



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 9, 2020

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Second Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 9, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Members' Statements

Housing

Member Irwin: Our current public health emergency has highlighted the need for bold leadership to finally tackle homelessness in Alberta. Those experiencing homelessness deserve to be properly protected and supported during COVID-19. This is why it's so hard to see this government pointing to mats on floors a few feet apart as a positive step to address this crisis. These are our neighbours, our friends, our family members. They deserve dignity and compassion now and always.

I'm not here to be critical of the incredible front-line workers, who I know are working nonstop at this very moment to do everything they can to support folks, nor am I here to be critical of just one government. Allowing homelessness in our society is a choice made by consecutive governments at multiple levels. It is a failure of decades of inadequate housing policy. Since the deep cuts of the '90s, there has been an exponential increase in homelessness, both provincially and nationally. Modern housing announcements pale in comparison to what Canada once did to ensure that no one went without a safe place to sleep at night. We know that the federal government's current approach to on-reserve housing is unacceptable.

But it can be different. We can do better because we've done it before. Past governments built, maintained, and publicly managed affordable housing units and supported the development of member-owned housing co-operatives. Not that many years ago Alberta even had a rent bank for tenants to access supports and help prevent evictions. This pandemic demonstrates why we need to do better, for humanitarian reasons, of course, but as a way of ensuring the wider public health and safety of everyone as well.

If the moral argument doesn't work in that it's the right thing to do, then consider the economic argument: it's also the smart thing to do for our budgets. Housing is health care. Addressing housing is an upstream approach to health, to justice, to reducing the strain on public services. We can treat people with the respect they deserve now, and we can end homelessness if we choose to. If we can scramble to house folks in a cold snap or in a pandemic, why can't we at all other times? Housing is a human right, and as we think about our next steps, let's act like it.

Former MLA Jack Ady

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise today to pay tribute to a man who dedicated his life to Albertans and truly understood the word "service." On November 26, 2019, Mr. Jack Ady, former MLA for Cardston and minister of advanced education and career development, passed away at the age of 87. Mr. Ady was survived by his wife, Darlene; by four sons – Don, Doug, John, Rob – and one daughter, Lori; and by 26 grandchildren and 38 great-grandchildren.

Beyond his service, Mr. Ady personified everything that was culturally and historically characterized as the Alberta way of life. In his earlier days Mr. Ady worked in the oil fields until 1975, when he decided to get back to his rural roots and bought a mixed farm and ranch near Hill Spring.

Wanting to serve his community more, Mr. Ady ran for political office in 1986 and was elected to the Legislature here for the constituency of Cardston. In 1992 Premier Ralph Klein appointed him as the minister of advanced education and career development, a position he held until he left this Chamber in 1997.

Even after serving in this place for 10 years, 10 months, and three days, his public service and dedication to bettering the lives of Albertans continued. In 2000 he was appointed to the chair of the Chinook health region's board of directors and was later appointed to the Alberta health superboard, where he served until he actually retired from public life in 2010. Today, as a thank you and tribute to his years of public service, his name lives on through the Jack Ady cancer centre in Lethbridge.

But, Mr. Speaker, as good a man and public servant as you think Jack Ady was, he was an even better husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend, devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and raiser of Tennessee walking horses. As the Member for Cardston-Siksika it is an honour to carry on the torch and follow in his footsteps. May he rest in peace.

COVID-19 and Easter Celebrations

Ms Glasgo: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is placing a spotlight on essential workers, who are keeping Alberta moving through this challenging time. Long-haul truckers, grocery store workers, delivery drivers, and, of course, front-line health workers have received the recognition that they deserve throughout this crisis.

As Easter weekend approaches, many of my younger constituents have been asking about somebody who is usually hopping around this time of year. With social distancing rules in place and public health officials advising against visits during the Easter long weekend, I have heard from concerned Albertans who are wondering whether the Easter Bunny will be able to carry out his important visits to homes in Alberta this year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure you and all Albertans, young and old, that the Easter Bunny is an essential worker, and he will be welcome to conduct the important work of delivering Easter chocolate treats and youthful joy this weekend. Like all Albertans, the Easter Bunny is working hard to practise physical distancing and good hygiene while he makes his visits to households across the province. He's been practising frequent paw washing and is staying at five bunny lengths, or six feet, away from others when he leaves his burrow.

Easter will be different for many families this year. Instead of large family dinners, we will be keeping things much closer to home in the days to come. But Easter is by no means cancelled, and there are still many reasons to be 'eggcited,' Mr. Speaker. The Easter Bunny will be making his rounds, and some communities are setting up their own egg hunt by putting up pictures of colourful Easter eggs in their windows for youngsters to spy on their walks by. While Easter may be a bit different this year, there are many ways to celebrate and keep a safe distance. The Easter story is one of hope, new life, and in the Easter Bunny's case a little fun, and his story will live on no matter the circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'd just like to know if the Easter Bunny will be coming to my house. That is the real question.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has a statement to make.

Vimy Ridge Legacy

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 9, 1917, Canadians launched their assault on Vimy Ridge. For three days the

four divisions of the Canadian Corps came together and pressed ahead towards the ridge at Vimy, taking back key territory from the Germans. When the dust settled, Canadians had captured a strategic position that eluded the French and British forces for years. It was a defining moment for a young nation that was often pushed into the shadow of Great Britain.

Many Albertans fought bravely at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, including distinguished sniper Henry Norwest. Born in Fort Saskatchewan of French and Cree ancestry, Norwest was a ranch hand and rodeo performer before enlisting in 1915. He became one of Canada's most famous snipers and was awarded the military medal for the bravery he displayed at Vimy Ridge.

Like any such victory, its commemoration takes on a somber tone. There were thousands of Canadian casualties during the battle, including 3,600 who were killed. Each of these men had a family, who mourned their loss, and a future that was cut tragically short. Today Vimy is remembered as more than just a battle of the First World War; it was a moment that showed the strength of our young nation and the dedication of Canadians to their cause.

Now we face a new type of battle, against a very different enemy. I believe that we can still learn a great deal from the legacy of Vimy Ridge. We can learn from the level of preparation, dedication, focus, and the drive to succeed in the shadow of the unknown and enormous risk. In this battle we must make our own sacrifices and support each other. We must celebrate the bravery of those on the front lines of this fight, and in a hundred years I hope that Albertans will look back with pride on the way we showed strength in the fight and supported one another together in this trying time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hope you'll accept my apology. I have a small error in the order today. We will now have member's statement 4, followed by member's statement 6.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

COVID-19 and Small Business

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's small businesses aren't just struggling during this shutdown; many are in real and immediate jeopardy of going under. We have heard from small businesses that the strategy of the government of Alberta to defer costs isn't working. All it's doing is leading to increased debt, that many if not most will be unable to recover from. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business small businesses are in a cash crisis and a debt nightmare.

They need immediate help and are begging this government to take their very survival seriously. According to the most recent survey rent is their biggest fear. Fully one-third of small businesses won't make it through April. The situation is dire in Alberta. With the Premier's estimate that social distancing will certainly be in place through May, many small businesses are giving up hope entirely. They appreciate the federal government's promised actions, but they fear it will come too late, and they know it will not be enough.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has listed their calls to action, that are squarely a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Today we laid out the Official Opposition action plan to support small businesses. It is a product of our consultation with the real small-business owners who are on the ground and struggling right now. We are calling for an emergency rent subsidy to a maximum of \$10,000; a government backstop of up to \$7,500 for landlords who agree to defer rent for three months for businesses during the pandemic – businesses will have the ability to pay back the amount owing over the subsequent 18 months – an insurance premium

freeze retroactive to March 18 and a 50 per cent reduction on premiums until December 31, 2020; a \$5,000 grant to help small businesses adapt to the new environment; and a \$10 million festivals guarantee program to support these critical events for small businesses.

The time for bold action is now. We urge the government to take our ideas, even take credit for our ideas, to help small businesses survive this crisis.

Thank you.

1:40 COVID-19 and Seniors' Housing

Ms Sigurdson: We learned yesterday that 29 Albertans have died from COVID-19. The vast majority of those deaths were Albertans over 80 years of age. Like many Albertans, I'm concerned for my parents. My mom and dad, 83 and 90 respectively, are in the high-risk age group. Each day I think of all the families in Alberta who are doing their best to navigate these unknown territories. Albertans are carrying heavy, heavy burdens. As a legislator I am thinking about what we can do to support Albertans. We know, from a review of the countries who are ahead of us in dealing with the pandemic, that societies with robust public programs and high social cohesion are better able to overcome the challenges. We heard from our own chief medical officer of health that having one public health system makes navigating the challenges much easier than having one with many private providers.

In our seniors' housing area we are not as fortunate. We have a mishmash of private and public delivery. Even before the pandemic there were many outstanding issues: not enough staff to care for residents, low levels of pay for front-line workers, and a lack of provincial funding for essential supports. Tragically, the pandemic has made things significantly worse. At this crucial time our government must ensure that regardless of private or public, all seniors' housing facilities must be supported through a province-wide staffing strategy. Staff must be recruited, trained, and supported to fill the many vacancies in the sector. Some facilities have vacancies of 50 per cent. All staff must be supported with hazard pay as they are putting themselves in harm's way. Surge funding of 20 per cent over current operating budgets for the next six months is needed to cover these expenses.

The UCP government needs to step up and ensure seniors' housing facilities are supported as if we did have a robust public system. Lives are dependent on it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Preparedness

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one here intended to serve during a global pandemic, but life is not predictable, and this is where we find ourselves. I love unsung heroes all around us who quietly and consistently, without recognition or reward, with the love of God and of man in their hearts, serve those around them. Heroes are defined by how they do their job, by example, serving in love, which edifies even the most humble of tasks into something sacred and special. I know this is true. When the world is in commotion, there is safety in true principles to carry us through to better days. One such principle is the virtue of preparation. Personal storehouses of physical and spiritual preparedness increase resilience. Prudent preparation is an antidote to fear.

Mr. Speaker, this pandemic reminds us of our shared mortality. Each day is a gift, an opportunity to start afresh, to do and be better. What a wonderful blessing. We do not need to be discouraged if we are not perfectly prepared. None of us are. As this challenge

subsidies – and it will – all of us will be blessed with opportunities to strengthen our individual and our family preparedness so that as future challenges arise, and they will, we can be blessed with peace of conscience and capacity to encourage and serve those around us in love.

Thank you.

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

Bits and Pieces Program

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As odd as this may sound, COVID-19 has truly brought out the best in us and given us the opportunity to show the world just what it truly means to be Albertan. Despite the horrors going on around us of illness and death, business closures and personnel layoffs, a lot of good has emerged through it all. People have been helping people. Business communities have banded together. Local communities have found strength in their heart and in their pride for the place they call home, and even the discourse online has become friendlier and more respectful. Even amidst the most difficult times we've faced in a generation, Albertans have risen to new heights and done their part to make this world a better place.

Last week our government announced the Alberta bits and pieces program, which will allow individuals and businesses to offer support. In that one short week, more than 2,900 offers of support have come into our government, including passenger and commercial vehicles, hotel rooms, mobile trailers, food and water services, hospital gowns, face masks, ventilators, personal protection equipment, data modelling, and even the delivery of surprise Easter baskets.

But the good-news story doesn't stop there. In my own riding of Banff-Kananaskis there has been a tremendous outpouring of support from restaurants, shops, and businesses, who are choosing to help others despite the hardships that they themselves are facing. Rocky Mountain Soap Company has donated 450 bottles of hand sanitizer to front-line grocery and gas station workers, 70 litres of hand sanitizer to the medical community, and 9,500 bars of soap to various community organizations. The Grizzly House in Banff is delivering free hot meals to the front doors of seniors in need. Iron Goat is providing 150 meals a day to St. Michael Anglican church to ensure that their weekly food-and-friends service can continue while ensuring their senior volunteers can stay at home safe. And Stoney Nakoda casino is delivering 1,200 ten-pound Easter hams to residents in Morley, Eden Valley, and Bighorn.

Mr. Speaker, these have been incredibly difficult times for many, but they've just shown why I'm such a proud Albertan.

COVID-19 Community Response

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, in the past few weeks our province has entered uncharted waters, and during these tough times Albertans continue to show their strength and resolve. Without question we have seen incredible acts of empathy, charity, and innovation, continued proof that Albertans rise to every challenge, are compassionate, and always willing to provide a helping hand to our neighbours and all those in need.

In Highwood alone we have seen Bar None Ranches and Hub Town brewing, along with many others, donate thousands to our local food bank; Hard Knox Brewery stepping up to support our Foothills country hospice; George Canyon conducting free online concerts; our local food banks banding together to deliver hundreds of pounds of supplies to the Eden Valley reserve; and Owen Plumb, an Okotoks resident, who has started producing Prusa face shields

for front-line workers on a 3-D printer his family acquired two years ago at Christmas. Now, Owen may not be the first nor the only person to be using this technology in Canada, but I would challenge that this 13-year-old grade 9 student may be the youngest. He has already produced over 100 of these masks, and with additional funding now coming his way from the Okotoks Rotary club, he plans to expand his production.

Mr. Speaker, the innovation of Albertans like Owen is why we created the bits and pieces program, a program for people to offer similar services, a program that has now received over 3,000 offers of services, supplies, and innovations to assist with combatting COVID-19.

Though there are still many unknowns, what is more than evident more than ever is that in the wake of this pandemic we need to stand together, united. Our differences must be set aside, and those who continue to instill fear, anxiety, and doubt need to be ignored. Owen Plumb is a prime example of what is possible when we come together and focus on solutions. His example is more than just an act of charity. It strengthens our faith and reminds us that we're stronger together and together we will get through this.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any tablings today? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has a tabling.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the November 6, 2018, *National Post* article titled Robyn Luff Fires Back at Alberta NDP after They Kick Her Out of Caucus, which includes a letter from the former MLA Robyn Luff cited yesterday during debate by the Minister of Transportation. To sum up quickly, Ms Luff called it "a tragedy of epic proportions" that when she tried to advocate for mobile-home residents, she was told that it wasn't a priority and was not on . . .

The Speaker: Thank you for that very expansive tabling. Perhaps we can keep it a little bit shorter and more to the subject line in the future.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Support for Persons and Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging the thousands of people who have lost work. We're with you, and we will get through this. Now, the OPEC Plus news that we've just heard stands to help Albertans going further, but today's news also shows that 117,000 Albertans lost their jobs and that there's another 245,000 who may have kept their jobs but worked significantly reduced hours or, more likely, no hours at all. We know this is just the beginning. More Albertans will need our help as the pandemic grows. To the Premier: what are you doing to get cash to the over 300,000 Albertans who are out of work? And by that question I mean you, Mr. Premier, not Ottawa.

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. You know, our government is working very hard with the federal government to ensure that there are supports in place for Albertans who are out of work. A number

of federal programs have been announced. This includes a CERB, employment insurance, and provincially we have announced a number of programs in terms of utility payments deferral, property tax deferral, and we continue to look at other ideas so that we can support Albertans to get through these trying and difficult times.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, small businesses account for roughly half of all employment in Alberta, and they are telling us that deferrals are not enough. A recent survey found that one-third do not have enough cash flow to pay this month's bills and close to half are facing permanent closure. Premier, if we wait for Ottawa, there might not be addresses to send the cheques to, so they need immediate support such as rent subsidies and new grants. Is this government looking at those things? Will they consider them? And if not, why not?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are focused on supporting Albertans, both employees, employers, and, in fact, all Albertans through these difficult times. On the employer side we have done corporate tax deferral, WCB premium deferrals – and for small and medium-sized businesses that also includes paying for half – utility and education property tax assistance. This is in addition to the federal programs that are already in place to assist small business. In addition – I failed to mention this in my previous answer – we also provide rental protection for Albertans. We understand this is a difficult time. We're continuing to look at other options, and we will announce those in the near future.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about rental support for businesses, and that's what small business is calling for. Now, the sector hardest hit by this pandemic is our hospitality industry: almost 30 per cent layoffs at our bars, hotels, and restaurants. These Albertans work part-time. Most of them are women. A large number are youth. Now is not the time to close emergency financial supports; now is the time to open them. Premier, the numbers prove it. Your program left two-thirds of Albertans who need your help with nothing. Why won't you reopen this program?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague has mentioned, our government has taken numerous measures to help businesses: deferring WCB premiums, deferring education property taxes, deferring corporate tax collection, deferring utility payments. All options are on the table. We've been speaking and continue to speak daily with businesses, landlords, tenants, hearing their perspectives, their challenges, and their needs. We will continue to listen to them and will introduce further measures if needed.

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

Ms Notley: Well, we've been listening, too, and – news flash – they are needed, so get on it.

COVID-19 and Health Care Personnel

Ms Notley: Now, Mr. Speaker, I was heartbroken to hear that another resident at McKenzie Towne continuing care centre passed away last night. We have tried repeatedly to convince this Premier and his government that these families deserve to be heard. We have nine other facilities with outbreaks. All of them are facing some level of staffing shortage and compromised care. Once again, when will the Premier show the same leadership as B.C. and other

provinces and step in to properly resource, co-ordinate, and manage staffing in long-term care across the province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been working with the members of the Alberta Continuing Care Association to be able to get their feedback, to be able to move quickly on what we can do and the steps we can take to make sure that they are going to have the staffing that they need in their facilities throughout the province.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I think that the time for feedback is over. Now, the woman that we lost yesterday was Rita Owen. She was a month away from her 92nd birthday, and her son Michael told Global News that he saw no level of preparedness when he visited his mom in mid-March. Quote: I don't think staff had enough support; I can't commend them enough for sticking it out through this, but I really wonder where the province was, why there wasn't external help rushed in. Premier, that is a damning comment. Where is the province? Waiting for consultation has passed. We need action.

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I think the issue here, as I said before in this House, is how we reduce risk and protect our seniors in our continuing care facilities throughout this province. The chief medical officer of health and AHS are both taking this extremely seriously. Dr. Hinshaw, as I mentioned many times in this House, has issued four distinct orders on continuing care, including one just this week. Those orders are setting out specific standards for infection control throughout the pandemic and in the event of an outbreak at a specific facility, and those orders are being followed, including at the McKenzie Towne facility.

Ms Notley: Those orders aren't helping the staff crisis, Mr. Speaker. We must be doing everything we can to support Albertans through this pandemic, especially those at risk. We can't compromise care.

Now, across the country governments are doing everything in their power to work together with front-line providers in caring for our citizens, but here our doctors have been forced to go to court and sue the government for a quarter of a billion dollars because this Premier tore up their contract. What will it take for this Premier to stop picking fights, creating enemies, and instead find allies and find support in order to focus on saving lives?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 1:56 p.m. The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The legal action today is what the AMA has said that they were planning. It does not change our decisions. We were planning to maintain our spending on physicians at \$5.4 billion, the highest level ever in this province. In fact, we'll likely spend significantly more this year due to the decisions that we've made to support physicians and their patients during the pandemic response. We'll continue to pay physicians under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, and we'll continue to move forward with the new funding framework, which we announced in February.

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

COVID-19 and Small Business

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, small businesses are struggling right now. Many have had to reduce hours or close their doors

altogether, but bills for these businesses keep coming in. Rent is one of the biggest month-to-month costs a small business needs to shoulder. According to a recent survey of businesses, just over half of small businesses paid or plan to pay full rent for April. Premier, what is this government doing to support small businesses that can't afford their rent?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll reiterate what we said before. Our government has taken many measures to help small businesses: deferring WCB premiums, deferring education property taxes, deferring corporate tax collection. Many commercial landlords are also offering rent deferrals to tenants, including Choice REIT, which has over 700 properties across Canada and is granting 60-day deferrals to qualifying small businesses and independent tenants. RioCan has a similar policy. The vice-chairman of CBRE, one of Canada's largest commercial real estate companies, says that the scale of the issue meant that almost all landlords have given some sort of rent deferral.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're hearing from small businesses that deferrals aren't enough. All it does is add to their debt load at a time when they have no revenue coming in, and many have said that they can't wait for the federal support that could still be at least six weeks away. Businesses need cash in hand now. They're crying out for immediate support such as rent subsidies. Our opposition endorsed this idea in a short-term action plan earlier today. Will the government agree to support these businesses by providing rent subsidies? Yes or no?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further reliefs that have been offered, for example, for ATB customers: they can apply for payment deferral on loans and lines of credit for up to six months. They can access additional working capital for ATB customers. Other ATB business and agriculture customers can access support on a one-on-one basis. As I've mentioned, all options are on the table. Our government and my fellow ministers are talking to businesses and tenants and landlords on a regular basis. We will make sure the decisions that we make are informed and based on data and based on valid information.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, we know that small businesses represent 95 per cent of all businesses in Alberta. When combined with the not-for-profit sector, this accounts for roughly 50 per cent of all private-sector employment in Alberta, or roughly 750,000 people. We need the provincial government to step up and protect 750,000 jobs. We're facing an economic crisis. We can't afford to continue to sit back and watch more Albertans lose their livelihoods. We need bold action, and we need it now. Will this government endorse our action plan to support small businesses right now? Yes or no?

2:00

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear the members opposite talking about the importance of businesses and supporting small businesses. Some of the first pieces of legislation this government introduced were to support our job creators. We will continue to support job creators. We took immediate action in introducing many measures to support them, and we will continue to find the

right balance between introducing timely measures and measures that are well thought out and based on data.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen.

Personal Protective Equipment Use Guidelines

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, yesterday Alberta Health Services published a document called COVID-19 FAQs for the public. On page 3 it says: "Wearing a non-medical mask may be helpful in protecting others around you. This is because face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces." Based on this, is it the position of this government, particularly this Premier, that Albertans should consider wearing a nonmedical mask if they are in situations where social distancing is not possible?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, it's this government's position to follow the medical advice of our medical professionals. That includes the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, and we will continue to follow the advice of Dr. Hinshaw as well as the medical officers of health throughout the system, including the senior medical officer of health for AHS, Dr. Laura McDougall.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, AHS also published a separate document yesterday called COVID-19 FAQs for staff. That says on page 8 that personal protective equipment "is not required for work situations where social distancing is not possible with your co-workers." It also instructs front-line health care workers to use routine practices when treating patients who don't display any flulike symptoms. To the Premier: why is this government telling Alberta health care workers to take fewer precautions than the general public?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly that is completely false. That is AHS and the medical professionals in AHS taking steps to be able to provide communication to their employees and their staff as well as to other Albertans. We continue as a government to take the medical advice of our medical professionals throughout this province in AHS, including Dr. Verna Yiu, who is the CEO of Alberta Health Services, the senior medical officer of health, Dr. Laura McDougall, and we look forward to continuing to be able to get their medical advice throughout this pandemic.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, front-line health care workers continue to reach out to me with stories of different mask standards from building to building, unit to unit, even manager to manager, and we've heard of seniors in long-term care facilities with a COVID-19 diagnosis being treated by staff without masks. One has to ask why the Member for Calgary-Acadia has taken so long to provide clarity on this crucial issue and why he is not focusing on this important part of his job. Don't he and the Premier think that people need clarity on when they should be wearing a mask that could ultimately save lives?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I do not provide medical advice to Albertans or to the staff of AHS, but we are as a government going to listen to the medical advice of our chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, as well as the medical officers of health throughout the system. We look forward to continuing to

get their advice. It's the best advice that we are going to be getting throughout this pandemic. We're going to continue to listen to Dr. Hinshaw and the rest of our medical professionals in the system and make sure that Albertans and the staff of AHS are going to be able to get their advice as we make our way through this pandemic.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has a question.

Education Continuity Plan and Student Assessment

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can all agree that the coronavirus pandemic is an aggressive, fast-moving threat. Each day the situation changes, and our province will have to rise to these occasions with the most appropriate response for public safety, despite opposition from the NDP, Alberta's first one-term government. The Minister of Education has announced that all K to 12 classes will be cancelled. My question for the Minister of Education: are there virtual options for schools now that in-person classes have been cancelled?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. School authorities across this great province are working hard and are quickly adapting to our new reality. Alternative learning plans include online and virtual learning options but also include paper course packages. Our priority is to ensure that every student continues to receive teacher-directed learning, including students without access to technology or to the Internet.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for the answer and your tremendous work. Given that in-person teaching has been cancelled indefinitely in response to the coronavirus threat and given that many students have access to computers at home and given that many classrooms use some technology in teaching, again to the Minister of Education: what supports, if any, are being provided to school boards to assist in alternate learning arrangements for students? [interjections]

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our education continuity plan was developed in consultation with the Alberta School Boards Association and the College of Alberta School Superintendents and the Alberta Teachers' Association. We have been actively working with school authorities across this province as they adapt to meet the needs of their students. My office has also been in constant communication with education stakeholders, including the ASBA, about the challenges our schools are facing. These are unprecedented times, and I want to thank our school authorities for demonstrating leadership and working day in and day out to shift their operations to meet our new at-home learning reality.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that I'm going to ask this question despite heckling from Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-Gold Bar and given that the grading is an important metric to understanding how students are learning and given that the coronavirus is disrupting

assessments for students in an unprecedented degree and given that no student should be penalized for having classes cancelled in the wake of a global crisis, to the Minister of Education: how will students be graded for this term now that classes have been cancelled?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question, and thank you again to the hon. member. Parents and students can be assured that every student will receive a final grade, and they will not be penalized because of the cancellation of in-person classes. Teachers are still expected to assess a student's progress, and every student who is on track to progress to the next grade will do so. Students on track for 100 or more credits will still be eligible to graduate and will receive their high school diploma. I want to thank all of our students for their patience and understanding as we all adapt to this new reality in our education system.

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

COVID-19 Monitoring and Protection of Privacy

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we recognize the critical need to prevent the spread of COVID, we also need to ensure that the privacy of Albertans is protected. The Premier's claim that he will use unspecified wireless technology to track those under quarantine orders is causing serious confusion and concern. The office of the Privacy Commissioner yesterday said about the plan, quote: the commissioner expects to be consulted on various initiatives being explored by the government of Alberta. Will the Justice minister assure the House that before this app is created and deployed, it will receive a full public review by the Privacy Commissioner?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, our department continues to work closely with Alberta Health Services throughout this COVID pandemic. We're there regularly consulting with the legal counsel through our department to make sure that the right decisions are made. We'll make sure that we comply with the law here in the province of Alberta.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Privacy Commissioner said, quote, any option being considered is sure to have privacy implications that would require reasonable safeguards to protect personal or health information and given that Professor Tom Keenan of the University of Calgary said, quote, there are questions like who gets access to the data and how long it is retained, can the Minister of Justice confirm that these serious and valid concerns around the use and retention of data will be addressed prior to these measures being put into place?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again, as I mentioned earlier on, our department will continue to work with Alberta Health Services to make sure that we have appropriate responses to the COVID pandemic. These are unprecedented times. We've never had to deal with a situation like this during my lifetime or many before me. We're going to continue to make sure that we comply with the law, make sure we take the reasonable steps necessary to protect individuals' privacy as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given that this government is asking Albertans to trust them with sensitive data from an unknown program that tracks every move they make and given the government's challenges in keeping a website running to provide emergency financial support to Albertans and given this Premier's tendency to make bold claims that he cannot always follow through on, how is the public supposed to be assured that this data will be handled appropriately?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, like anything that this government does, we have to make sure that we comply with the rules and the laws of our province. [interjections] We're going to continue to do that. The other side over there is laughing right now. We're talking about a COVID pandemic. That's ridiculous, and shame on them for that step right now. Shame on them for that. That's ridiculous. We're answering a reasonable question right now, and they're heckling. That's unacceptable. Shame on them. We'll continue to comply with the law in the province of Alberta and take reasonable steps.

2:10 Bill 12 and Landowner Rights

Mr. Schmidt: A number of landowners have reached out to me to say that they were deeply concerned by the minister passing the Liabilities Management Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, under the cover of a global pandemic. They're worried that the changes further limit their rights and will prolong conflicts about well cleanups. The legislation appears to turn the Orphan Well Association into an oil and gas operator. To the Minister of Energy: will landowners now have to wait forever for their land to be cleaned up while the government operates its own oil and gas company on their land?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we're excited about the work the Energy minister has done with the orphan wells program. In fact, one of the components that she has put within the legislation that has come into this place and into the process going forward is a mechanism for landowners to actually be able to prioritize wells on their sites to be cleaned up, something that landowners have asked for for a long time. The reality is that we have a situation across the province, orphan wells that need to be cleaned up. We also have an opportunity within that problem of being able to create work for contractors, something I know – the NDP has often been against oil and gas contractors. Rest assured, this government is going to get that job done.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that landowners hope to have a say when their land is going to be cleaned up and given that the recent legislation does nothing to give landowners avenues to speed up reclamation on their land and given that this might increase the potential for more legal conflict between landowners, producers, and the Orphan Well Association and given that this government loves to hand out political favours like candy at a county fair, to the minister: will you commit to the people of Alberta that money from the orphan well fund will be independently managed and spent only on the basis of science that dictates environmental priorities and not spent to win favours and political support?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, everything, like, from my perspective, normal for that hon. member – that's just completely ridiculous. The reality is that, yes, there will be a process for landowners to be able to identify wells that they want cleaned and be able to move them up within the priority of the process. We'll make sure that happens. But what that member just kind of hinted at – and this, again, was a member who stood on the steps of this

Legislature and protested with Extinction Rebellion – is the fact that he continues to hate the oil and gas industry and will do everything he can to stop the Alberta government from doing everything we can to make sure the oil and gas industry succeeds, because our country needs it.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that landowners were not consulted about the changes in Bill 12 and many do not feel that the bill addresses their concerns at all and given that this government and particularly my good friend the Government House Leader seem committed to use the cover of a global pandemic to ram their agenda through with no public accountability and given that they have probably gone too far on Bill 12 and now their own supporters are turning on them, will the minister go back to the drawing board, consult with landowners, and work on a solution that respects their rights and promotes their interests?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I spoke to lots of constituents who are landowners in the last few days. They're excited about the process that we're bringing forward and excited about the fact that we're going to get to work dealing with orphan wells inside this province. That hon. member, when he was in government, did absolutely nothing when it came to that file. But again to the point, what you're seeing right there from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is his continued attack on the oil and gas industry. He doesn't want us to succeed. He doesn't want the oil and gas industry to come back. He does not want our industry to move forward because, again, he's been protesting with organizations like Extinction Rebellion and trying to shut down our largest industry.

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

Human Trafficking

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week our government introduced Bill 8, Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act. Bill 8 puts in place measures such as giving survivors the ability to sue traffickers, giving police the authority to take action to rescue survivors, and creating a provincial day of awareness. Given that human trafficking and exploitation affect so many in Alberta, including far too many women, children, and girls, to the Minister of Justice: what will our Justice department and law enforcement do with this additional authority to stop the heinous acts of human trafficking from happening in our province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We simply have to keep vulnerable Albertans safe. It's just as important now in a pandemic as it is at any time to keep them safe. What this bill would do: it will provide emergency protection orders, greater ability to get that done than currently exists under the law. It'll also give the police the ability to get expedited warrants for this type of a situation as it relates to human trafficking. We simply have to do more. We have to have a focused effort. That's what this does.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last two days we've heard much debate about Bill 8, and even though we've made little progress, I still believe everyone in this Chamber knows that this bill is needed. This legislation was inspired by 90 incidents of human trafficking in Alberta reported between 2009 and 2016. Given that there is a significant possibility of many unreported

cases of human trafficking in our province, to the Minister of Justice: can Albertans expect to hear of more unreported cases of human trafficking in Alberta, and if so, what would the number look like?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This legislation is so key to bring attention to this important issue. We need to make sure that Albertans are confident that the law will be there for them when they need it, for those that are the most vulnerable, that they know that they can come forward with confidence that their case will be handled properly. That's what we're trying to do here with this bill: have a focused effort, have consistent protocols, consistent definitions, and be a leader in the country on this important issue.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that preventing human trafficking and bringing those criminals to justice relies on information from bystanders and informants and given that reporting human trafficking is dangerous and can be deadly to victims and witnesses and that Albertans may be afraid of reporting human trafficking, especially if there's a risk of retaliation, to the Minister of Justice: what can Albertans do to safely stop human trafficking in our province and help bring those criminals to justice?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to come together as a province. This isn't something that simply happens over there. It happens right here in our province to our children, to our young people, and to people of all ages. We have to step up. We have to do more as a government, and we need to raise awareness around this. That's why we're going to have February 22 as human trafficking awareness day. We need to come together as a province to make sure we snuff out this deplorable practice, come together and have a clear message: not in Alberta, not now, not ever.

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

Personal Protective Equipment Availability

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The N95 mask is a commonly used item on construction and industrial sites. Many contractors use them to protect their workers from dust and aerosol chemicals. We know that some private construction sites across Alberta are slowing or suspending their work, and this means the supply of these masks and other PPE is sitting idle. Has the Minister of Infrastructure conducted an inventory of N95 masks in the construction and industrial sectors that could be redeployed to the health care or social service delivery industries?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure is rising.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-South for that suggestion. I talked to industry associations and advocacy groups about their safety protocols and all. They said that they're all equipped adequately, but I didn't ask them if they have more than they need. I'll go back and check with them. If they can spare their surplus to protect our front-line health care workers, we'll implement that. I would like to thank the member for his suggestion.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Alberta's need for masks will continue to rise as we head into fire season and given that the absence of clear advice from the Member for Calgary-Acadia will drive up public demand for masks and PPE of all types, including the masks currently on construction sites, is the Minister of Infrastructure monitoring this privately held inventory to ensure it doesn't slip away while the Member for Calgary-Acadia dithers?

Mr. Panda: I don't see why he's trying to take a shot at the Minister of Health there, but I will work with the member opposite, and I'll also consult the Minister of Health. If infrastructure contractors have any surplus PPE, we will support the AHS front-line workers.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Public Health Act gives the government the authority and the ability to use a wide range of powers to respond to this pandemic and given that the UCP has also granted itself extraordinary powers to do anything it wants under Bill 10 and given that we need these masks at the front lines, and projections indeed show we will run out of these masks, why is the government being so slow to act and take additional measures on assembling this province's inventory of N95 masks?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the hon. member is picking on construction workers. We need to keep all Albertans safe. Yeah, we need to keep our front-line health care workers safe. It's not either/or. It's both, all Albertans. The hon. member didn't even ask to take inventory to see if there was enough before he wants to take valuable safety equipment away from Alberta workers. Why does the NDP not care about people that are actually doing all kinds of work, including health care workers and including others?

2:20

Ms Ganley: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted at 2:20.

We are on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

COVID-19 and Child Care

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For families across Alberta the necessary shutdown of child care centres during this pandemic has made it incredibly challenging for many of them to be able to work. I hope that it has also made it clear to this government that child care is an essential service that Albertans need access to. The Minister of Children's Services had a call with child care centres on Monday, and once again they are left with more questions than answers and zero commitments of the concrete support they urgently need. What is the holdup? When is the minister going to step up to support our child care operators so that they are there for Albertans when we're all able to go back to work?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. On behalf of the Minister of Children's Services I want to reiterate that the decision to close child care centres was made on the advice of the chief medical officer of health to protect the health and safety of all Albertans. As the minister has said before, she has held four town halls with child care operators now and will continue to do that as she moves forward. The intention, of course, is always to support the centres once this situation has

stabilized, and I know she's working really, really hard to enact that and work with that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four town halls but no concrete answers.

Given that rather than standing up for Alberta child care providers, the minister seems to prefer the idea of waiting for the federal Liberals to provide support, which is a common theme with this government, and given that I was copied on a letter to the minister, that 14 child care organizations representing private and nonprofit operators and early childhood educators sent, which laid out a simple and concrete request for a temporary emergency operating allowance based on money that is already in the budget, to the minister: are you prepared to do your job, stop waiting for Ottawa, and actually support Alberta's child care operators?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to share on behalf of the Minister of Children's Services that we now have around 4,000 spaces for children of all essential workers. We also established a process with AUMA and RMA to add new locations and spaces based on demonstrated need. While we're keeping in contact with the chief medical officer and ensuring that all is done in as safe a manner as possible, these are incredibly difficult times, and the Minister of Children's Services is responding in a very timely manner.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That answer wasn't even related to the question I asked.

Given that B.C. has given child care centres the ability to repurpose already-budgeted but unused funds towards covering costs during the pandemic and given that the minister has the capacity in her budget to support these organizations – it's just that she's chosen not to yet – and given that once the pandemic is over, Albertans will need access to reliable and affordable child care to get back to work and given that in order to fulfill this essential purpose, centres will need to still exist in order to reopen, will the minister commit to the simple and direct request to save our child care centres?

The Speaker: I might remind the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that preambles are also not allowed in question period.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to extend my gratitude on behalf of the Minister of Children's Services to the daycare centre staff and their operators that have stepped up to provide an important service during emergency time periods to help in the fight against this pandemic. The goal has always been very clear that when our economy recovers, we will need a viable child care sector to contribute to it. Right now there's just too much flux to say what will ultimately be the best way to do that, but I know the Minister of Children's Services is continuing to work really, really hard on this particular piece.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been faced with a pandemic that is, of course, unprecedented. Our first

responders have been working around the clock walking into this unknown, invisible enemy. Now, while many are staying indoors to avoid exposure at all costs, our first responders have been responding to calls to service regardless of the risk. To the Minister of Health: have there been any additional boots on the ground since this pandemic has begun?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Paramedics in this province are dispatched through a standardized process, and that includes COVID-19 screening. This ensures that when they go to a scene that they are safe and they have the appropriate PPE. Every day in Alberta there are more than 1,000 calls to EMS for emergency issues. Typically around 65 per cent of those events result in patient transport. Every EMS unit is equipped with a full supply of the necessary PPE to care for the potential patients, including eye protection, gloves, gowns, and masks.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Alberta Health Services was in a hiring freeze prior to the outbreak and given that there is a paramedic class graduating right now from SAIT in Calgary who are unable to write their registration exams until the fall, to the same minister: are there any plans to fast-track these exams so that we have more paramedics on duty to respond to calls to service?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The regulatory colleges set the requirements for graduation, and the colleges have not changed their requirements at this time. The requirements are to ensure the safety of all Albertans. AHS does have guidelines, guiding principles in place regarding student placements. Their top priority is the care and safety of patients, clients, and residents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that in my riding of Calgary-West there are many seniors' facilities and given that the elderly have been categorized as at high risk of contracting COVID-19 and given that we want to avoid a paramedic shortage, can the same minister please comment on strategies that we're implementing to protect our elderly and the paramedics responding to the emergent situations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ministry and AHS are working closely to protect the health of EMS and the patients that they support. All paramedics are being screened under a standardized process before they enter a seniors' facility. I should also note that there are no noted shortages of paramedics in Calgary at this time. It's essential that anyone who is COVID-19 positive and needing urgent medical attention should notify 911 operators of this when they call. Additionally, all paramedics are required to perform a point-of-care risk assessment when they arrive so they can determine if PPE is required.

COVID-19 and AISH and Income Support Benefits

Ms Renaud: During times of emergency and crisis it's always the most vulnerable Albertans who are in the greatest danger, yet Albertans on income support and those receiving AISH didn't

qualify for the government of Alberta's emergency isolation support despite many calls and letters to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Now that the provincial emergency assistance has abruptly ended, will the minister follow B.C.'s lead and provide a monthly \$300 supplement to those receiving assistance and disability payments who are not eligible for federal programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AISH income is still in place in our province. That will still continue. As the minister has said in the House already very clearly, AISH payments will continue. There are other mechanisms as well to help those who are on AISH within our system that the minister has spoken about many times inside this Chamber. The isolation support was for people who have lost their income, and I'm proud to say that AISH income has not been lost in this province and that the Alberta government continues to pay AISH. That will continue. The hon. member should stop fearmongering inside the Assembly.

Ms Renaud: The minister should pay attention to the question to be able to answer it.

Given that many Albertans on AISH or income support also work part-time to make ends meet and given that these Albertans are at high risk during a pandemic and they have no choice but to self-isolate, which has resulted in lost wages, to the minister: given that they will have to apply for employment insurance and the \$2,000 federal emergency funding but any federal support they receive is automatically deducted from their monthly provincial assistance, will you exempt federal benefits from being counted as income and clawed back? It's actually quite a simple question.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, AISH income remains in place in the province. In regard to isolation support, that program was being used for different purposes. AISH income will continue to be paid. There are other mechanisms within the government that the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services has spoken about many times in this Chamber. If the hon. member would like to learn more about that, she's welcome to contact the minister, who I know will be happy to take her through it. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to those who are on AISH, I want to assure them that the Alberta government will continue with AISH payments going forward, and that's not going to change.

Ms Renaud: Given that disabled and low-income Albertans were already struggling before the pandemic – let's be clear; single people on income support get under \$900 a month – and given that they're now in isolation and further grinding poverty, to the minister: why don't you show some compassion and help vulnerable Albertans apply for the federal supports without fear that their benefits will be clawed back? They're struggling, they're isolated, and they just want to know that these benefits won't be clawed back. A simple answer: yes or no?

2:30

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government will be lectured by that member when it comes to compassion. That member stayed up last night till 4 o'clock in the morning attempting to filibuster a bill that helps those who have been human trafficked. That hon. member has no right, from my perspective, to stand in this House and in any way lecture anybody on compassion after that shameful behaviour last night. In fact, from my perspective – it's totally up to her – she should stand up in this House and apologize

for her behaviour last night. What I really want everybody to know, even her constituents, is that the Alberta government will continue to defend them in the days to come.

Municipal Funding

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, this government likes to refer to municipalities as their partners and suggest that they have the back of Alberta's municipalities during this pandemic and economic crisis. Despite today's infrastructure announcement municipalities are still reeling from the cuts and downloading that they have already seen from this government and will continue to see as a result of the government's fiscal plan. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs commit to freezing, reversing, or cancelling all downloading and cuts to municipalities for the duration of this crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the pleasure after our infrastructure announcement today to talk to the head of RMA and the head of the AUMA and the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton, and as best as I could tell from the phone call, they are happy with our announcement today. They are looking forward to other supports, if we can work with them on some other infrastructure things as time goes on. I assured them that we will take their requests into consideration as we go forward. I think at this point we're in a pretty good place.

Member Ceci: Thank you for the answer. Other supports are needed.

Given that the UCP agreed with our caucus's proposal to increase stimulus funding for infrastructure as well as to reverse the 4.2 per cent increase to municipalities' education property taxes but given that even despite this municipalities are telling me and my colleagues that it's not enough, specifically, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs commit to reversing the 50 per cent reduction to the grants in place of taxes, GIPO program, which is tens of millions of dollars of the province not paying its own taxes downloaded onto Alberta's municipalities?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting with RMA yesterday and AUMA today. Both of those organizations indicated their strong support for the direction the government is going and thanked the Alberta government for the work so far. They're going to continue to work with us. Interestingly enough, though, we have municipalities who have been asking for the Emergency Management Act to pass in this Chamber. There is significant concern from municipalities that that member and his caucus continue to filibuster that legislation inside this place. So if the member truly wants to support the Alberta government in helping municipalities, one thing that he can do is break the filibuster and stand up for his mayors.

Member Ceci: And you can support an amendment we have on the floor, and perhaps we'll get there.

Given that during these difficult times our municipal workers have shown their dedication and commitment to Alberta and given that so many of them are standing up for Alberta, our provincial government needs to stand in support of those municipal workers with meaningful actions. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs commit today to push for funding for our municipalities so every essential municipal services' worker can access free child care during this pandemic if they need it?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I can say that this government will do: our Premier announced today that we are going forward by doubling our infrastructure spend on capital maintenance and renewal for 2020. That's an additional billion dollars in job creation on projects that will matter to future Albertans, projects where workers can find meaningful work, and projects that will position this province for the recovery when that arrives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a question.

Trucking Industry Concerns

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The supply system for grocery stores has remained strong and steady, and still some Albertans are afraid that supplies could run out, leaving essential stores empty. Thankfully, we have truckers working day and night to safely restock supplies. As this pandemic continues to restrict travel and increase social distancing, to the Minister of Transportation: how have truckers been impacted by the restricted travel caused by this pandemic?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been working closely with our truck drivers, the Alberta Motor Transport Association, and the different companies. They have had trouble getting sanitary supplies, getting food on the road, having a place to sleep. We're making progress. We've got more work to do, but we have more and more restaurants stepping up that will serve truck drivers without them going through the drive-through. We're putting in more bathroom facilities on weigh scales and other provincial places. We're adding roadside truck stops, but we're not finished yet.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we rely on truckers to be able to replenish our stores and restock shelves and given that legislation in both countries, the United States and Canada, has restricted nonessential travel and given that this may impact truckers' ability to cross borders and replenish our stores and shelves, to the Minister of Transportation: with restrictions at borders, can Albertans still count on truckers to be able to continue to do their job?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, Albertans can always count on truckers. They're there for us. They're working very hard under difficult circumstances. Some of the hurdles that they've gotten over lately is a threat that they couldn't get insurance on their trucks across the border, that they couldn't get health insurance when they crossed the border. We've worked with our Canadian partners, and those things are available. We've got exemptions where they don't have to stay in isolation for 14 days when they get back unless, of course, they're sick. That's a different case. There has been lots of progress made. Our truckers are not the problem. It's the rest of us making sure that the truckers can do the job that they want to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that truckers risk their lives by being on the road and crossing borders and given that they

are one of the most essential services that we need to keep our stores replenished and shelves stocked and given that many Albertans rely on truckers and feel that they want to give thanks to them, to the same minister: how can Albertans support our truckers?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that Albertans can encourage the restaurants in their communities to be available to truckers and, in fact, encourage their municipalities. Just today our government took off restrictions on where truck drivers can park in municipalities. You know what? The municipalities I talked to today were in favour of that. They know it's a temporary measure, but they want to do what they can for truckers. The other thing people can do is post on social media and thank a trucker. If you see a trucker stopped somewhere, just say thank you, and encourage people to offer them the services that they need.

COVID-19 and Employment Standards

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, the strict requirements that are necessary to flatten the curve in our province are affecting more and more Albertans. Across the province people have been forced to stay home to care for children who are no longer attending classes at school or in day care. Others have been forced to make the difficult choice to stay home to care for a self-isolating dependant, risking losing their livelihood. In such unprecedented times Albertans deserve assurance that they will not be penalized for staying home to take care of their families. Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration please update this House on what measures have been put in place to increase job security for Albertans forced to stay home?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Let me say this. Albertans will not be penalized. We are doing everything that we can to protect Albertans during this difficult time. That's why on Monday I announced changes to the Employment Standards Code which include unpaid, job-protected leave for employees who have to stay at home and look after children due to the closures of schools and day cares. This also applies to employees caring for ill or self-isolating family members due to COVID-19. The leave applies to anyone who needed to stay at home for those reasons on or after March 17. No one should have to choose between . . .

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that many industries have been particularly hard hit by the necessary measures of the COVID-19 response and given that employers have had to make the extremely difficult decision to temporarily lay off staff in order to survive the weeks to come, to the same minister: how is the government planning on helping Albertans get back to work and resume their day-to-day work after this pandemic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know a number of businesses have made the difficult decision to lay off employees, and we know that this wasn't easy. We want to ensure that every temporarily laid-off worker can stay attached to their job during this pandemic for as long as possible, and that is why on Monday we announced changes to the Employment Standards Code that for an individual who's laid off on a temporary basis, that will be from 60

to 120 days in duration. This change is retroactive for any temporary layoff prior to March 17. We want to help Albertans get back to work quickly once the recovery starts.

2:40

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, again, to the minister for his response. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency that has rapidly evolved over the past month and given that recent projections show that social-distancing measures will need to be in place for several months yet to come in order to keep Albertans safe and given this important adjustment requirement around employment and job protection throughout the public health crisis, to the same minister: what other measures are being considered to increase flexibility for employers and employees, both, during this public health crisis?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this situation continues to evolve, we are making sure to adapt and do everything that we can to help Alberta employees and employers. We've heard from businesses that they've had some difficulty under the employment standards, and that is why we made a number of changes to allow flexibility so that employers can work with employees to ensure that they deliver the key services that Albertans need during this pandemic. In addition, we've also streamlined the variance process so that if there are going to be further changes required, we can do this quickly and ensure that the critical services and essential services that Albertans need today can be delivered.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. I am both pleased and mildly regretful that both points of order have been withdrawn.

As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, all you cool cats and kittens. I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 13 Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)

The Chair: We are on amendment A2. Are there any speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I put this amendment, and this is my first time to get to get to speak to it. Earlier this morning I was briefed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs with regard to his preparations in his ministry with regard to COVID-19. I appreciate that opportunity to have those discussions.

As was mentioned by the House leader earlier, we have before us an opportunity to come together as a Legislature and to look at what's in the best interests of Alberta's municipalities and Albertans, frankly, because of the pandemic that we're dealing with. Obviously, there's no issue with changing one part of this amendment, Bill 13, which talks about taking away the word "influenza" following "pandemic" so that it's more general in scope

and speaks to all potential kinds of pandemic which will be different than the novel coronavirus in the future.

The amendment that I'm speaking to is to strike out section 8 on page 3 of the amendment bill. Specifically, Madam Chair, it is with regard to the line at the bottom of that page that reads: "(1.02) The Minister may, by order, rescind, cancel or modify any bylaw enacted, resolution passed, action taken, order made or direction given by a local authority during a state of local emergency." Local authority, if you look that up in the definitions, means local elected authority, and it could mean the delegated parties that the local authority has put in place with regard to a local emergency. It's that item in particular in my feeling that's an overreach by this minister. He has powers in other parts of the EMA that he repeatedly points out to members of this side in section 22. So he has powers already to take many, many actions. I don't see the purpose and our side does not see the purpose of restating that power again, particularly when he already has the hammer, as it were.

If he wanted to put something in here and he wanted the support and agreement of the loyal opposition, he potentially could look at changing his (1.02) to say that it's done in consultation with local authorities so the overreach is not allowed indiscriminately, that there's a discussion between local authorities and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but repeatedly he has not seen the wisdom of working in concert. My question today in question period, Madam Chair, was, you know, that this government likes to say that it's got the backs of municipalities, and the answer from various ministers was: we do; we work in concert with municipalities. Well, if you work in concert with municipalities, why don't you put it in writing instead of finding that there's push-back from those same municipalities who feel that this is an overreach by the Minister of Municipal Affairs? The amendment is not long. Of course, it's a striking out of that section, but that seems to be the only way we can get the attention of the minister, seems to be the only way we can suggest a change to the document.

You know, I'm speaking on behalf of my colleagues here, but if this was amended by government to say, "Okay, (1.02) will say in the future that the minister may by order rescind, cancel, or modify any bylaw enacted, resolution passed, action taken, order made, or direction in consultation with local authorities during the state of a local emergency," I can support that.

The thing is that many of these large cities, Edmonton, Calgary, they know what they're doing with regard to a local emergency. They've been through it before. They have pushed back flood waters in 2005 in Calgary, in 2013 in Calgary. They have acted in the best interests of hundreds of thousands of people in that city who were affected by the 2013 flood. At that point in 2013 it was the largest natural disaster any city in Canada has ever experienced. It was billions of dollars. That was done under the direction of CEMA, the Calgary Emergency Management Authority. Why would CEMA give up its authority to this minister when they've got the track record, they've got the abilities?

Working in concert together with the province of Alberta, the government of Alberta is the way to go. It's worrisome, Madam Chair, that this minister does not see the benefit of four or five small words in that part of the bill that would make the whole difference. It would improve it from my perspective, our opposition's perspective, and, I believe, the city of Calgary's perspective. I think they were surprised with that overreach, that line inserted in particular, and I can understand why they would be.

Now, the city of Edmonton also has a wonderful emergency management authority. I have not got the same concern identified by representatives of that city with regard to this part of the bill. Fair enough. You know, they've got a number of other things that are on their plate right now.

2:50

Canvassing broadly the municipalities throughout the other five large municipalities in Alberta and the scores of others is not something I could do because this bill was brought here Tuesday, and we are at Thursday. This side has looked at it and made some recommendations to improve the bill. I believe it's in the interests of the city that I represent, the portion of the city I represent, I come from to work in partnership with that city instead of being didactic and saying that this is the way it's going to be. I think a coming together, a working together is what's in the interests – and that's what should happen during any emergency, Madam Chair. All of the levels of government should work together hand in glove, and I'm happy to say that they have in the past.

The 2013 flood could not have been properly addressed – I can remember photo ops with the Prime Minister of Canada. I don't think it was Premier Prentice; it could have been Premier Redford at that point standing with Mayor Nenshi. They were on the brow of the hill, Crescent Heights, in front of the new CEMA building that the city of Calgary had built at great expense. I remember the mayor at the time was Dave Bronconnier, and he said that we have to improve our operations centre for our emergency personnel when disasters occur. It was probably hundreds of millions of dollars to build that centre. I was on the council that made the decision to do it because the mayor was still around and I was still around before 2010, and it was far reaching. It was what we needed to do.

If anyone has been to that centre, I can tell you that it's state of the art. It's buried into the ground two or three storeys. It's totally self-sufficient; hundreds and hundreds of emergency people can exist, stay there, and work together in comfort and be safe while conducting a major, major operation. They did that in 2013 to the benefit of Calgarians and the downtown business district, that was shut down for one full week, Madam Chair. For one full week not one person went into the downtown because there was no power; there were flood waters still throughout the downtown several feet high. That was managed in co-operation with the government of Alberta and the government of Canada, the recovery efforts.

So it boggles my mind to read this (1.02) and to understand the implications in it, which is that the minister, without agreement of the local authority, can change anything he wants to. That's just not okay for me as a Calgarian, as a former city alderman, city councillor. I would not approve of the minister, of the Crown, of Alberta taking over and saying: "The things you have put in place aren't good enough. We want them to be different, and we're not asking you. Anything: I can do it because it's written right here in black and white." That's why we have put the amendment on the floor to strike out section 8 because that's the only thing that has so far gotten the attention of the other side. If, as I say, there was agreement to take a softer approach, to amend those problematic three lines, then I would certainly welcome that. If it were to say, "in co-operation or in consultation with the local authority during a state of emergency," that would do it, Madam Chair. We think it's important.

I think I just want to cover a few other things. Yes. We believe that we're being infinitely reasonable in our approach. The House leader a few minutes ago was talking about this item and the amount of time it's taken the whole bill to come before us and be debated. You know, I must say, Madam Chair, that when a bill is dropped either yesterday or the day before and the expectation is that there will be three readings of that bill within a few hours of us getting it, I don't think it's reasonable.

I think it would have been helpful for more of us on this side to have the opportunity to reach out to our elected representatives at the local level and to say – you've heard this part of the discussion

before on different bills. You know, I'm not saying anything unique here. To have the opportunity to consult with stakeholders, meaning local elected officials, is not a terrible thing. It's expected. It's a part of the job. The expectation that we're living under is that we don't do any of those things, that we quickly look at it and give it a nod, saying: thumbs-up; let's go.

I'm a little wonderstruck at the kind of change in the environment around here and not just because of the pandemic. I think that the change in the environment around here is the result of new leadership. The traditions that this Legislature has existed under since 1905 or something – maybe that's the building. No, that's Alberta, right? Alberta became its own province in 1905. The building was 1911. You know, those traditions have lasted for a long time, but they don't seem to be ones that people are willing to continue to operate under.

Back to this Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), I wasn't here for the debate on the original amendment that was put forward, and I understand that it wasn't supported. I do want to underline that the co-operative working arrangement of all orders of government is necessary to tackle even the most benign kinds of issues. I know that as a representative, you know, residents often come to me and say that they'd like me to do this, that, or the other thing on their behalf. You look at the sharing of power or how power is kind of dispersed to the different orders of government, and you can't always do what they want, but you can work with your colleagues who are representatives of the government of Canada or the city of Calgary, and that's how you get things done. That doesn't exist in this part of the bill that I am identifying that should be changed, and if it were to change in that regard, then I don't think that there'd be a problem.

Of course, I haven't got the Regulations Act in front of me, so I don't know specifically what that is. But I do have the EMA in front of me, and I have checked out section 22 and read the EMA, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs has urged us to do. This is an amendment to all of that. What would make this amendment and its adoption for the EMA better is a spirit of co-operation identified in subsection (1.02).

I think, Madam Chair, that with those words said, I can look to take my seat and perhaps hear from the minister, if that's possible, or my other colleagues who want to address this part of the amendment that's before us now.

Thank you.

3:00

The Chair: Are any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise once again to speak to the amendment before this Assembly, which essentially seeks to strike section 8 of Bill 13. I also want to respond to the comment made by the opposition Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who also happens to be the critic on the municipal file.

Let me say once again, through you, Madam Chair, and for the benefit of viewers who may be watching from home, that this is one amendment that, quite frankly, should not be tabled before this Assembly, but I do understand the concerns and why the member opposite would want to bring this particular amendment before this particular House.

I am going to respond in this way. One, the powers given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs under the current Emergency Management Act are enormous, much bigger than in the amendment or in Bill 13. For the benefit of viewers out there, all of section 19 of the Emergency Management Act and section 22(2) of the Emergency Management Act, when read together, detail some

of the expansive powers given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs under a local state of emergency or a state of emergency.

Again, to be clear and so that viewers better understand why it is disappointing to have to sit in this particular Assembly and listen to this proposed amendment, currently the Minister of Municipal Affairs has got the power, given to him by the Emergency Management Act, to step in and terminate completely any local state of emergency anywhere in this province. That power was not given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs by this government. That power has been there as long as we have had this act in place in this province. The question, then, that I have for members opposite is: if the Minister of Municipal Affairs has got the authority to terminate completely a local state of emergency, why are they afraid to give the Minister of Municipal Affairs the power to step in to modify instead of terminating, which, essentially, is what this is all about?

By the way, Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and the AUMA agree with us. I want to read the April 8 press release by the AUMA, which is the organization that the member opposite ought to be speaking with and listening to. I quote from April 8.

Alberta's municipalities and [the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association] fully support the provincial government's April 7 announcement about amending the Emergency Management Act.

The April 7 amendment is Bill 13.

The extension of local states of emergency for up to 90 days are a necessary step to respond to Alberta's evolving situation.

Now, here is the interesting part with respect to amendment A2 to strike section 8 of Bill 13. They wrote:

We also expect that providing the Minister of Municipal Affairs with the power to modify a state of emergency, without terminating it, will remove unnecessary red tape during this time of uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What else are they arguing about if not for petty politics? What else do they want from this bill? I am saying that, you know, I would prefer to work with the municipalities, which is what they expect from us, rather than me having to step in to terminate or end the whole of the local state of emergency, which, I'm sure the member opposite would never disagree, is a legal right given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Again, what else if not for petty politics, which, unfortunately, has been the attitude of the members opposite with respect to any conceivable bill?

We are in an unprecedented time having to deal with this COVID-19 pandemic, that is tasking all of government. All of government. We have deployed all of government's assets and resources and the full time of all of my colleagues in cabinet to make sure that we protect our people across this province.

The municipalities came to us and said: in order for us – i.e., Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and the AUMA – to have the tools to better respond to this pandemic, please give us this. I am not the originator of Bill 13. It came from Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer, with the support of the AUMA.

And, by the way, because I fundamentally believe in the Westminster parliamentary tradition, I have always made the time to brief my critic. In fact, this afternoon I spent almost half an hour or more to brief him on the entire Municipal Affairs response to COVID-19. I also took the time to brief him ahead of time before the tabling of this bill. And hear this: he did not raise any questions on section 8.

Again, I understand the nature of politics – I get it – but at this point in time the people in our province are going through some difficult times. We don't need to add any additional anxiety or headache on them. We ought to be focused on: how do we make life a little bit easier for them? Those who have the responsibility, by the way, to make use of this provision are telling us that they welcome it, that it's what they want, that it would help them in their work.

This morning I alluded to their previous amendment, to strike the requirement for up to 90 days, and I said just yesterday that I received the notices of these weekly renewals from Edmonton and Calgary, added paperwork when they should be focusing on addressing the pandemic needs of their citizens. Why should we ever think of that? Why should we allow this paperwork and time and the resources needed to call council to do this when we have the urgent need to keep our people safe?

Members, hon. members of this Chamber, you have before you an amendment to Bill 13 that should never, in the first instance, have made it to the floor of this particular House if the members opposite are serious about having a substantive conversation with respect to Bill 13. As you have heard, all Albertan municipalities support this Bill 13. I have no clue who the members opposite are speaking with, and the bill that we put forward does not in any way seek to enlarge – let me be clear for the benefit of our viewers out there at home. I have not been given any additional power that I don't have. The power to terminate is greater than the power to modify. I already have that particular power. I really don't need this. But the reason why this is important is because in a state of pandemic, you want to make sure that the municipalities and the province are working together.

3:10

The province has already got those powers. We want better coordination. We want our response to be in line with that of our municipal partners. That is what our people expect from us. They want to make sure that their government is functional, that their elected leaders are responding to their needs, and that, whether you are in government or in the opposition, at this particular point in time in our history we are working together, not to debate an amendment that runs contrary to what they would expect from us.

With that, hon. members, I urge all of you to vote down this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just seek a little bit of clarification from the minister. You know, I apologize. I myself was certainly only a sergeant with the Calgary Police Service, my friend here was only with the Edmonton Police Service, my friend over here only has his master's degree in social work, and my friend over here only has his doctorate, so we may not be as learned as the folks across from us. I just want some clarification here from the minister. What you're saying is that the municipalities would be opposed to this amendment that is being presented by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

I just want to be clear as well in that the municipalities are the ones that have requested this bill that is before us right now. Really, any sort of delay in this would be going against the wishes of the municipalities. I apologize because, you know, again, I just may not be understanding this. Maybe you can expand on that.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you to the Member for Calgary-West. The member is absolutely correct. I have just read a news release by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association confirming that indeed they would welcome . . . [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. members, hon. Member for Calgary-West, no crosstalk along the benches here.

Sorry, hon. minister. Please proceed.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I was saying that the Member for Calgary-West is absolutely correct. This Bill 13 was a request by two of our biggest municipalities, Edmonton and Calgary. Red Deer joined them. And you also heard me read the press release in support of this particular bill and every aspect of the contentious part.

By the way, all of the parts that the AUMA supports are all of the amendments that the members opposite have offered to delete from this bill. The question for them is: who are they working for? Are they working for our municipalities, or are they working for special interests? Who are they working for?

The elected council in Calgary represents the residents of Calgary-Buffalo, and through that elected council they have made their request, and I would appreciate it if the member opposite will respect the wishes of his residents in Calgary-Buffalo. That's what they have asked us to do, and that's exactly what we have given them.

As I said, the current provisions of the Emergency Management Act give the Minister of Municipal Affairs enormous power, including the power to conscript in a time of a pandemic. It's right there: section 19. Take a look. So if the minister has got that particular power and the power to terminate, why are they afraid about a provision that says that you could modify it rather than ending the whole thing? You know, all they need to do is talk to Calgary, talk to Edmonton, talk to Red Deer, talk to the AUMA, and I'm sure they have. I'm sure that the members opposite have followed up with the AUMA, and I am sure they have seen this press release. But that's not good enough because for them it's all about gotcha politics.

We have a responsibility to do the work of the people that sent us here, and this is one rare occasion where we ask for unity to tackle this pandemic and make sure that our residents and communities and our partners at the local government level have got the tools that they need. The province has got the powers already to deal with a provincial state of emergency or a local state of emergency. What we are looking to do here is to make sure that, again, we collaborate and reason with and work with our municipal partners.

One last point. They want to frame this thing as giving the UCP-led government a massive, overreaching, powerful power. This is coming from a political party, by the way, that believes in big government. They can look at every political party in the world's philosophies. They are the ones that fundamentally believe that unless government is big, it doesn't work. They are the ones that want to layer and layer layers upon layers of regulations and obstacles in the wheels of progress and business. All of a sudden they became interested in giving the municipalities the tools. It became a concern to them, giving the municipalities the tools that they have asked for. There's something not right about that, again, if not for gotcha politics.

With that, members, once again I urge you to vote down this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon on a Thursday to speak to the amendment to Bill 13, amendment A2, and once again attempt to bring the debate home to speak about individuals that the legislation we are debating will ultimately influence and affect intimately and directly. Those people that I speak about, of course, are the municipal leaders, whose wings will be clipped by section 8, that we're hoping to strike with our amendment.

I'm given to thinking, of course, in reference to remarks made just recently by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that people turn to government in times of a critical emergency. Of course, globally, as the minister alluded to, people are turning to governments because they see value in a government's abilities to respond to the necessities of the society. The most basic level of their responsibility is to protect and preserve the safety and health of the people they are elected by.

Of course, that's what's happening globally, and it's giving many, many millions of people around the globe great pause and reason to reflect upon some of the debate that was taking place before this pandemic struck the world, about what the minister was talking about, the size and the role of government. I think that with this pandemic, one of the lessons from it will be, as a result of that reflection, that people reacquaint themselves with the very reasons that we turn to our civic authorities and to elected officials to show leadership in getting us through times of crisis such as a health pandemic. That's the very reason that I'm happy to support this amendment, Madam Chair, because I'm thinking of exactly what effect this might have on the relationship between the two levels of government.

3:20

Now, the minister, of course, is very correct in asserting that major powers of termination, complete termination, of an emergency measure declared by a municipality exist already. In fact, Madam Chair, the power to completely terminate the existence of a municipality exists within the rubric and the legislation of the province already, but that's not necessarily the relevant fact that we're looking to discuss today.

We are fully knowledgeable that municipalities are the creations of the province, and they are a different level of government within the Canadian spectrum, but of course they're not constitutionally established. They were established by statute, and they can be eliminated by statute in their entirety. In fact, that has happened in some cases where a municipality has become insolvent for whatever reason. My own little home village of Thorhild, that I've mentioned numerous times in this House, was one of those, unfortunately, to suffer that dissolution, and it became part and parcel of the county rather than an independent village as a result of financial difficulties over a long period of time. So we're certainly aware of the power differential and the legal framework that the province and the municipalities operate under, where the municipalities are the children of the province and they certainly exist at the will of the province.

This particular piece of legislation that we're debating today revolves around the ability of the province to not only terminate but now to additionally tinker with the emergency measures invoked by a municipality. Certainly, as I mentioned, the state of affairs right now is that the provincial government has the power to terminate completely the municipality itself, to terminate the emergency order, but now to go further and ask for a more minute and I would say – I'm searching for the right word in terms of the feelings it is going to impose upon municipalities to go in and adjust and amend the actual orders and dictate how an emergency management order might be fulfilled or how it might be altered or, in fact, written in the first place.

That's what I'm actually trying to get at here, Madam Chair: what will it cause in terms of the thinking process of municipal authorities when they're looking at creating the terms and details of their emergency measures declarations? Will it create rather than minimize a layer of red tape, at least one that might be unseen by the public? Will it not, in the minds of the municipal authorities, create a need to have a second thought every time they decide that

they're going to go ahead and make a change to the emergency declaration that they want to draft? In fact, when they're drafting it or making the decision to go forward with it, will it not force them – and maybe this is what the government hopes it will do – to say, “Jeepers; we'd better talk to the province; should we go ahead with this, or are they just going to slap it down anyways?” thereby creating another level of unnecessary interaction that won't really cut red tape? In fact, it adds another layer of process that doesn't happen right now.

You know, this government and others before it have encouraged the independence of municipalities so that they can serve their residents, their citizens, in a way that meets their special needs and special circumstances, whether they be big cities or middle-sized ones or small villages. Of course, that's the way our municipal government system operates. Given free rein, municipalities have operated extremely well and don't end up in dire straits very, very often. It's a fairly unused section of our legislation where a municipality will actually be taken over by the province, because the responsibility of municipalities is exercised quite well by those elected officials at the municipal level.

I'm hoping that the upshot of this legislation, should the amendment not pass, is not going to be the necessity for municipal authorities to reconsider what they're planning to do in an emergency declaration and having to wonder whether or not the province will strike them down or wondering whether they should be seeking prior counsel from the province or seeking some under-the-table or outside-the-channel authority from the province to actually go ahead before they go ahead and exercise their authority under the law to determine that a declaration of an emergency measure must be made.

Once again, I always try to bring it back to the individuals that this is really going to affect, whether it's the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary, Red Deer, and so forth or small municipalities or even the rural counties. I mean, the rural counties, of course, would be the ones who most likely would have fear of their decisions to enact an emergency measure being second-guessed by the province because they are subject to perhaps a little more direct oversight. It may take maybe not even an official measure. Maybe it would only be a phone call or a wink or a nudge from a higher level authority that this indeed is going to invoke the ire of the province, and they may end up having to change their emergency measure because the province isn't happy with it.

It alters fundamentally, Madam Chair, I contend, the relationship between the municipalities and the provincial government at a time when they least need to have to second-guess their decisions. They need to be able to exercise the authority they have. I don't think that the municipalities have demonstrated a behaviour over the years that would require the province to step in and want to have this power to tinker when, in fact, they have the power, as the minister rightfully said, to completely eliminate the emergency declaration that a municipality decides to invoke. On top of that, they could eliminate the municipality itself.

Once again, I wonder, as we talked about earlier this morning in debate, indeed what lingering effect this will have on the relationship between the province and the municipality. As always, during a time of emergency measures are taken to deal directly with the issues at hand, and decisions are made quickly, but they have long-term effects. I fear that the relationship damage that could be done here is something that is not being considered by the bill. I fully hope that the amendment to this legislation that we're supporting to strike section 8 is one that's accepted by government members. I know members on this side will.

Initially the whole intent or the underlying intent of the legislation that the government brought forward to adjust the

relationship between the province and the city in terms of emergency declarations: what I understood it to be was to allow the coincidental operation of emergency declarations provincially and municipally. Previously, of course, it wasn't permitted to do that. That in and of itself is a reasonable thing to do. To have both municipal and provincial declarations operate coincidentally during an emergent time frame is a wise piece of legislation to bring forward and to put into place, but this particular reach into the decision-making process of the municipalities, where in a time of an emergency, whether it be a fire, a flood, or a pandemic, in a municipality that they might declare – it could potentially be something of a more local nature, whether it's a chemical spill or a train derailment or a bad road accident with some dangerous goods involved.

3:30

To have the municipality sort of hamstrung by the requirement to always be in the knowledge that the province might step in and second-guess their decisions, I think, is adding in red tape, an unseen, let's say, an invisible piece of red tape that perhaps wasn't thought through by the government when they were implementing this. I hesitate to think how much this might have a lasting effect on the relationship between provincial and municipal governments when, during an emergency situation, the municipality is having to second-guess its own decisions.

Then afterwards, after the emergency has passed, that relationship has been altered and developed in such a way that there's a culture of the municipality thinking: “Well, goodness. Should we go ahead with X, Y, or Z policy? It may not suit the direction the province wants us to take.” That's a cold and shuddering thought to have, that municipalities would be so cloistered as to think that they would have to consider every measure they take within the framework of whether the province would give its blessing or not. If that would happen, Madam Chair, I think that we'd maybe eliminate the need for municipal governments altogether and simply have appointed administrations in municipalities, appointees by the province. You know, I just think the mindset that the municipalities will get as a result of this is that it's sort of a father-knows-best intrusion into their area of jurisdiction, and I'd hate to see that influence a long-term relationship between municipalities and the province as a result.

Obviously, permitting coincidental operation of provincial and municipal emergency measures is a good thing, but this, I think, goes a long way to sort of suggest that there's a forced requirement to gain permission in advance for moves that should be made fairly quickly during an emergency situation. In the situation that we face right now, some have said that it's a slow-moving emergency, yet there are things that we're racing to do in advance of the expected surge of the pandemic, and that requires the co-operation of both the municipal and provincial authorities, including the collaboration and integration of their emergency measures that they have independently declared.

Even in this pandemic, which may be a slow-moving contagion, relatively speaking, compared to some other types of disasters, it still can lead to some difficult decisions by municipal authorities about whether to go ahead with a particular measure. I know that there are some examples being made currently about this different level of government decision-making in influencing the other.

That has to do particularly with the masks that we're now told by our chief medical officer of health federally may help in preventing the spread of the virus if the mask wearer actually wears one but won't prevent you from getting the virus. After a few weeks of wondering, indeed, whether or not one should wear a mask, or whether one shouldn't, there's been a declaration by the chief

medical officer of health of Canada and now, of course, repeated by our own provincial chief medical officer of health that there may be some benefit to it. But there are also risks. That was the reason that they withheld their agreement to give Canadians and Albertans sort of a green light to go ahead and say, “Yes, indeed, this is a very positive thing to do,” because there are risks involved with it. What I know that levels of government were concerned about was contradicting each other, and that resulted in a delay of a real decision that Canadians were hoping to hear about.

All kinds of things happened as a result of that. There are major sewing bees going on across the country right now. I think that some people are running out of fabric that they thought they would never run out of from their sewing rooms, and machines are getting up and running that haven’t been running in years, making masks of various qualities. They may or may not be workable masks that the chief medical officer of health would authorize, but because of the lack of decision-making collaboration and perhaps the second-guessing of both authorities, they resulted in the public making up their own reasons and going ahead with these mask-sewing bees.

I know that there may be unintended consequences as a result of a policy of the municipality where a decision doesn’t get made because they’re waiting and wondering and deciding what, in fact, the province might do if they went ahead with it. Therefore, there’s a stall in that, and the public may be waiting for a decision. I won’t get into hypothetical circumstances but just look at it in principle right now. The municipality hesitation could cause definite consternation in the public, and the only reason that the municipality would be hesitating is because they’re wondering whether or not the provincial government will actually come in and rescind whatever decision they make. That’s something we really need to think about. I don’t know if the government has really thought through why the tinkering mechanism of section 8 is required when in fact, as they admit, they’re able to rescind the whole emergency measures act that a municipality might go ahead and invoke.

So I would encourage all members to think through this measure and support the amendment and basically revert to the original language of the EMA and continue to rely upon the very satisfactory relationship between municipalities and the provincial government, particularly in times of emergency, that we’ve seen exist over many decades, including more recently, within recent memory, where we’ve had fire and floods ravage our province. That has resulted in a very significant and intense level of co-operation and collaboration between municipal governments and our provincial government, and it didn’t cause a great hue and cry from the municipalities to go ahead and amend the act to allow the provincial government to tinker.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 13? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really appreciate the honour to speak in this House. As I was listening to the opposition speak on this, it kind of crossed my thoughts that I’ve probably forgotten more about emergency management than they know collectively or ever will, so I’d like to talk about this for a moment. Just to clarify my background, I don’t have a degree. I don’t have a master’s or anything like that. My education was a bit more technical, from advanced life support – giving medications, intubating, defibrillating – to firefighting 101, you know, even wildland firefighting, dangerous goods, high animal rescue, you name it. I’ve taken those courses. I’ve also been very fortunate in my career to go into the management side of things and run a lot of these things

and also participate in emergency operation centres on high-level incidents that have impacted a lot of people.

When the good minister put out this bill, I was very curious about it because I considered it to be a bit in, you know, my wheelhouse, and it’s a good bill. I don’t feel it needs any changes. This amendment that the opposition has requested was actually very specifically the question I had asked the minister when he was consulting with our caucus on this bill. My concern was that by granting the municipalities and the individual agencies in different regions so much power – there are sometimes challenges and other things that throw things out of the loop and sometimes overbearing decision-making, you name it. The minister addressed that. See, when my good friends who are in government are making these bills – I really respect them for that – they have to recognize the lowest common denominators. They have to recognize the worst case scenarios about what can happen in these incidents, so they have to ensure that the powers are there to make sure that there is balance.

3:40

Again, like, yeah, when they’re concerned about a lot of these things and they’re making these rules, as many of the members across the way, who were in cabinet at one time, know, you have to address all the issues, yes, the lowest common denominators. Know that every time my good friends in government are making a decision or writing bills, they’re thinking about you folks across the way in the opposition. The decisions that they make are very pragmatic, especially in this current environment that we have right now in our society. If there are errors, we’re going to learn from them, but what the minister currently is doing right now is really giving some great powers, greater than what they ever were, to these municipalities. This is an assurance that he’s not going to push further, that he has an ace up his sleeve, if you will, to make sure that things function in a good and appropriate way.

With that, I just wanted to speak very quickly. I’m not here to drag out the clock like the opposition is, but certainly I just want to point out that this is a good bill. It doesn’t need this amendment. I’m asking everyone in the House to vote this down, because this literally addresses the one issue I had with my experience. You know, I’ll end it with that.

Also, Calgary-Buffalo, your pin is upside down. You probably mistook it for your cross, but you should turn it back up.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Well, are there any other speakers to amendment A2 on Bill 13?

Member Ceci: I dropped one of the things from the back of it. Thank you very much for pointing it out. By the way, 666 is not my address; it’s 1616. [interjections] I’ll keep talking. I’ll keep talking.

I do want to say that of course I’m going to take the minister at his word that he sees this as a downgrading of potential impact that he would have as a result of, in the EMA, the previous section 19 and section 22, the one that’s before us here under section 8, which I’ve admittedly kind of taken a sledgehammer to approach, saying: get rid of the whole thing. You know, had we had the opportunity – and I know we’re in a pandemic – to operate more normally, perhaps more reflection from my side would have gone into the approach to recommend improvements to this bill. It’s always been my intent to look to improve it, and that’s, I think, as it should be for all of us when we look at legislation, potential legislation.

I’ve always wanted to see anything that’s done in this section to be in consultation with the local authority. My reading of it is that the minister may unilaterally do these things that a local authority

has established. That seems still heavy-handed. You know, a lighter touch would have been, I'm offering, that in consultation with the local authority the minister may then continue to do all the things that are here. Arguably, we don't have a lot of time as an opposition when we get these bills. They are given to us the day before. We're here two days into it or a day and a half into it, and it's always been my intent, after speaking to different people, to try and improve this.

All I've ever said when I stood up on my feet was that the minister may do these things, but he should or that person should at least talk to the local authority and ensure that it's put in writing in a bill like this, because this minister will change. In five years, in 10 years there'll be a different person here. And they may look at this and say: I can do what I want. I don't necessarily think that's the intent of this minister, but a minister could do that. They could do it unilaterally and take the actions they want without even advising local authorities that they're doing it.

In consultation with a local authority, then, the minister may do all the things that are identified here: rescinding or cancelling or modifying a bylaw, a resolution, an action, an order taken by that local authority around the local emergency in good faith, the things they have done in good faith, that they thought they were doing in the best interests of their municipality. As a former elected official at the local level, if I wasn't even asked, if our council wasn't even asked by a minister of the day to look at something we've done, I'd feel usurped. I'd feel like, you know: what's the point if the things I've done in good faith aren't even investigated and talked about and have a dialogue with the minister of the day to make sure they understand exactly why we did what we did?

I think, Madam Chair, that certainly I appreciate where the amendment on the floor is a sledgehammer. I intended always to try and improve this, and the only way I could see of doing it in the short time we had was to remove it entirely. I think that on reflection what I believe is in the best interests of this section and municipalities around the province is that they would have consultation with the minister, and that would be in writing before the minister would take the action that's identified here.

I recognize that procedurally we're kind of hooped a little bit with one amendment on the floor and me talking very differently in terms of how to improve this bill, but perhaps the minister has heard and can appreciate that my intent always was to see this bill improved. If the words "in consultation with the local authority the minister may" and then go on for the rest of it – that would do it for me. Recognizing that that minister, this government won't always be in place, there'll be other people here, and they will be looking at these words, and if they're not clear, they will take actions that may not be in the best interests of municipalities around the province.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I want to thank my friend from Calgary-Buffalo for bringing his personal experience as a city councillor for the city of Calgary for 15 years to bear on this debate, and of course I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs again for being so heavily engaged in this debate. I appreciate his interjections as well.

I'll just reiterate what I said yesterday at second reading of this bill. We are here in this Chamber to debate this legislation just to make sure that we're doing a good job and that we're making the law of the province the best that it can be. I think that it's fair to say that, you know, we've learned a lesson from the last two weeks, that perhaps we've been letting things go through this House a little bit

too quickly and without the kind of critical, rigorous analysis that we need to put on these pieces of legislation. It was only on the 20th of March, according to the legislative calendar, that we dealt with some amendments to the Emergency Management Act for the first time.

I appreciate that the minister says that municipalities have asked for these amendments, but surely that must have been known to the minister and the municipalities at the time that the first Emergency Management Amendment Act came forward. I don't understand why it couldn't have been brought forward at that time.

3:50

I see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is taking issue with my comments, and I'm looking forward to hearing his explanation as to why it wasn't dealt with two weeks ago or why it couldn't have been dealt with in the normal course of the operations of this Legislature. Had the Emergency Management Amendment Act been dealt with in the conventional means of dealing with legislation here in this House, we probably could have landed in a place where we could have had these amendments in the first place and we wouldn't have had to go back for a second time to look at this bill again. I hope that the minister can provide us an explanation as to what has transpired in the last two weeks that made it so that we couldn't have dealt with this two weeks ago and that we're dealing with it now.

You know, like I said, I think that we here in the Official Opposition have learned our lesson, that by letting the legislation go through without the level of rigorous, critical analysis that every piece of legislation demands us to give, we're making mistakes and that when we make mistakes, we have to go back and do the work again. I appreciate the minister's assertion that we need to also work efficiently, especially in the time of a pandemic, but I would assert that it's much more efficient to do the job right the first time and not have to go back and do it again when we rush things and make mistakes. I hope that the minister will be able to respond to that question.

I also want to address a couple of the comments made by my colleagues from Calgary-West and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. You know, they've both indicated that they have significant experience dealing with municipal services during local states of emergency, so I'm curious to know how, in their experience, these amendments would make the jobs that they had to do when they were in those positions easier or better. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo touched on it a little bit, but he didn't really give us any details or examples, and that would certainly help us in the Official Opposition know exactly what kinds of things municipalities are looking for from this amendment to help everybody do their job better. That's what we're here for.

We're not here, as the minister says, to filibuster and delay. We're here to make sure that we're getting this legislation right, and because of the rushed nature of legislation going through the House these days, Committee of the Whole is really the only opportunity for us to really dig into these issues and get a better understanding of why we're doing what we're doing. I know that I and the constituents that I represent would love to have some examples of how these new proposed amendments will make the work that Municipal Affairs does during the time of an emergency better.

I appreciate that the minister has raised the fact that AUMA has put out a press release and said that they want these changes. My friend from Calgary-Buffalo has said quite clearly that the city of Calgary is not in favour of these changes. I think that what would be a valuable contribution to this debate is what specifically is – you know, my friend from Calgary-Buffalo has quite at length talked about the things that Calgarians and the Calgary municipal

government are concerned about in this bill. He's given specific examples, so I would challenge the minister and the members opposite to give us some concrete counterexamples of why it is they're seeking to make these amendments.

I share my friend from Calgary-Buffalo's concerns about the changes that are presented in section 8, particularly section 8(1.02), which says, "The Minister may, by order, rescind, cancel or modify any bylaw enacted, resolution passed, action taken, order made or direction given by a local authority during a state of local emergency." So that means that if this bill passes, the minister can say that anything a local government does during a state of emergency could be rescinded or modified. Anything.

You know, I don't have familiarity with what's going on with the city of Calgary and the local emergency measures that they're taking. I represent an Edmonton constituency, so I'm a little bit more familiar with the things that Edmonton is doing in their local state of emergency. I'm wondering, if I give the minister some examples, if he can tell me: are these the kinds of things that he's looking to modify, change, or rescind?

You know, on April 8 the city of Edmonton said that they're making changes to pedestrian signals.

[They] will adjust push buttons at pedestrian crossings and allocate some roadways for shared use effective Thursday. These changes will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and encourage physical distancing while Edmontonians are outside.

Is that an example of a decision that the local authority has made that the minister wants to override, and if it is, why?

Similarly, on April 8 the city of Edmonton announced some road use changes.

The City is adjusting two roads in busy and densely populated areas to provide more space to pedestrians and cyclists. These changes will allow for Edmontonians to [meet] physical distancing requirements while safely enjoying the outdoors.

These areas are:

Victoria Promenade (100 Avenue) from 116 Street to 121 Street . . .

Saskatchewan Drive from 105 Street to 109 Street.

Is that the kind of action that a local council can make that the minister wants to override? If so, I hope that he can explain to us why.

Also, on April 7: "The City is providing Capital City Clean Up kits to grocery stores and pharmacies across Edmonton in response to an increase of personal protective equipment." Is that something that the minister is taking issue with? Is that something that the city of Edmonton has done that the minister doesn't agree with or is even concerned about, and if so, why is that the case?

The city said that they're going to increase the frequency and intensity of cleaning in their transit facilities. Does the minister have concerns with how frequently the city of Edmonton is cleaning its transit facilities? If he does, what proposed changes is he going to make to how the city is managing the cleaning of its transit facilities?

Waste collection. Now, "there are no changes" to waste collection right now during the city of Edmonton's local state of emergency. Does the minister think that maybe the city of Edmonton should be doing something differently with how the city of Edmonton is collecting waste during this time, and if he does, why?

An Hon. Member: This is absurd.

Mr. Schmidt: I hear members opposite saying that this is absurd, and I agree. It is absurd because the minister is asking for the power to do exactly these things, to go into the city of Edmonton's business and say: hey, we want the power to modify or rescind or

add to any of these things. Why does he want to do that? We haven't heard clearly from the minister why he would want to dictate to the city of Edmonton what they're doing with waste collection.

With respect to enforcement – and I suspect that this would probably be a concern to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont because of his history as an Edmonton Police Service member. "The City is encouraging voluntary compliance and is focusing on educating citizens found violating any orders but will write tickets when appropriate." Does the minister have concerns with the way that the city of Edmonton is enforcing local and provincial health orders right now? Does he want the power to go in and change those individually, and if he does, why?

4:00

Edmonton's 311 service remains available for citizens seeking information about COVID-19 requirements. Is the minister concerned about how Edmonton is delivering its 311 services right now? The city hall parkade has been closed to protect the public. Does the minister take issue with city hall closing its own parkade to protect the public? If he has those concerns, what are they, and why would he change what the city is doing there? I talked about dog park restrictions yesterday when this bill was in second reading. Vehicle-for-hire services: the city has made extensive changes to how vehicle-for-hire services are being delivered in the city of Edmonton. Does the minister take issue with what the city of Edmonton is doing with respect to changing how vehicle-for-hire services are delivered? If he does, I would appreciate it if he tells us.

Golf courses are closed. Now, I know that this isn't exactly the prime golf season, but we don't know how long we're going to be in this pandemic, and I don't know if the minister takes issue with the city of Edmonton closing its golf courses. Would he, if given these powers, go in and demand that the city of Edmonton open its golf courses during the time of a pandemic? I don't know, and we haven't heard from the minister or anyone from the government benches as to why they want the power to go in and meddle with these individual decisions that the local authorities are making.

We talked about playground closures yesterday. This is a controversial – it's not controversial. I fully support the closure of playgrounds because I don't want my kids spreading any potential diseases that they may have or coming into contact with other folks who do on the playground, but perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs knows differently from the city of Edmonton and would like to rescind or modify that order.

The city of Edmonton has also closed a number of city service counters in Edmonton service centres, city hall. They've closed the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board counter. Now, we've heard from members opposite during debate on Bill 3 the urgency that they're addressing resident, tenant, and landlord issues. Would the minister go in and force the city of Edmonton to open up its Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board during this time, and if he would, why?

Again, with waste delivery, although there are no changes to waste collection, there have been changes to how we're handling recycling in the city of Edmonton. The Ambleside ecostation is temporarily closed. Paint exchange is not being accepted at any ecostation until further notice, and cash payments are no longer being accepted until further notice. Does the minister take issue with how the city of Edmonton is handling its recycling facilities? Is there something about these changes – closing the Ambleside ecostation, not accepting paint exchanges anymore, or not accepting cash payments – that he would take issue with? If he does, then I think it's incumbent upon him to tell us why he would want to make those changes.

Animal care and control centres are closed. The facility will accept animals by appointment that are in distress, injured, or sick, but anyone who finds an animal experiencing these conditions is asked to first call 311 for further instructions. Does the minister have any concerns about how the city of Edmonton is handling animal care and control right now?

Cemetery services are closed. You can't have a service with more than 15 people right now. That's a provincial order, but it's up to the local municipality. The city of Edmonton operates a number of municipal cemeteries right now. Does the minister take issue with how cemetery services are being handled by the city of Edmonton during this time of a local state of emergency? If he does, please tell us how it is that he plans to improve how the city of Edmonton is responding to these things.

This is an extensive list of a number of actions that one municipality has taken, since they declared a local state of emergency, in two weeks. Now, just imagine multiplying that number by 340, and that gives you an idea of how many different bylaws, orders, actions have been taken by municipalities all across this province. The minister is saying to us that it is reasonable for him to have power so granular that he can go in and change how a municipality is handling recycling services or golf courses during the time of a pandemic. Maybe there's something I'm missing, Madam Chair. That's why we're here, so that we can raise questions to the minister and have him respond to us with answers so that we can modify the legislation and make sure that it's appropriate.

With that, Madam Chair, I think I've raised my issues. You know, just to recap: why didn't we get this right the first time, on the 20th of March? Why are we here two weeks later, when we should have known that these amendments had been asked for by the municipalities? Had we allowed that legislation to go through the normal processes of this House, we could have probably gotten it right the first time, and we wouldn't have to be dealing with this a second time now. What specifically will improve or change or be better for the people of Alberta and its municipalities by giving the minister the powers to go in and amend individual orders, actions taken, or bylaws that have been passed by municipalities during their states of emergency? I'm eagerly anticipating a response from the government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to make mine really quick, again keeping up with the tone I took this morning. Obviously, we're all here during a crisis-type situation. Everyone feels this is very relevant information to allow both municipalities and the MG Act to work. We've already had the support read by the bodies that were originally pointed out by the Member for – is it Calgary-Buffalo? I know that he gets me confused with the Member for Highwood, so I just want to make sure that I'm saying his right. What I've seen happen over here the last, oh, about an hour on the shop clock here roughly is that there were concerns about nonconsultation with those authorities from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He had said that Calgary – and this is paraphrasing; I'll make it quick because we know that we have a lot of things to work on here today – wasn't good with it. Edmonton was cool with it. He didn't talk to the other seven majors. He didn't have time to because, well, he didn't have the chance to consult.

I was going to mention that his mace was upside down – there's a symbolism to that – but that's already been rectified. You never fly a flag upside down unless there's a major duress event. I want to make sure that the Leg. is still sound. So we're good there. Sorry.

I'm trying to inject a little bit of humour on that one. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar doesn't take exception to that, I hope.

We've already heard from the minister now that – well, actually, he has it in writing. All these folks do support it; they do support the initiatives. They understand that there's a heavy-handed approach, if you would, within the current legislation that says: termination or nothing. This is actually allowing a stepped approach. If there was some collaborative effort or if we could step in as governors on this level, the provincial level, we could help out, and they could assist with that. To me, that doesn't seem very heavy handed. That seems prudent given what we're into right now. Again, the same folks that we're concerned about, and rightly so, making sure we have the time to go through to do due diligence, are actually onboard with this. That's already been given here before the next speakers came up.

What else do we have here? I heard comments – you know, we don't have the Blues or anything else – on having a stepped approach. The minister pointed out that you've got the termination clause or nothing. The comment was: yeah, but it's never used. So the fact that we're not using the heavy-handed approach now, that we're going to put a stepped measure in place, offers concern even though in the past in times governments have never used the heavy-handed approach and terminated it.

4:10

We're into unprecedented times. We're looking at a stepped, measured approach, similar to the days of the extensions. We talked about that. We talked about why it would make sense to have that length of window over the seven days that was originally there, and the proposal of 30 days made sense in talking through the arguments. However, given those timelines and what we're dealing with, this, to me, again, seems like it's a good approach.

There's another saying out there that kept coming to mind when I was hearing the debate, and it's paralysis by analysis. We can paralyze this whole system if we want to sit here, or we can carry on. There are some really good points here, and I've heard from our side mentioned a number of times now from a couple of members that, yeah, they had concerns. It was addressed with the minister through the consultation. They actually consulted with the cities themselves, and that's good. We have that in writing. We heard from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, suggesting now that he made this amendment. There was a methodology for it. He spoke a second time saying that, well, this isn't really relevant – not relevant: I'm paraphrasing here again – but he wouldn't have submitted this addendum as it were based on the information he's heard in this Chamber and that that wasn't his intent, to use a sledgehammer – again, I'm paraphrasing – because he probably would have done something differently now.

We also heard that those consultations took place in the front, so with the minister and his critic. They talked about that.

I heard that it was about feelings. So even though after in the second statement it was acknowledged that the city of Calgary would put it forward, the city of Edmonton – it was the feelings, so the feelings of a former council member from that city. Now it was justification of how he would feel in that circumstance. Well, I'm sorry. You're not there. We can issue a hurt-feelings report. You know, in our industry we do that when the feelings get bent, but let's carry on with business. It's not about your feelings. It's about what's sitting in front of us and the facts. We need to take care of business.

There's another thing that came to mind. Again, I'm going to ramble a bit, and I'm trying to keep my stick on the ice. There's this old adage out there: "How do you catch a thief? Well, you think like one." So how do you govern in a draconian way? You

listen to the what-if report from people that may abuse powers potentially. All these what-if scenarios: “What if? What if? What if?” I would never consider that because I would consider that the people in place, who come to this place and are elected by their members, are doing the right thing for their constituents. We swear an oath, and we even say a prayer for how we govern here. To get to this level and to govern like this, it’s almost an expectation, so I would never consider someone that gets those powers. Paralysis by analysis.

You know, I come back to the one comment from the member in back. It was Edmonton-McClung, I believe – I’m paraphrasing; I don’t want to get in hot water – running through a scenario of what would happen if a council had to second-guess itself for fear that Big Brother would come in place and overstep. Well, let’s hope that in the first place you never elect a council like that, who can’t make a flipping decision for what they’re hired to do.

Secondly, if they are in that position, maybe somebody should help them make the decisions, because, again, potentially they’ve never had the experience of making decisions, being accountable and held responsible for it. Given those circumstances, it wasn’t required, or they didn’t have the depth. In the events and in these times here’s your fail safe. The fail safe is that we can come in and help tweak and help go through that process to make sure that these measures are in place, because they’re all our constituents regardless of our political boundaries, one taxpayer, so that everything is taken care of, so that we do have a minimalized government, so that they are working together for the right reasons and that to make sure it happens.

I would suggest that given that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, in his original statement, his original addendum, would have amended it, that he would have amended his amendment to the amendment – let’s end this. Call the question, move on to the next thing, get back to talking about the bill, and let’s give the people

that are watching this, hopefully at home, something better to do than to see us keep debating and going over our feelings. What if we might do it this way or that way? Let’s carry on, call the question, get back on the bill, and hopefully we can conduct some real meaningful business here in the next 15 minutes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 13.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Getson: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i) the Assembly now stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:15 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i)]

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

Activity to Thursday, April 9, 2020

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Critical Infrastructure Defence Act (Kenney)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second Reading — 431-46 (*Apr. 7, 2020 morn.*), 458-65 (*Apr. 7, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 465-76 (*Apr. 7, 2020 aft.*), 477-507 (*Apr. 7, 2020 eve., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

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

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

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

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

Second Reading — 224-32 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*), 222-23 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*)

Committee of the Whole — 232-33 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 234-41 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 241 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 242-48 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

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

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

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

Second Reading — 216-22 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*)

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

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

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

Bill 8 — Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 431 (*Apr. 7, 2020 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 509-21 (*Apr. 8, 2020 morn.*), 551-58 (*Apr. 8, 2020 aft.*), (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

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

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

Second Reading — 277-80 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 280-82 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 282-83 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

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

Bill 10 — Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020 (Shandro)

First Reading — 296-97 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 307-20 (*Apr. 1, 2020 morn.*), 337-44 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 354-57 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft.*), 407-09 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn.*), 426-28 (*Apr. 2, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 428-29 (*Apr. 2, 2020 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force April 2, 2020; SA 2020 c5]

Bill 11 — Tenancies Statutes (Emergency Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020 (Glubish)

First Reading — 297 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 301-03 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 303-05 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2020 c6]

Bill 12 — Liabilities Management Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 (Savage)

First Reading — 297 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 320-25 (*Apr. 1, 2020 morn.*), 344-49 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 350-54 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft.*), 401-05 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 406 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2020 c4]

Bill 13 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2) (Madu)

First Reading — 431 (*Apr. 7, 2020 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 521-26 (*Apr. 8, 2020 morn.*), 537-51 (*Apr. 8, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve.*), 619-35 (*Apr. 9, 2020 morn.*), 648-57 (*Apr. 9, 2020 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

Bill 201 — Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act (Gotfried)

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

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

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

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