would just take a few minutes and take a look at Bill 13 and the original legislation, the Emergency Management Act, they will find out that most of their comments around Bill 13 are really much ado about nothing. Again, through you to the members opposite and to all of our citizens listening from home: we have not sought to expand the powers of the Minister of Municipal Affairs by this Bill 13.

Section 22(2) of the current legislation reads: "The Minister may cancel the declaration of a state of local emergency at any time the Minister considers appropriate in the circumstances." That power is already there. What we have done is to say, you know, that we would prefer to work with our municipalities to make sure that they retain control over their declaration of a local state of emergency and that if there is ever a need for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to want to end it, he may consider whether or not to modify a declaration of a local state of emergency.

4:20

Section 22(2) of the current act as written, which is the law in this particular province, is much broader, gives the minister much more authority than anything that is being proposed under Bill 13. That is the simple answer to your concerns, and I challenge you to take a look at the original act and the bill and tell me how that is different.

Number two. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I don't understand why the members opposite would want to spend their time on a bill that should not be controversial at all. This is not one of those bills where members opposite would want to rise and light their hair on fire. There's nothing in this bill. But am I surprised? No. That's because time after time the members opposite have shown that for them, as I said before, it's all about gotcha politics. Much ado about nothing; there's nothing in this particular bill that should be of concern.

Rather, the people of this province, the municipalities now have the flexibility – oh, by the way, Mr. Speaker, from seven days to 90 days: that is not a power given to the province. That is much-needed flexibility given to our municipalities, and it is completely up to them. They can choose to say that they are going to end, modify, limit the number of days that they may choose to declare a local state of emergency. That flexibility is entirely in their hands, not in ours. When we live in trying times such as this, we want to make sure that we are better prepared to respond to this pandemic in a way that our citizens expect us to do. That's exactly what we have done.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, again, if they take a look at this particular bill, they will see that under the current provisions the order that I could deal with to ask them to comply is with respect to an evacuation order. I think the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is confusing the powers under the Public Health Act and those of the Emergency Management Act. All we have said in this particular bill is to make sure that all of the orders issued by the chief medical officer of health and by this government to make sure that we are managing this pandemic very well are complied with, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the time for 29(2)(a) has elapsed.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to second reading? I see the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased that I'm getting such a warm reception from the members opposite when I rise to speak. I will try to not let them down.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 13. I first of all want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for engaging in the debate and answering some of the questions that we've raised here on this side. I do want to provide in the time that I'm given here a bit of a response to some of the issues that he's raised. First of all, I think we need to acknowledge that it's not common practice by members of the front bench to engage fully in debates around the legislation that they bring forward, so at least I am grateful that the Member for Edmonton-South West is here, and certainly I think he's following the – forgive me.

**The Speaker:** I'd provide some caution about making note of the presence or the absence of any member inside the Assembly.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I'm ashamed that I accidentally broke the rules of order here today.

I do want to say that I appreciate the contributions that the Member for Edmonton-South West has made to the debate. It certainly follows the practice that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park provided yesterday when he engaged in the debate around Bill 3. I think the process of democracy is better when the people who are bringing forward the legislation are engaged in the debate that we bring forward, so I'm grateful for the interjections.

Now, of course, I think that even though the ministers are here to engage in the debate, that doesn't mean that they're right. You know, it is our job as the Official Opposition to debate back and forth and get some clarification. I think that my understanding of the bill is better now than it was when I walked into the Chamber earlier thanks to the debate that has taken place.

I do want to raise a couple of issues that the Member for Edmonton-South West has raised. One of the issues is around, you know, the urgent nature of this legislation. We were brought back to the Legislature under the understanding that the legislation that we would be dealing with is of an urgent nature. Yesterday, certainly, we engaged in debate around Bill 3, and we fully agreed that it is an urgent matter to give mobile-home site tenants access to the dispute resolution service because there are a number of mobile-home site tenants who are going to be in very short order in dispute with their landlords and need that access right away.

I expected that the provisions provided here in the Emergency Management Act would also be of a similar urgent nature, but when I look at the bill, there are a lot of things that appear to be housekeeping issues. Section 4 of the bill amends section 18(4)(a) of the Emergency Management Act to strike out "pandemic influenza" and substitute "pandemic." Fantastic. You know, that is an oversight that should have been corrected at some time. I have yet to hear the members opposite explain to us why it's urgent. I understand that the Minister of Transportation, the Member for Calgary-Hays, says that this gives power to the government to declare an emergency for a specific length of time in the case of any pandemic, not just influenza. Fantastic. We don't disagree with that, but that's not the urgent kind of matter that we expected to be dealing with when we saw this legislation.

There was another piece in here that struck me as housekeeping, and that's section 11, which amends the Peace Officer Act.

11(1) The Peace Officer Act is amended by this section.

(2) Section 13(1.1) is amended by striking out "declaring the peace officers to have jurisdiction in any part of Alberta to which the declaration of a state of emergency or a state of public health emergency relates".

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the original section that's being amended here, the lawyers in Municipal Affairs just decided that that clause was too long, so they decided to shorten it in this legislation, which is fine. We routinely as government clean up and

clarify legislation. Often those things are dealt with through miscellaneous statutes amendments. None of those things are urgent. Those two clauses didn't have to be in this bill today because neither of those things is going to materially affect the declaration of the state of emergency that the province currently finds itself in.

It is a bit frustrating, Mr. Speaker, for us to be here debating a bill that contains a significant amount of housekeeping. We have no issue with debating legislation that is fundamental to the proper operation of the province of Alberta during a time of emergency, but we shouldn't be dealing with housekeeping sections like this right now. That's not, in my view, the appropriate use of our time.

4:30

Moreover, the Member for Edmonton-South West tried to give us a lesson on how democracy should operate, berating us for raising questions, saying that they weren't relevant or that we didn't understand the bill. I'd like to remind the member that that's how democracy operates. We don't all operate under the same information and knowledge of the legislation that the minister does. Members opposite here: we don't have the armies of lawyers and civil servants that the minister has access to to explain these things in detail. This is our only opportunity to come and understand the legislation.

We're asking questions in good faith. We sincerely want to know why we're dealing with this legislation right now and what powers are changing and how that's going to affect the legislation, and what we hear from the Member for Edmonton-South West is: "We don't have time to do those things. The members opposite are wasting our time. This is an emergency situation, and we need to pass this legislation right away."

Well, Mr. Speaker, you can't be committed to democracy and then deride people who are engaging in democracy at the same time. If this was a matter that was so urgent that any questions that we would raise, unless they had been preapproved by the Member for Edmonton-South West for appropriateness, are a waste of everybody's time, then he didn't have to come to the Legislature to do this at all. The government has already given themselves sweeping powers to amend, add to any piece of legislation at any time during this state of emergency. We're grateful that the minister and members of the government caucus want to engage in democratic debate, but then don't spend time deriding us for trying to participate in the democratic process.

I do want to also ask some questions around the timeline. It's not necessarily on why they're putting the timeline into the legislation. I appreciate they're aligning the timelines for local authorities' states of emergency with the powers that the province has given, and I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-South West for clarifying that for us. One of the questions, though, that this is raising: as the members have said that this is an urgent piece of legislation that needs to be dealt with now, why are we imposing a 90-day time limit? The number one question that I'm getting from my constituents is: "How long is this state of emergency going to last? How long are we going to have to hunker down in our houses and not be allowed to visit our grandparents and our friends and go to church and to the libraries and playgrounds?"

I appreciate that the Premier was on television last night and at least shared some of the facts with the people of Alberta about the number of people that we expect to contract COVID and probably die from this horrible pandemic disease, but we also need to be honest with Albertans about how long we're going to be in this situation. If we're going to be in this situation for the next 90 days, then I would appreciate hearing from the Premier and the chief medical officer of health and other people in the know how long

we're going to be in this state of emergency. Right now we don't know. Is it going to be 90 days? Is that why we're granting local authorities the power to extend their local states of emergency for 90 days? The people of Alberta really need to know how long we're going to be in this situation so that they can prepare themselves, because it is incredibly stressful on everybody, the circumstances under which we're living and working and trying to get by, and it's made far worse when we don't know how long it's going to be.

You know, that's tangential to this piece of legislation, but when we're talking about timelines of local and provincial states of emergency, it does raise the issue of how long we're going to be in these circumstances. I would appreciate more information from Executive Council about how long we think we're going to have to live under these circumstances.

The final point that I want to make is on this issue around power. The minister has claimed that he is actually giving himself less power, and I want to take issue with that, and here's why. The Emergency Management Act as it's currently written gives the power to the minister to either leave in place or set aside all of the conditions of a local authority, and he doesn't get to pick and choose, right? Either you set aside the entire thing, or you leave it in place.

Now, this legislation allows the minister to go in and pick and choose what aspects of the local state of emergency he wants to change or get rid of or add to. I would argue that that actually gives the minister more power in practice than is the current state of affairs because the minister is much less likely to set aside an entire state of emergency that's been imposed by a local authority than he is to meddle with the details. I don't know what kinds of details the minister wants to meddle in. You know, it could be ridiculous things.

I'm looking at the state of emergency orders that the city of Edmonton has issued, and it's closing off-leash dog parks to require everybody to keep their dogs on leash. Well, is the minister in the pocket of Big Dog and wants to amend or set aside that order? I don't know. Why would he want that power? You know, also, the city of Edmonton has closed playgrounds, much to the chagrin of my children and much to my own chagrin because I cannot send them outside to play. It's driving me crazy. Maybe the minister wants the power to set aside the city of Edmonton's declaration of closing city playgrounds. In this case maybe I would throw him a parade if he did because it's causing so much hardship.

My point is: why does the minister want to give himself the power to meddle with the details of a local state of emergency, especially when he could be potentially dealing with 340 or however many – sorry; I don't know the exact number of how many municipalities there are. Why would he want to give himself that power? How much time does he have in states of emergency to be deciding whether or not an emergency amendment to bike lanes in Red Deer is in the public interest?

I would appreciate the minister being able to answer that question. Why is it that he thinks it's better for him to be able to meddle with the details of a local state of emergency than to just either say that it's not valid or that the whole thing is valid? I look forward to the minister's response.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you to the member. I always appreciate when you choose to follow the rules. I am a little Sad Dad when you choose to break the rules on purpose. It makes my heart sad a little bit on those days.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise to quickly respond to some of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think that at the outset of some of my commentary on some of the concerns that have been raised by members opposite, I did indicate that I am someone who values the Westminster parliamentary tradition and the place of the opposition to ask questions and to hold the government to account. I don't think that that is in doubt in this particular Chamber. But, at the end of the day, what is important is whether or not we are actually, you know, living up to that expectation.

4:40

I want to again commend the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his questions to understand whether or not this particular bill furthers the powers of the minister or limits the powers of the minister and where those powers, so to speak, are really situated. Again, as I said before, if the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would take some time, take a look at the original Emergency Management Act, you know, there's nothing in this proposed bill that furthers significantly the powers that exist under the current legislation.

I would again ask him to take a look at section 19 of the current law, the EMA, and section 22(2). You know, take a look at section 19: "On the making of the declaration and for the duration of the state of emergency, the Minister may do all acts and take all necessary proceedings including the following," including the power to conscript, by the way.

What we are talking about here is an addendum to a particular section that says: rather than the minister stepping in to terminate, if circumstances were right, can you work with a municipality to see whether or not we can reach a compromise? There are areas that need to be retweaked, a flexibility tool. The power to end an entire local state of emergency currently, presently, resides with the minister – oh, by the way, Mr. Speaker, also with the municipality – and the municipality can also choose how long they would want the local state of emergency to last. That flexibility, again, is there.

What we have simply done is extend the seven-day period so that council doesn't have to renew it every seven days at a time when the entire province is dealing with a very serious pandemic. That made this particular government three weeks ago modernize the MGA to make sure that, you know, we provide a lot of flexibility with respect to the ability to be able to meet and to get their residents to participate without congregating in council chambers.

You know, the 90-day period, again, already exists with the provincial government – it's there – but the municipalities don't have it. Common sense would tell us, Mr. Speaker, that – I mean, take a look. We declared a state of emergency when? That was on March 17. We have already passed seven days. I would prefer councils to focus on the things that are important to their residents and give them the tools to better manage the expectations of their residents. As far as I am concerned and as far as . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate at second reading?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to allow the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all members of this House for a spirited debate on Bill 13. It's always a pleasure to make sure that we afford every member of this particular House an opportunity to speak to bills that have been brought forward in this particular House. This bill, again, seeks to make sure that our municipalities have the tools that they need to help the province and

help our communities make sure that we are better prepared, aligned, and in co-ordination with one another and to make sure that we are dealing with this pandemic.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

### Bill 8

#### Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act

[Adjourned debate April 8: Mr. Deol]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate on second reading of Bill 8? I see the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has risen. [interjection]

**Member Irwin:** Inappropriate.

All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise, actually, today and to speak to Bill 8, the Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act. This is a really important piece of legislation, and it's – yeah. I will try not to get emotional as I speak to it today because I know that for many folks, for people that I consider friends, this is a really important issue. Like I said, it's an honour to speak to it. What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about some of the folks that I know who've been working on this for a long time and who've been pushing and just, obviously, ask a few questions. We're in second reading here. I'm sure most folks in the House today have just had the opportunity to review, so please very much take my questions as just probing and wanting to learn more.

One of the first things I want to mention when it comes to Bill 8 is just, like I said, the sheer number of folks who I know work day in, day out on the issue of human trafficking, and it's certainly not glamorous work. It's a challenge for a lot of the folks on the front lines because it's an issue on which there's a lot of education still needed. I'll talk about that in a little bit more detail later on in my remarks, but there's this idea that human trafficking isn't something that happens in our own backyards. I'll talk more about that in a moment.

But I want at the outset to thank one person that I know who lives in my riding and who's been working with the government on this piece of legislation, and she was in fact quoted in their press release as well. Her name is Kate Quinn, and she is the executive director, the head, of CEASE. If you don't know much about CEASE, I would urge you to do some reading. They do incredible work to address primarily sexual exploitation – CEASE, I should say, stands for the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation – which, of course, is an issue inextricably linked to human trafficking.

Like I said, I want to give Kate – and I know I risk by naming her, but like I said, she's someone who was quoted by this government. She's worked closely with this government as well on this topic, and in fact her comments were as follows:

An awareness day, emergency protection orders and the ability to sue traffickers can help those who have suffered. We work closely with law enforcement and community partners to support those who are in immediate danger from their traffickers, and it is abundantly clear that we need to do more to create much-needed protection at critical stages.

I start with those remarks because I very much want to underscore the fact that this is critical legislation. This is very important.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

However – you knew there was a “however” coming – my worry is that this legislation will not get the robust debate that it deserves at this time given that we are in the midst of a global pandemic and given that we don't know from day to day how long we're going to

be sitting. I worry very much that the voices of folks like Kate and other stakeholders won't have the full respect that they deserve because I worry this bill will be pushed through in a bit of a hurried manner.

4:50

Again, I want to be very clear that I'm not being critical of the legislation. I absolutely believe that we need to act on this issue, but I worry about the timing, and I worry about giving it the coverage it needs. Human trafficking is an incredibly complex issue, and while I've done some reading and while I've spoken to stakeholders and while I've done consultation, particularly given my role as the critic for women's issues, I don't think we've had enough time to have the conversations needed. As I'll get into here in the coming remarks, we do have a lot of questions, and I worry that we won't have time to get the full answers that those questions merit. Without clarity and without a full understanding of the impacts of this bill, I hesitate to say, it's giving lip service.

Again, we've got an opportunity right now, you know, to do the right thing and to think about: what are the – we've talked about emergency measures. We were just debating Bill 13 as an example. Absolutely. Again, I'm not questioning the fact that we're in this House right now, but I am questioning the fact that we want to give an issue like human trafficking, an issue that we know is complex and deserves fulsome debate – we want to give it that. I guess my question is: why is there a need to rush it at this time specifically? Again, I look forward to hearing from the members opposite because – this is my first time speaking to it – I just really want to understand: why now? My apologies if it's been spoken about earlier. I wasn't in the House. But I do really want to kind of just understand the rationale for now. Why now? We know that the government has gone on the record to state essentially that we're back in the House to deal with issues that primarily are relevant to the pandemic.

Again, I would point out that actually this pandemic has highlighted a lot of holes in our system. You know, one of the things that I read just the other day that really impacted me was that somebody had posted something along the lines of: the biggest tragedy will be if we come out of this pandemic unchanged. I think this pandemic compels us to ask critical questions of the day, to ask about the systems that are failing so many Albertans, so many folks around the world. I point to housing, for instance, as an issue, right? We see countless folks who are on the streets. We're all trying to help. We're trying to get them into a safe space. We see gaps in health care, right?

[The Speaker in the chair]

We see on this issue in particular, on human trafficking, the complex barriers that vulnerable folks face. My worry, by debating this bill right now, is that we're going to see a need for further examination of the systems that are in place that are barriers to folks like those who are exposed to human trafficking. I would like for us to really consider the timing of this conversation.

However, given that it's second reading and given that I want to take a little bit of time to dig into some of the details, let's talk a little bit about what the bill does. I must first point out that, you know, we had heard about this bill in the previous session, I believe, and there was a name change, which I support because I think it's important that we think about human trafficking from a very, I guess, broad lens. This legislation will create an annual day to bring awareness to the issue of human trafficking, a standard definition of human trafficking, a standard definition of sexual exploitation, a statutory tort allowing victims of trafficking to sue their traffickers, a statutory remedy allowing victims to secure a protection order

from the traffickers, and a warrant permitting a police officer entry, among a few other things.

Now what I want to do is that I want to talk a little bit about some of those specific pieces. I first want to mention the need for education on this issue. Again, while I'm certainly no expert, I've taken some time to try to understand and try to just learn a little bit more about it. I've talked about, you know, the riding that I represent in the House before, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm happy to represent the Alberta Avenue, 118th Avenue area. I live, in fact, a block south of 118th Avenue. While my neighbourhood is incredibly diverse and the arts community is flourishing there – it's a wonderful community – our neighbourhood has been plagued with exploitation in various forms over the years. There are a number of sex workers who choose to certainly engage in the profession, and that's certainly their choice. But we also know that there are folks who are exploited on 118th Avenue.

We know that Project Kare, for instance, which the government has also worked closely with on this legislation – we know that there have been a number of deaths of sex workers, of folks engaged in the sex industry. We know that human trafficking has happened in my own backyard. So this is one of the key pieces, I think, as to why, you know, I'm encouraged by parts of this legislation, because there's a lot of work to be done on the education piece. Human trafficking isn't something that just happens a world away. It happens on 118th Avenue. It happens in other parts of the city as well and across the province.

Also, as the critic for women's issues I do need to point out the relevance of naming the trafficking specifically of women because we know that the victims of human trafficking are most often young women. In fact, I've got some statistics here. According to police-reported data there was a total of 865 victims of human trafficking between 2009 and 2016, and the vast majority, 95 per cent, of these victims were women. In fact, most of those women were under 25 years of age, so young women. Women under the age of 25 represented 70 per cent of all victims of police-reported human trafficking. In fact, tragically, 26 per cent of those women were actually less than 18 years of age. It very much impacts women, young women.

I don't have the statistics handy; it's something I'm hoping to see if we can get a little bit more data on, the impacts on indigenous women and women of colour, because I think we would also see a disproportionate number there again. You know, I'm not stating that I have that data, but I'm trying to find it. It's really important that we look at it from a gendered lens, absolutely, because, again, the data shows this.

On this note, one of the first questions I have is around consultation. I'm curious to know – of course, you know, in the government's own materials we do see that, as I said, Kate from CEASE is quoted, Project Kare is quoted, a few others. I would also like to know which other groups were consulted. Again, I know that some of this work happened last year, so I'm certain that folks opposite will be able to fill us in on some of that information.

I think one of the things that's most important to me and, I'm sure, to many of my colleagues as well is that folks with lived experience are consulted, those women, those people who have been victims of human trafficking, that we can have their voice. Perhaps they're not wanting to be quoted in a press release. Absolutely. I understand that, for sure. I mean, these are extremely sensitive issues, but I want to have some assurance that we've had those conversations with folks who've unfortunately experienced the experience first-hand.

I also have questions around labour trafficking. I don't know – it's not fully clear to me – how much we've considered the issue of labour trafficking; temporary workers, for instance. Again, I pose

that as a question because I'm sure there have been some conversations. I'm just not seeing enough explicit details in the legislation to give us the assurance that there is a consideration of labour trafficking.

I'm going to bring people back to Clare's law – I believe it was Bill 17 in the previous session – which spoke about survivors of domestic violence. We supported that. You may recall that our caucus supported that bill, Clare's law. However, we did so with a few qualifiers. Our qualifiers were . . .

5:00

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would like to provide a brief question or comment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very much engaged with the conversation by the member, and I would just like to ask the member if they might happen to have a few more facts and ideas that they would like to present to the House.

**The Speaker:** Sometimes 15 minutes goes by so quickly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for that because I did leave the viewers at home hanging.

**The Speaker:** The viewer.

**Member Irwin:** The viewer, yeah. My mom.

I would like to point out that I was talking about Clare's law, which our caucus supported, and we thanked the government for bringing that legislation forward. However, we were very clear multiple times in this House that our support was a little bit contingent on a few qualifiers, and I was just about to say what those were. What we made clear in our arguments in the House was that without proper resourcing, Clare's law could in fact be harmful. Those words were not my own. In fact, I had stated in the House at that time that we had spoken to folks on the front lines of addressing domestic violence, and they said: "Listen, we know what's happened in other jurisdictions." They point to Saskatchewan, for instance. Survivors of domestic violence need to have resources in place as they're fleeing domestic violence.

We can draw a clear parallel to human trafficking. As we are protecting and supporting victims of human trafficking, they need to have a wide net of supports in place because we all know how incredibly traumatizing that experience would be. So what sort of supports are we saying need to be in place? There needs to be funding. This is for things like housing, things like child care, access to transportation, access to adequate health care. The list goes on and on. In speaking to a few stakeholders in advance of my comments today, they said the same thing. I'm just looking at some of my notes here: child care, antipoverty measures. If these things are rolled back by this same government, then those women, those people – I won't just say women – those victims will be in no better place.

So I really want to hammer home to the government that, absolutely, there's a lot in this legislation that I'm very happy with and I'm quite supportive of, but it's a warning that without supports in place, we won't be helping the victims of human trafficking. I urge you to consider that, and in concluding my remarks, I urge you as well to be clear with us about who was consulted.

The next step is around the task force. I know my time is going to run out here. I have a lot of questions about the task force membership as well because that task force will have an incredibly

important role in carrying out this important legislation. I really want the government to be careful in who they're choosing to be on that task force. I would like it to be a representative sample. I would like to see indigenous folks on that. I would like to see women of colour on that. I would like to see folks from the LGBTQ2S-plus community on that task force, right? We really need that to be representative. Most importantly, I want there to be folks who are weighing in that have that lived experience because that's going to be crucial in informing the next steps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there is approximately one minute left under Standing Order 29(2)(a). Is there anyone else that would like to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo caught my eye as he'd like to join in the debate.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. With regard to Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act, I'm pleased to be able to stand up and speak briefly to this bill. Admittedly, it's been a lot of years since I've been a social worker directly involved with supporting families and having the responsibility to counsel and assist families to work through the multitude of issues that they would bring towards me, but I can say that I'm extremely happy to be in the Legislature, to be a legislator at this time when we're talking about things like this, protecting survivors of human trafficking.

I remember back clearly to when this Legislature dealt with children involved in prostitution through a task force and then made recommendations to amend the Child Welfare Act to better protect young, underage, under-18 children who were involved in prostitution and to strengthen the Child Welfare Act to better protect them and, of course, the PSECA legislation that came out of that, Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act. I remember all those things, and I'm pleased to be in the Legislature now, as I say, to do more to protect children, survivors of human trafficking, and to give them better support as a society, as a government, as organizations mandated by government to protect them.

I don't think we can talk about this as a pandemic-related act, which we were, you know, ostensibly brought back to the House to deal with, pandemic-related issues. Nonetheless, it's an important issue. I think, being such an important issue, it's too bad that there wasn't an opportunity to be involved in multiparty discussions around this issue. Certainly, the six social workers who are on the benches of this NDP opposition could have added value to what's before us today. I'm not saying that the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General hasn't done the job. I think that job could have been improved with the input of people currently working in the field, people who as legislators worked on these issues when they were in government. Nonetheless, it's here before us today. I think we can do a better job to protect survivors, and that gives me great pleasure.

I think the preamble is, you know, very clear about what this bill intends to do, and for that I'm glad that we've got it before us. Then the definition of human trafficking is substantive. I note that my colleagues have raised issues with regard to that definition and the hope that it includes labour as an issue also curtailed under this act in terms of being trafficked. We know that there are many who will take advantage of others in our society, and they, unfortunately, have probably more skills and abilities to find loopholes around their activities than people in authority have the ability to close those off, but I see Bill 8 as an attempt to do that.

As I said, I just wish there would have been an opportunity to have that kind of discussion, the sharing of information, the

improving of the bill, the robust debate at a multiparty committee level. I recognize that we don't easily form those kinds of connections with each other, but I do note that back in '97 there was a task force that did just that, and the multiple parties that were represented on that task force no doubt felt better about the outcome of the recommendations to the Child Welfare Act that they were able to bring forward that started this ball rolling, Mr. Speaker.

5:10

The act will include, you know, an annual day, February 22, to bring forward awareness around this issue. I think the more substantive things, of course, are what I pointed to as a definition of human trafficking. It looks complete to me. The standard definition of sexual exploitation is included in here. It allows victims the opportunity to go to court, the statutory tort to allow those victims of trafficking to sue their traffickers. In the United States we often hear about situations much like that, and they become quite publicized. You could argue that there's a great deal of awareness created across society as a result of those very public displays in the court system, where traffickers are brought to account in that process. The other things, of course, that are included here include the involvement of police officers, allowing them the ability to have warrants so that they can investigate and use their powers to protect people who are trafficked.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague fully laid out just a few minutes ago, we all are connected to those who want to improve the laws, particularly for young people who are exploited. As we know many people who have expertise from different aspects of involvement, we should be open to those people coming forward and being part of a task force. I hope the government would be open to that suggestion. There are many people with credentials who have done a lot of this work. In fact, I was reminded of one person in the community that was doing yeoman's work, not only Kate Quinn, who was mentioned here. Down in the Calgary area there are similar kinds of folks who are working with the young and exploited and police officers as well who have retired and set up homes. I can remember very well a former sergeant who set up a receiving home for young people who were exploited, involved in prostitution, and helped many, many young people get off the streets over time.

Mr. Speaker, the act that's before us certainly has merit. I certainly want to see it robustly debated in this House and, hopefully, the committee. The committee, which we'll be going into whenever we get done with second reading, will have an opportunity to bring forward amendments with the greatest of positive intention to improve the act beyond what's before us. As I said, it's unfortunate that we don't have opportunities to have all-party committees to do these things. I think that those are some of the comments I wanted to make with respect to this.

Lastly, to finish off, you know, I don't see the pandemic-related import here. I know I heard other members on the opposite side say that there's no time like the current time to better protect people who are trafficked. But I understood that our purpose – just as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about with respect to the last act that we were talking about, I just don't see the connection, and I'd appreciate it if members on the other side can make that connection for me and members on this side.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the call.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 8. This is an incredibly important bill for this time, at this moment, during this pandemic. Most of us will agree that human trafficking is a tragedy. It's insidious, and it's harmful to so many innocent people. I think we need to recognize that the true nature of human trafficking is one that is truly located throughout all of our ridings. To think that human trafficking simply occurs in some neighbourhoods where you might have people on the street that you see visible – mostly it comes from everywhere in this province, from homes of children and families where the child meets the wrong person at the wrong time. They're groomed, sometimes for years, and taken into human trafficking, often as children, in their teens, and then in their early 20s. Sadly, many lose their life through it.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Human trafficking is usually born from need, on the part of the trafficker many times, as a way to earn a living. As I said, many of them will undertake insidious actions to groom these children into the trade, and it's sickening. It's absolutely sickening to understand that your next-door neighbour's child could meet the wrong person at the wrong time and that a number of years later this person, that seemed like a kind person that was just looking after them, has groomed them. The next thing you know, they're marketing that child on the Internet, and before you know it, that is their trade.

These traffickers will be involved in the drug trade. They will be involved in the weapons trade. They are no strangers to criminal activity, often organized criminal activity, and they have absolutely no heart. That's how they can do this. They will do it to more than one. They will have an entire stable. These women, children, and young men are often held hostage for years and years and years and years. They become the mothers to these traffickers' children, and they become tied in, and they feel that there's no escape.

Now, why is this important during a pandemic? I think we all realize that this is not a short-lived crisis that we are going through right now. This crisis will have an impact on Alberta and our society for months and probably years to come. There will be economic hardship, and that economic hardship will in fact drive these traffickers to try to increase their trade. They will work harder to make money off young women and boys. So it is imperative that we move on this now. It may not seem overly apparent to those sitting today in the Chamber. It's economic need that drives human trafficking in the first place, and to the extent that we are going to face greater economic hardship, we can expect that human trafficking will continue to occur.

5:20

This bill includes the definition from the Palermo protocol on human trafficking.

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth [above] shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth [above] have been used.

I think that's a pretty fulsome definition of exploitation. I think that's a very good part of this bill. It's part of the reason why I support it.

This bill will give mechanisms. We will be able to put mechanisms in place now that we will need in the months and years ahead to combat an increase in human trafficking that will be brought on by economic hardship. I ask the members of this Chamber to please seriously consider this bill. I know it is not fulsome. It does not include a full suite of services and programs that survivors of human trafficking are going to require to recover. That will come. That is not in this bill, but this bill puts meaningful mechanisms in place to at least allow these victims to be able to survive, to be able to get away from their exploiters, and I think that's incredibly important. I hope that this Chamber will pass this bill with the understanding that there is still much work to be done in this area. Please, let's put this mechanism in place now because we know the situation is going to get worse, and we need some means in place now to combat it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you. Actually, under 29(2)(a) I wasn't originally contemplating speaking to this bill. It's not my normal area to discuss. It's not typically regarding industry or those such things. But in listening to the member for Calgary-Glenmore, it brought back a lot of salience on why this bill is so important to all of us here and in the rural communities.

You know, it brings back a story of a friend of mine during high school. He ended up working, went into the oil patch. He was one of those really good big brothers and had a couple of younger sisters. He was on the road for a couple of years and came back home, and his little red-headed sister wasn't there anymore. There was a little bit of turmoil in the family at the time, similar to the economic conditions that we're going to hear about again, and his sister ended up in Edmonton on the streets. My friend ended up taking it upon himself to try to go find his sister, and unfortunately what you had mentioned as well – there was a predisposition to that, I guess, at that point. She had become conditioned to that type of lifestyle, and that's been an ongoing challenge for the rest of that young lady's life. Now, the good thing was that my friend managed to make sure that that didn't happen to his youngest sister, but the one that was intermediate, next to him, was in that.

When we're on these big projects, we're going through all these different areas, and down in the States I'd seen West Philadelphia up close. We were on an Eddystone project down there, and it was all the illicit drug traffic that went with it and all that lifestyle. When I was out doing fibre optics in Vancouver, where along the port there and along West Hastings and all the other hot spots – and not all those folks are from that immediate area. They're recruited from elsewhere. The Minister of Indigenous Relations has told us so many times about the indigenous file and how many First Nations ladies go missing. So that is the salience. That does resonate with rural as well. It is all connected.

Your points are spot on, and I do think this is something that is of vital importance for us to look at, the humanitarian side. Since we are here and since we know we are potentially facing this, this is something that we really need to take care of. Again, it's not just for the immediate needs. Like you were mentioning, it's out there, and I would feel so bad if I didn't step up and if I wasn't here at this point and this time to help throw my support behind this bill and to make sure that we do the right thing for those folks out there.



With that, if you have anything else to add, I would definitely turn it over to you.

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think it's important to really understand that with this bill we are in fact giving survivors some tools to keep themselves safe, to have a chance to get away from sexual exploitation. It gives them a chance. Like I said, there's much more work to be done. An important part of this will be to increase the visibility to our society of sexual exploitation: the existence of it, the prevalence of it, and the fact that your daughter, your next-door neighbour's son could be the next kid that just disappears and ends up in Vancouver or Winnipeg or somewhere in the States or just in downtown Calgary. You have to understand that everybody can be a target in this, and by this bill we are giving tools that can be used immediately in a time where we know that exploitation is more likely to happen.

So I ask the members to please support this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to such an incredibly important bill. I really appreciate the fact that members opposite have spent a lot of time bringing their concern, sometimes, you know, educated by personal life experiences and other ways of knowing, and have brought what I think is a very critical bill to this House, so I'd like to thank them for that work. It's pleasant for me to be here in this House to have an opportunity to have a "Yes, and" conversation with the government side of the House, because I certainly support the things that they have been saying about this bill.

Again, for context, I think most people in the House know that my life before I became a politician was very much in the area of family violence, with a specialization in the area of sexual violence, particularly of young children, so this bill itself is one that's close to my heart in terms of importance. As a result, it does lead me to have a few cautions about the bill, which I'll try to lay out in a clear manner so that members opposite understand, you know, that any concerns I have about the bill are not about their intent, not about some of the very positive things they've put into this bill but, rather, some of the things that I continue to worry about having read the bill.

Given my experience, you know, both as a child welfare worker earlier in my life and for many years as a family therapist in the area of child sexual abuse and, of course, my work at Catholic Social Services and family services and teaching about all this at the University of Calgary – I say that only because I want the government to understand that my desire here really is not to argue against this bill but, rather, to express some of the concerns that I have about moving this bill ahead at this particular time without perhaps considering some of the issues that I think should be considered before this bill is finalized. You can hear that I'll be arguing for taking some time to address some of the issues which I think are inherently important in this bill.

The issue of human trafficking is a very complex problem and one that I think we need to take some time to parse out a little bit. I think that sometimes people have an image of human trafficking as being one that's sort of that style of activity reflected in movies about women being brought in from eastern European countries and forced into prostitution when they thought they were coming for very different reasons; you know, the typical, classical movie scenario. I think that while that's absolutely true and absolutely repugnant and something that we need to work very carefully to

stop happening, in fact human trafficking is a very much more complex issue than bringing people into the country.

5:30

As the Member for Calgary-Glenmore indicated, it is something that does happen in our neighbourhoods. It's not just something about bringing in foreign nationals and exploiting them because of their lack of resources in this country but something that does indeed happen to very innocent people just living their normal lives in everyday life.

I know that the member spoke about the fact that very often the motivation for this, for human trafficking, is financial. I concur and want to add that indeed human trafficking can have a very strong financial component to it. Therefore, at a time like what's happening right now in terms of financial stress in the province of Alberta, I do anticipate that human trafficking is probably more likely to be happening right now than at any other time because of the deep financial stress that's experienced in the province. Individuals who have the complex characteristics that lead to them making the choice to exploit others may see this as a way of dealing with the larger financial issues that are going on right now.

I guess I'm saying yes to all of that which has been said, but I also want to just take a bit of time to talk about the other kinds of human trafficking that go on, that need to be addressed, and then I'll address the particular issues that worry me about where we're at in terms of the development of this bill. In my work as a child sexual abuse therapist and as a consultant later in my life in that area as well, I found that the notion that people are trafficked for the purpose of financial gain is only a portion and perhaps not even the largest portion of human trafficking that goes on.

In fact, the vast majority of children that are human trafficked are actually not trafficked for dollars. There's not a financial exchange that goes on. Rather, it is – I'm worried that I'm about to get too deep into a lecture about the psychology and reality of child sexual abuse. But the vast majority of children that I worked with that were trafficked were not trafficked for the purpose of financial gain but, rather, were part of the larger problem and issue of power and abuse, and the reason why one individual may take a child and then proffer that child to someone else to sexually abuse was almost never financial. Instead, it had to do with the exchange of power, the currying of favours, and the expectation that if I bring a child to you to sexually abuse, you will bring a child to me to have access for sexual abuse.

I think it's important that we understand that, that for the vast majority of the young children in our province who find themselves used by sexual offenders, there are no dollars involved. The issue for us here, then, is to design a bill that isn't narrowly focused on those forms or situations of abuse where somebody is doing it for a financial gain but to understand that this is truly an issue of power, as almost all forms of sexual abuse are. It's not really about sex. It's really about power and abuse and misuse of others. Because of that, the reward – it's a crazy word to use – for the offender is in the achievement of that power and the exercise of that power and not necessarily in a financial gain.

This brings us to a very complex place of the legislation which I hope to spend a few minutes addressing, and that is that given that circumstance, I want people in the House and the people listening to understand that we need to have legislation that doesn't just address the type of issue, people who are trafficked for the purpose of financial gain, but we need to focus on legislation that actually looks at children who are trafficked for all these other reasons. I've tried to explain very quickly, and it's very difficult to take such a complex issue and summarize it quickly. What this means, then, is that the work we do in this bill needs to be very carefully aligned

with the work that we do under the child welfare legislation because, indeed, many of the kids who will be exploited will need to have child welfare workers of this province involved in their lives. That means that the requirements under this bill need to be consistent with the requirements under the child welfare legislation, and that's the piece I don't see quite addressed in here. I'm just hoping that the government can find a way to address some of my concerns.

Presently we have a Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act in the province, often referred to as PSECA in the community. Under that act, for example, if there's a determination that a child has been used in a sexual manner, the act provides the authority to a police officer or the director of child welfare, to whom that authority is ascribed, and then down to the front-line workers to apprehend that child and to take responsibility for that child and to deal with the issues at hand. Now, under this legislation we have a different set of mechanisms that are in place, and in fact in these mechanisms there seems to be almost an assumption that we have adults only that are going to be using this act for their own benefit. It allows the adults themselves to seek a human trafficking order, not a child welfare worker, not a police officer, which, you know, actually, I support. I'm not against that.

But what it doesn't do is that it doesn't, then, address the issue of: what is the relationship with the process that exists for a child who is being taken care of by the state through the Child Welfare Act in terms of all of the practices that will be engaged and the fact that under this new legislation an adult or a custodian of a child may make an application under the human trafficking order? So suddenly we've gone from having police and responsibly trained social workers and other child welfare workers making decisions around children to having parents or custodians making those decisions. I'm not against it; I just think it's a complex area of legislation, and we should be making sure that they are actually working together and they're not working at odds with each other.

I just would really appreciate it if someone on the government side of the House could tell me how we're going to combine these two together, what happens if we shift the emphasis from having police officers and child welfare workers making decisions for children to having other people make decisions for children. I'd just be interested to know how that will be handled. I'm sure it can be, but I just don't see this legislation as having done that thing.

We also notice that there is a definition of sexual exploitation, which the member opposite read and identified as a fairly strong definition, and I think I agree. I would want to take some time to really think about that, but what is also a problem is that that definition of sexual exploitation is not the same as the definition of sexual exploitation under the child welfare legislation. So now we have two pieces of legislation in the province of Alberta which define the same activities differentially, and I just would really love to see some work done to bring those two together, to ensure that we aren't creating, you know, difficulties for people who are trying to work in this area, to ensure that they are able to do the work that they need to be able to do. Sexual exploitation is fundamentally one of the worst things that can happen to a human being. The violation of the integrity of the body and the destruction of the human spirit that is inherent in sexual exploitation is sometimes – you know, it just is the worst thing that I can imagine. It's hard for me to talk about sometimes because this is a very emotional subject.

**5:40**

I really just want to make sure that we kind of get this right. As a result, I certainly would like to see this House think about whether or not it is best to move this legislation ahead right now and get it done, which there may be some arguments for – and I'd be happy

to hear that from the other side of the House – or whether or not we should actually take some time to work with even our own departments of child welfare and so on to ensure that the two pieces of legislation actually are working well together and that they define the work in a way that is consistent across legislation and that they define the responsibilities for intervention appropriately across legislation and ensure that we don't have children being victimized by the system because of the complexities that are inherent here after they've been victimized by sexual offenders.

So I guess that's my concern at this particular time. I think my preference would be that we actually take some time, that we perhaps have this bill delayed long enough to ensure that that work is done.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to some of the issues that were raised by the member across, who, quite rightly, pointed out that we do have, in fact, in this province the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act. That has existed, I think – it's been around for some time.

Interestingly enough, I took time yesterday to review the PSECA policy manual, and I'll just point out a couple of issues where we will need to work on alignment. I will tell you that the government is working, through Children's Services and other departments, to review PSECA to ensure that it's meeting the needs of children who are sexually exploited programmatically and from a legal standpoint under the act.

One of the things that we need to take a look at in PSECA, for instance, is that the fines don't add up. In the current legislation before us the fine is \$50,000 and two years in jail, and in PSECA it is \$25,000 and two years in jail.

One of the most troubling things I found was actually a definition from PSECA where it states:

For the purposes of this Act, a child is in need of protection if the child is sexually exploited because the child is engaging in prostitution or attempting to engage in prostitution.

In my view, the PSECA definitions need to be re-evaluated from a point of view that the child is not the one that we need to be blaming. They are being exploited. I think that we need to take a serious look at that. That work is under way.

We're looking at it from a point of view of also understanding programmatically what needs to be done to ensure that these children are not only protected from those who are exploiting them but also from a standpoint of: what can we provide programmatically, and what are the barriers to some of those program pieces? How many orders, stacked upon stacked, are appropriate? Is there a better way to do that?

I will say that this act before us today does in fact speak to adults who have been exploited, and that is important because I think that at this point in time there is no mechanism to actually protect an adult who's being exploited short of a restraining order, that usually doesn't have any effect at all. So this at least provides some protection for not only children but adults.

We know that we need to make sure that the two pieces of legislation line up. That work is occurring, and it will continue to happen. Programmatically, of course, we need to have a look at how we can provide the support as people are leaving the circumstances of exploitation. How can we support them to get their life back so that they can live a full and meaningful life after having been victimized? I just want to leave that with the members of the Chamber today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood under 29(2)(a).

**Member Irwin:** Thank you very much. Yeah, I know there's not much time under 29(2)(a), but just thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. I mean, exactly; this is an opportunity, certainly, to examine some of those definitions. I think this also kind of underscores my point earlier just around: who's involved in these conversations? It sounds like you are intimately involved in some of the conversations that are happening. I just hope, again, that in the consultative process we are, you know, thoroughly including folks who not only have the lived experience – again, I mean, we have to be super sensitive when we're talking about children, for sure – but who are from organizations that are on the front lines and involved in these conversations as well.

Again, I appreciate your remarks on this because it's an incredibly sensitive situation. We want to get it right, which again brings me back to my point that I just hope we have the time for fulsome debate on this bill because it is important. My worry is that it will unfortunately not get the full debate in this House that it most certainly deserves.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act. I just wanted, before I begin, to look at again – another member has already referenced the preamble, but I think it's important to focus a little bit on the preamble. I think that, like with most pieces of legislation, you can get a lot of information just from the way that this bill is described and the intent and why it's important.

Obviously, “human trafficking is a serious crime that exploits people of all ages, genders and ethnicities.” Then it goes on to talk about just the horrible realities of it, what it looks like: “threats to coerce victims to provide labour, sexual services or human organs and tissues against the victims' will.” It goes on to describe that trafficking is indeed “a violation of human rights.” It talks about the “barriers and challenges [to] deter” and then also the challenges and barriers to “seeking assistance, including legal assistance.” Then it finally looks at the intent, obviously, which I think is good. The intent is “to empower and protect survivors of human trafficking and [to] provide additional remedies” against human trafficking. That certainly is a lofty goal, and I certainly support that. But the reason that I focus on the preamble is that I do believe, as in my comments earlier, that when we have important pieces of legislation, it's important to have sort of all hands on deck, everybody with experience, everybody reaching out to their constituents and stakeholders to get as much information as possible.

I'll give you an example of that. One of the groups of people that is not really mentioned in this legislation – and, again, I understand that you certainly can't describe every possible scenario that could happen. But there's a huge category of people that are left out that tend to get left out a lot and also tend to be victimized frequently, and those are people with disabilities. For people with disabilities, whether they are chronic mental health problems, whether it's brain injury, a physical disability, a developmental disability, sadly still in this country and in this province abuse and neglect of people with disabilities is a reality. They are abused and neglected far more frequently than their nondisabled peers. I'm sure that you have either people in your life or constituents that you've met who tend to frequently be in positions where there is a power differential,

whether they're reliant on a family member or a friend or a paid caregiver to meet some very, very basic needs, from getting them out of bed to helping them buy food or to feed them or to provide very simple banking, having access to their phone and all of their codes. That is the reality for people with disabilities; they are in positions where there is a huge differential of power.

5:50

As well, on top of that, there's another layer that I think perhaps we in this place could address more simply, and those are the perceptions of people with disabilities. We tend to think of them as, “Aren't they inspiring” or, you know, “Poor things.” I don't speak for people with disabilities, but what I am told by people with disabilities is that more than anything what they want is just equality and inclusion. That is the goal. When you consider the best way to keep people safe in any situation, to prevent any kind of abuse, whether it's human trafficking, whether it's sexual exploitation, or any other range of horrific things that happen, the best way is to empower people and to give them a voice.

Just speaking from, I guess, the point of view of case management, I'm sure that for people in this place who perhaps before being elected and being sent to this place did not have experience doing casework with people with disabilities, they likely didn't understand maybe or didn't appreciate the enormity of some of the barriers that are present in our current system. But speaking from experience – and this goes back way before I arrived at this place – weirdly enough, it is actually quite difficult to report abuse. Whether that's financial abuse, whether that's, let's say, where somebody is on AISH and they have a family member or a friend that is an informal trustee that is supposed to assist and there are concerns that you have, it is actually quite difficult to report that abuse. You can report it to AISH. There is a system. It is difficult. There is legislation like the Protection for Persons in Care Act, but that is a very narrow view of persons in care, sort of how that's defined, and how you can report those allegations of abuse.

The reason I bring these things up is that disabled Albertans, disabled Canadians actually are at far more risk for most kinds of abuse, including human trafficking. In the preamble it talks about gender and some other things. I think it's important to include a group of people that are high risk, that are at risk every day.

The reason that I bring this up is that I would like to propose an amendment to refer this piece of legislation to committee. Do you want me to read it in?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just give me one second.

This will be known as REF1.

Please proceed.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Again, going back to my comments, I don't expect that every piece of legislation will be able to capture and solve every problem or barrier that we identify, but I think that given the enormity of the problem and just given that it's a huge problem, we all can realize that people with disabilities, whether they are visible disabilities or not, are the most marginalized people in our communities. We don't see them that much. They struggle with poverty, all kinds of issues, and the reality is that they are far more vulnerable to all kinds of abuse.

So I think that with our failure to recognize that this is a group that has been exploited, that has been trafficked, and that there is the potential to do so in the future, our failure to include a focus on this particular segment of Alberta's society would be an oversight. Knowing what we know now about what's missing, I think that failure to stop and truly consult would be an oversight that we can prevent by sending it to committee. Again, as I said before, the government saw fit to stop private members' bills and allow for time to really consult and thoroughly go through legislation by referring to committee. I would suggest that it's time to do that for this piece of legislation as well.

I know, of course, that this is important legislation, and if we can prevent anybody from being harmed in any way, certainly that is something to be proud of. However, just given the amount of work that we continuously address in this place through legislation, I think our failure to do everything that we can while it's in front of us and while we have the opportunity to fix it or to make it better or to tighten it up – it's incumbent on us to do it, not just to pass it and say: well, you know, it's enabling, and we'll figure out all the details later.

I think that while we have the ability to refer it and to stop and to truly ask the questions that we need to ask, I would like to know if the government has spent time reaching out to communities of disabled people. They're as diverse as all of us. There is no one group that represents everybody, so that would take some time. There are so many groups of people with disability. There are national groups. There is a Disabled Women's Network. It's a national group that has spoken out for years, pointing out the risk that women, in particular women with disabilities, face on a regular basis, whether it's gender-based violence, whether it's abuse in the home, whether it's financial abuse, abuse by a caregiver, all of those things.

Again, I am bringing up some serious concerns that I have in this piece of legislation, that I think is great. I don't think it goes far enough, and I don't think we've had the opportunity to ask the correct people the correct questions. I'm going to run out of time, but I just wanted to say that knowing what you know, for all of the members in this Chamber, what I told you now, and I think that if

you think back to your own casework and the people that you know in your community and in your life, you will agree with me that people with disabilities, whatever kind of disability, whether it's a chronic mental health problem, whether it's a spinal cord injury, whether it's something like Down syndrome, whether it is a profound medical disability, whatever it is, this is a group that we know – we absolutely know; there is no question – are vulnerable to abuse and neglect on a scale that is higher than their nondisabled peers.

So knowing now what we know, I think we can all justify and understand that perhaps in a rush to really, truly want to protect people, as many people as we can, the government wanted to get this through. I'm saying that that's great, but you missed some people, so let's stop. Let's refer this to a committee so that we can make sure that this group is covered, that this particular stakeholder group is consulted, and that we don't miss anything, and then make sure there are no other major groups that we've missed. That is our job, to be inclusive, and then when we know to do better, we do better.

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that I'm happy to propose this referral amendment. I encourage my colleagues to support it. That doesn't mean that we aren't passing this legislation at some point. What that means is that you don't have all the answers. Not everything you propose is perfect, and that's okay. What I'm telling you is that this piece isn't perfect yet. It can be better, and it wouldn't take that much work to recognize that there is a huge segment of this population that has not been considered in the crafting of this legislation. Let's take the time to get it right, send it to committee, where you have other people with other opinions, consult the correct stakeholders, because there are many that have not been heard.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock now strikes 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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